

**Media construction and representation
of women in political leadership positions:
A study of selected news media outlets in Nigeria**

By

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Declaration

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Abstract

Despite the growing acceptance of women's political participation across the world, women in political leadership positions are still regarded as "others". In Nigeria, just like in other parts of the world, women are still poorly represented in politics and political leadership positions. Globally, media portrayal of women has been identified as one of the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in politics and public leadership. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions by the media in Nigeria. Situated at the intersection of media, politics and gender studies, this study explores media contents for representations of women in politics which could contribute to the promotion and perpetuation of traditional gender stereotypes which legitimate marginalisation and subordination of women in Nigeria. Given that media has been identified as sites for hegemonic contestations through ideology building, this study, by examining the construction and representation of women political leaders in four national newspapers in Nigeria, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day*, contributes to media and feminist scholarship aimed at understanding the intersections in the marginalisation and subjugation of women in society. The study combines analysis of media contents with In-Depth Interviews to ascertain important stakeholders' sensitivity to the role of the media in the promotion of disempowering narratives and stereotypes which have excluded women from public leadership positions by confining them to the private space. Utilising the interpretive research paradigm, the study is hinged on three theoretical frameworks, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, and Feminist Theory. Drawing on the principles of these theories, the study examines how media processes play out in the selection and publication of stories about women in political leadership positions in Nigeria, as well as how media publications promote and reinforce pre-existing socio-cultural gender norms. This study adopts the case study methodological approach, utilising Content Analysis and In-Depth Interviews (IDI). The data were thematically analysed using Atlas.ti 8, a computer software programme. The media articles and the respondents were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques respectively. The study reveals that while the media in Nigeria utilise both stereotypical and non-stereotypical frames in their portrayal of women in political leadership positions between 2007, 2011, and 2015, the quantity of publications focusing on them increased by 13% while usage of gender stereotypes in the publications reduced by 31%. Nevertheless, the publication of an average of six media articles per day across the four newspapers indicates that women in politics are still largely underrepresented in the Nigerian media sphere. Meanwhile, a cross-section of the respondents perceived media representations of women in politics as numerically marginalising, but not stereotypically tinged. Therefore, this study concludes that women in political leadership positions are still being framed out of the Nigerian media space, and that the media in Nigeria are sites for the reproduction of disempowering patriarchal discourses. Lastly, it also concludes that socio-cultural gender norms and economic challenges intersect with media representations in perpetuating the low participation of Nigerian women in politics.

Opsomming

Ondanks die groei in vrou se deelname aan politiek oor die wêreld heen, word vrou in politieke leierskapsposisies steeds as die “ander” in die politiek beskou. In Nigerië, soos in ander wêrelddele, is vrou steeds ondervteenwoordig in die politiek, en dus in leiersposisies. Globaal word die media-uitbeelding van vroue beskou as een van die redes vir die ondervteenwoordiging van vroue in die politiek en openbare bestuur. Dit is teen hierdie agtergrond dat hierdie studie die konstruksie en representasie van vroue in politieke leiersposisies in Nigeriese media ondersoek. Die studie, gefundeer binne die interseksie van media-, politieke en genderstudies, ondersoek die mediaverteenwoordiging van vroue in die Nigeriese politiek om media-uitbeeldings te identifiseer wat kan bydra tot die bevordering van tradisionele genderstereotipes, en daarmee dus die marginalisering en subordinasie van vroue. Aangesien die media geïdentifiseer is as terrein van hegemoniese kontestasie, gebou op ideologie, dra hierdie studie by tot meer begrip binne die kennisveld van media en feminisme deur die konstruksie en representasie van vroulike politieke leiers in vier nasionale koerante, naamlik *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, en *This Day*, te ondersoek. ’n Inhoudsanalise van berigte word gekombineer met in-diepte onderhoude met die doel om die rol van die Nigeriese media in die marginalisering en onderwerping van vroue te identifiseer deur te ondersoek hoe ontmagtigende narratiewe en stereotipering vroue tot die private ruimte beperk, eerder as om hulle in openbare leierskapsposisies te bevorder. Met die toepassing van die interpretatiewe navorsingsparadigma gebruik hierdie studie drie teoretiese raamwerke, naamlik raming, mediahegemonie-teorie, en feministiese teorie. Op sterkte van hierdie teorieë word ondersoek hoe mediaproesse ’n rol speel in die seleksie en publikasie van narratiewe oor vroue in politieke leierskapsposisies, asook hoe publikasies bestaande sosiaal-kulturele gendernorme bevorder en verdiep. As navorsingsontwerp word die gevallestudiebenadering gebruik, met inhoudsanalise en in-diepte onderhoude as metodologie. Die data-analise word tematies gedoen met behulp van Atlas.ti 8, ’n sagteware-program vir kwalitatiewe data-analise. Die media-artikels en die respondente is gekies deur onderskeidelik doelgerigte en sneeubalsteekproeftegnieke. Die studie se bevindings dui aan dat die media in Nigerië sowel stereotopies as nie-stereotopies rame gebruik in die uitbeelding van vroue in politieke leierskapsposisies. Ondanks die toename van 13% in die aantal berigte gedurende die studietydperk dui die daaglikse gemiddelde van ses media-artikels daarop dat vroue in die politiek steeds grootliks ondervteenwoordig word. Die bevindings toon wel ’n vermindering van 31% in die gebruik van geslagstereotipes in mediakonstruksie en representasie van vroue in politieke leierskapsposisies tussen 2007, 2011, en 2015. ’n Deursnit van die respondente het egter aangedui mediaverteenwoordiging van vroue in die politiek is getalsgewys gemarginalisereerd, maar nie stereotopies gekleur nie. Die studie kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat vroue in die politiek nog steeds buite die Nigeriese mediaruimte geraam word en dat die Nigeriese media ’n terrein vir die voortsetting van patriargale diskoerse is. Laastens kom die studie tot die gevolgtrekking dat sosiokulturele gendernorme en ekonomiese uitdagings, interseksioneel met die media, verantwoordelik is vir die lae deelname van vroue aan die politiek in Nigerië.

Dedication

To Dad – you sowed this seed of greatness but did not live to nurture and see it blossom.

To Babajide – you gave me reasons to succeed when you were around and now that you're gone, I see more reasons why I should not give up on our dreams.

To Mum – For praying and patiently urging me on to succeed.

To Uncle Bisi – for stepping in when it matters most.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Even as we celebrate new female leaders and the inspiration they bring to today's women and girls, let's remember that having a female leader does not automatically level the playing field for others ...
– Gillard, 2016

1.1 Rationale

This study focuses on media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria. This was done not only to understand how the media in Nigeria construct and represent women in political leadership positions, but also to ascertain whether the media in Nigeria promote gender stereotypes which could undermine women's capability to hold political leadership positions. To this end, this study utilised a qualitative research approach to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. By using a combination of theoretical frameworks, methods and data sources (see Chapter Five), this study intends to provide a new and more nuanced perspective to the discourse on media portrayal of women politicians and its perceived role in the low participation of women in politics in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Over the years, women's advocacy for gender equality has led to the promulgation and ratification of international statutory instruments like the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (hereafter Beijing Declaration) in 1995. Yet, women are still largely underrepresented in top leadership positions both in public and private sectors globally (Coffe & Bolzendahl, 2010; UN Department of Public Information, 2010). It is unarguable that women have made significant gains in their quest for gender equality since the enactment of the Beijing Declaration 25 years ago. Globally, the percentage of women in parliaments has grown from 11.3% to 24.9% (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020a). Nevertheless, only four countries across the world have achieved in their lower parliaments 50% representation for which women have been advocating. In Africa, only four countries have more than 40% of women in parliaments as of 2020. Nigeria, which is the focus of this study, recorded only 3.4% women in the lower parliament and 12.3% in the upper parliament in the 2019 elections (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020a). It is worth noting that since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, women constitute less than 10% of those elected into political leadership positions both at the national and state levels (Egwu, 2015; Eme & Onuigbo, 2015; Gberevbie &

Oviasogie, 2013). This may be why gender equality continues to be one of the central foci of world leaders, as can be seen in the global Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter SDG 5), 20 years after the Beijing Declaration (United Nations, 2015).

Although the underrepresentation of women in politics has been a source of concern for feminists and gender advocates across the world, it is even more challenging for women in the Global South than for those in the Global North.¹For instance, Nigeria has never had a woman head of state or president since it attained independence in 1960. The only woman who has ever made it to the position of Speaker in the Nigerian lower parliament had a brief and tumultuous tenure marred with unconfirmed accusations of mismanagement (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 195–198). It is, therefore, surprising that despite being one of the signatories to international statutory instruments on gender equality, as well as having a national gender policy, Nigeria continues to have women marginally represented in politics. This raises questions about the causes of women's persistent underrepresentation in political leadership positions in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, scholars have identified several factors connected to the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics and leadership positions. One of them is the volume and nature of attention given to women by media. Scholars have argued that these affect women's chances of going into politics (Carter, Steiner & Mclaughlin, 2014: 1; Braden, 1996: 8). Similarly, studies have shown that media contribute to the sustenance of gender inequality in society through stereotypical portrayals of women (Montiel, 2015: 182–183). Furthermore, it has been argued that media portrayal of women in leadership positions usually subtly foregrounds features of women's femininity rather than their ability to function effectively in leadership positions like their male counterparts (Baxter, 2018; Vu, Lee, Duong & Barnett, 2017; Lünenborg & Maier, 2015; Braden, 1996). Although most of these studies originate from the Global North, studies emanating from the Global South do not have evidence to the contrary (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Ouahidi, 2018; Ette, 2017; Oyewole & Olisa, 2017; Enwefah, 2016; Skalli, 2011). These studies which focused on print and broadcast media

¹The Global North and Global South, as used in this study, refer to the division of countries on the basis of socio-economic development indices. All “First World” or “Developed” countries, like the United States of America, Australia, Canada, Europe and some countries within Asia, are categorised under the Global North divide, while the Global South consists of “Third World” or “Developing” countries within Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and less developed parts of Asia (Dados & Connell, 2012: 12).

representation of women from the Global South reported that women are underrepresented in politics and their visibility in the media is inadequate and also streamlined to certain issues.

This study is of particular significance because Nigeria is one of the African countries with a high rate of gender disparity in political participation. Scholars considered the gender disparity to be a result of longstanding patriarchal ideology which fosters categorisation of individuals by gender identities and gender roles (Oloyede, 2016; Oyinade, Daramola & Lamidi, 2013). Therefore, a study such as this one is necessary to understand how the media in Nigeria construct and represent women occupying political leadership positions. Also, this study is of significance considering the underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999. More so, the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society and the attendant domination of leadership positions by men make a study of this nature necessary (Eme & Onuigbo, 2015; Oyinade *et al.*, 2013).

Aside from the foregoing, the motivation for this study was borne out of my desire for the emancipation of Nigerian women from oppressive patriarchal ideology. As a Nigerian woman who was born and brought up in the country, my experiences of gender inequality in Nigeria include deliberate marginalisation and subjugation of women through discriminatory practices which are degrading, or, sometimes, harmful to girl children and women, such as female genital mutilation, harmful widowhood practices, gender-based violence, discriminatory property ownership, and child custody laws. Although gender advocates in the country are making progress in terms of raising awareness about the plight and rights of women in the country, the struggle is far from being over. For some years now, I have come across videos where male members of the country's upper legislative chamber have vehemently opposed the passing of the country's Gender Equality Bill out of fear of losing their headship position.² Specifically, their argument has been that women already have enough power and that passing of the Gender Equality Bill into law would accord women too much power, to the detriment of Nigerian men. With a legislative chamber where women have been greatly outnumbered for about 20 years now, one can only assume how long it would take for women to get the bill passed to achieve equality in all spheres of societal life. This impressed on me the need to seek out ways to dismantle every perceived barrier to women's participation in politics, and, most importantly, their inclusion in leadership positions, with a view to accelerating the emancipation of women in Nigeria. Although many women have watched

² For example, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvevckahxRQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mI3Lh-l4n1U>

helplessly as women in Nigeria over the years contend with issues of gender inequality, this research has given me the opportunity to add my voice to that of other women who have been raising awareness and seeking solutions to combat gender inequality in the country.

Lastly, it is worth noting that this study is descriptive in nature and goals. Therefore, the causal inferences made here are conjectures based on identified frames in the analysed newspapers in conjunction with the responses from In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). The most important aspect of this study is that it offers a contextually grounded and systematic insight into media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in relation to its perceptions by relevant stakeholders while offering recommendations for increased gender-sensitive media representation and women's political participation.

1.2 Preliminary study

My preliminary literature search on academic databases like *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, *JSTOR* and *Google Scholar* showed that there is a high level of academic interest in understanding various aspects of gender and media dynamics globally (Mpofu, 2017; Buonanno, 2014; Ter Bogt, Engels, Bogers & Kloosterman, 2010; Johannessen, 2006; Len-Ríos, Rodgers, Thorson & Yoon, 2005; Cunningham, Sagas, Sartore, Amsden & Schellhase, 2004). Existing studies on the subject focus on the extent and dimension of media coverage and its possible influence on women in leadership positions in different cultural contexts (Ette, 2017; Craig & Rippere, 2016; Lünenborg & Maier, 2015; Kimani & Yeboah, 2011; Ross & Carter, 2011; Adcock, 2010; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a; Parry-Giles, 2000). This study joins the global conversation by examining the construction and representation of women politicians in selected news media in Nigeria by carrying out a Content Analysis (CA) of news, features, opinion pieces, interviews and editorials published in the pre-election periods of 2007, 2011, and 2015. Also, the study includes In-Depth Interviews with selected journalists, politicians and gender advocates.

1.2.1 Gender construction, representation, and media

The notion of gender construction is deeply rooted in feminism³ and the struggle for the emancipation of women from various forms of gender-based social injustice (Wood, 2011; Butler, 2006). Generally, feminism seeks to challenge the hegemonic view of gender identity,

³Feminism is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

which confers more power and social control on men and subjugates women (Hooks, 2015; Watson & Hill, 2012). To challenge the dominant gender ideology, feminists advanced the argument of the social construction of gender, as briefly discussed in the following section.

There are two perspectives to the notion of gender, namely the normative or biological determinist perspective, also known as the dominant gender ideology, and the constructivist perspective. The dominant gender ideology presupposes that both sex and gender are biologically acquired and mutually constitutive (Mikkola, 2017; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This school of thought assumes that gender identity, sexual orientation as well as gender roles are components of nature. Also, it maintains that people's gender largely determines the roles they play, or how effectively they function in certain roles within society.

As opposed to the normative view of gender, the constructivist notion of gender argues that while sex is biologically determined, gender is a function of interactions or performativity within the social system (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014; Sargent & Corse, 2013; Berkowitz, Manohar & Tinkler, 2010; Keifer-Boyd, 2010; Wang, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1986; De Beauvoir, 1972). The constructivist notion of gender was championed by a feminist and social theorist Simone De Beauvoir in her seminal work *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir's work set the tone for the constructivist notion of gender. Through the position she advanced, feminists have sought to displace the biological determinists' notion of gender which promotes the subordination of women in several spheres of society (Butler, 2010, 1986; Risman, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Over time, feminists and gender scholars have not only sought to debunk the biological deterministic notion of gender, but they have also deconstructed gender to dismantle the subjugation of women within all facets in society.

According to the constructivist perspective, the process of gender construction is mediated by several social actors, among which is the media. The notion of construction, as used in this study, is synonymous with "representation", which Buikema (2009: 72) describes as a symbolic process of using language and culture to make known an unknown idea or concept. In media studies, representation is used to describe not only the nature and dimension of coverage which the media give an event or individual, but also the number of mentions an event or individual gets in the media. Having given a brief overview of construction and representation, I will now briefly discuss some of the existing studies on gender and media.

Gender and media studies scholars have sought to understand how the media influence peoples' perception of gender by observing interactions in different segments of the society

and how media space and content can be used to bridge gender gaps (Buonanno, 2014: 7–8; Wood, 2009: 31–36). Scholars in these fields are concerned with understanding the nuances of the media's role in the social construction of gender. Although many of the studies in this field are targeted towards exploring the role of the media in perpetuating gender stereotypes and bias, especially against women in different socio-cultural contexts, more studies are beginning to explore the interrelationship between media and other aspects of society (Kumari & Joshi, 2015; Buonanno, 2014; Sarkar, 2014; Cunningham *et al.*, 2004). These studies are some of the numerous attempts to understand the relationship between gender and media in society.

Research on gender representation and media have indicated that the media are part of the active agents that influence the process of gender and identity construction (Popa & Gavrilu, 2015: 1200; Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad & Gaffner, 2012: 262–265; Collins, 2011: 291–295; Espinosa, 2010: 2–3; Len-Rios *et al.*, 2005: 152–153; Wood, 1994: 31–32). These studies suggest that media representations, or portrayals, of gender identity and roles, are usually stereotypical or biased. Wood's (1994: 31) observations are still relevant that media representation of gender usually falls under three themes. The first is the underrepresentation of the female gender, which Wood argues has created the impression that males are the dominant gender; the second is the stereotypical portrayal of both genders, which reflects and sustains socially endorsed views of gender; the third is the normalisation of traditional gender roles and violence against women (Wood, 1994: 231–235). According to Wood, these usually misrepresentative, unrealistic and stereotypical portrayals of gender influence and condition peoples' views of gender roles and identity. In line with Wood's assertion, Espinosa (2010: 14) examined the role of the media in perpetuating gender stereotypes in society through their portrayal of gender roles. Espinosa submitted that the media, through their contents, promote fantasies about gender-appropriate jobs, body image or looks, relationship and sexuality. Also, Espinosa noted that such portrayals contribute to creating and entrenching gender stereotypes and inequalities in different aspects of societal life.

The foregoing review gives a bird's eye view of the concept of gender construction, representation and media. Further details on the concepts of construction and representation are given in Chapter Two of this work. In the next section, I present a brief overview of studies both from the global and local contexts.

1.2.1.1 Studies in the global context

Studies emanating from the United States have shown that female politicians are given low media coverage (Meeks, 2013; Bligh *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, Hooghe, Jacobs and Claes (2015) examined media coverage of female politicians in Belgian news broadcasts. Their study confirms that female politicians receive lower media coverage compared to their male counterparts. Hooghe *et al.* stated that despite the evolution of the Belgian political system towards equal representation of gender, news media are still persistently biased in their treatment of female political officeholders. In another study, Bathla (2004) revealed that Indian media coverage and portrayal of female politicians were mostly stereotypical and personality-based, rather than issue-based. The study also revealed that journalists' reportage of women emphasised accepted norms of womanhood within their socio-cultural context and discredited behaviours that negate the socially acceptable patriarchal norms, thus sustaining gender stereotypes and bias against women. The findings of these studies are consistent with the assertion of Carter *et al.* (2014: 2) that media undermine the capability of women in politics.

These studies are relevant to this work for two important reasons. First, they show that the media have traditionally been biased against women. Second, they confirm that the media sustain gender inequality in society through stereotypical and biased portrayal of gender roles. The findings of the studies are also similar in some respects to the findings of some of the studies from the Global South, specifically, Nigeria, as will be seen in the following section.

1.2.1.2 Studies in the Nigerian context

In Nigeria, as in other parts of the world, women are mostly portrayed by the media as adornment or appendages of men, and as hyper-sexualised or narcissistic (Aromona, 2016: 16–19; Olorunfemi, 2015: 54; Anyanwu, 2001). Existing studies noted that women issues mostly go unreported in the media, except for cases of sexual assault or domestic violence (Oyewole & Olisa, 2017; Ekwugha, Adum & Ebeze, 2015; Amobi, 2013; Oyinade *et al.*, 2013; Okunna, 2002). It was also noted that women are usually portrayed as wives, homemakers and caregivers. In cases where they are portrayed as career women, they are shown as combining homemaking and career, with the former usually taking precedence (Aromona, 2016: 19; Oyinade *et al.*, 2013: 29). Also, Ette (2017) observed that female candidates in the 2015 general elections were not given adequate coverage by the media. Ette asserted that the marginalisation of women politicians by the media might be detrimental to the success of women in the Nigerian political sphere. These studies do not only reflect the gender situation in the Nigerian

media, they also buttress the assumption that the media perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias against women in society, as confirmed in global studies (Collins, 2011; Wood, 2009).

1.2.1.3 Women and political participation

Women's struggle for equal representation in various decision-making sectors of society has given rise to the enactment of various statutory instruments globally. The most prominent of these is the Beijing Declaration of 1995 which advocates equal opportunity for women in various sectors of society. Other statutory instruments enacted for the advancement of gender equality around the world and in various regions and countries include the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Caribbean National Gender Policies, the Dutch Emancipation Policies, the African Union Gender Policy and the Southern African Development Community Gender Policy, to mention a few (Suleiman, 2017: 21; Plantenga & Remery, 2015; McFee, 2014; Tripp & Kang, 2008: 341; Tripp, 2003: 3). The enactment of these gender policy frameworks alone confirms that gender bias and inequality have always been a challenge for many societies in the world. As was expected, the enactment of laws and policies for gender equality and fairness has not rid the world of gender inequality. Even though many countries have adopted policies for equal representation and opportunities, women representation in high profile leadership positions across the globe is still below the stipulated percentage of the Beijing Declaration (UN Department of Public Information, 2010: 2; De la Rey, 2005: 4). This explains why gender equality advocates still persistently push for the dismantling of the so-called "glass ceiling"⁴ against women's upward mobility in leadership representation.

In Nigeria, the National Gender Policy (NGP) is a response to the global advocacy for gender emancipation and empowerment (The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2006: 6–7). Even though the policy stipulates 35% representation, research shows that women still occupy the least percentage of elective positions in Nigeria – the highest so far is 6.8% of elective positions at the federal and state levels in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016: 21–23). Nigeria's military rule of all together about 29 years, between 1966 to 1979, and 1983 to 1999, must be noted, after which democratic rule recommenced in the country (Eme & Onuigbo, 2015: 396–397). All through the military rule years, women barely

⁴Glass ceiling is a metaphoric term used to describe the invisible institutional and structural barriers to women's attainment of high political or corporate leadership positions (Stainback, Kleiner & Skaggs, 2016; Steiner, 2014: 623; Eagly, 1998).

took part in the running of state affairs except for some “pet-project” initiatives put in place by wives of Heads of State, President, and State Administrators, to represent the interest of women in the country (Mama, 1995: 42–50).

Therefore, the return of Nigeria to democratic rule was expected to engender participation and representation of women in politics (Samuel & Segun, 2012: 4; Omotola, 2007: 41). However, over two decades later, women still constitute less than ten percent of both elective and appointive positions in the country. Among the reasons advanced for the underrepresentation of women in politics are socio-cultural factors, which show the fact that women are still highly marginalised in various spheres of the Nigerian society on account of their gender.

Despite their low representation in politics, as well as in other leadership positions, studies also show that the few women who have managed to break the “glass ceiling” (Carter *et al.*, 2014: 1; Steiner, 2014: 623) of male hegemony have been regarded as “aberrations” by society (Humprecht & Esser, 2017). The media is even more discriminatory in its relations with such women, as they are largely underreported, and in situations where they are given media attention, such coverage usually evaluates their achievement in the light of their femininity and gender roles (Braden, 1996). Furthermore, it has been argued that the stereotypical and biased portrayal of women in politics often reinforces existing societal gender norms, which have a potential negative impact on women’s chances at leadership (Eberl, Wagner & Boomgaarden, 2017; Bligh *et al.*, 2012).

Women and political participation will be discussed in further details in Chapter Two of this study.

1.3 Problem statement and focus

Despite continued advocacy for gender equality in various spheres of the society, women are still highly marginalised and underrepresented in top political leadership positions in Nigeria (Oloyede, 2016; Egwu, 2015). Although several reasons have been advanced for the low representation of women in leadership positions across the world (Lachover, 2017; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012), studies have shown that biased media coverage of women in politics reinforces gender stereotypes and undermine women’s ability to perform effectively in leadership positions (Lizotte & Meggers-Wright, 2018; Walsh, 2015; O’Brien, 2014; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009). These serve as the basis of the assumption that media are part of the causes for the low participation of women in politics and leadership positions.

This study, therefore, sought to evaluate how the media in Nigeria construct and represent women in politics across three election periods. The study also analysed the role of the media in the process of identity construction and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. The temporal delimitation of this study, that is, 2007, 2011, and 2015, is significant because it falls within what is generally termed the Fourth Republic in Nigeria. The Fourth Republic began in 1999 when the country returned to democratic governance after 16 years of military rule. The return to a democratic system of government led to the establishment of more political parties which many thought would foster increased women participation in politics and governance in Nigeria (Esomchi & Akoji, 2016). However, 20 years later, Nigerian women are still grappling with gross underrepresentation in political leadership positions.

1.4 Goals, theoretical points of departure, and research questions

1.4.1 Goals

This study examines the media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria. It aims to ascertain how the media contribute to gender inequality and perpetuation of hegemonic ideology through news reportage and other media articles. More specifically, the study seeks to ascertain whether the media in Nigeria utilise stereotypical frames in their representation of women in political leadership positions and the extent to which such stereotypical frames were used. Therefore, this study does not only contribute to scholarship in the broad field of gender, media and politics, but also add to feminist discourse emanating from Africa on the role of media in the marginalisation of women in political leadership positions.

The specific goals of this study, therefore, are to:

- examine how Nigerian women holding political leadership positions are constructed and represented in selected news media;
- evaluate the role of the Nigerian media in perpetuating gender stereotypes;
- ascertain whether media construction and representation of women political leaders has evolved; and
- ascertain how members of society (journalists, politicians and gender advocates) perceive media construction and the representation of women in leadership positions.

1.4.2 Theoretical points of departure

To reach the goals of this study, three theoretical frameworks were chosen, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, and Feminist Theory. The theories are discussed in detail in the theoretical framework section in Chapter Four and I will proceed to introduce them only briefly in this chapter.

Framing is one of the media effects theories whose central proposition is that the media have immense power to provide references for the public about what is important and what is not. Framing assumes that the amount of coverage the media give an issue directly determines the perceived importance of the issue or the perceived importance of an issue determines the amount of coverage the media give it (Holz & Wright, cited by Carter, 2013: 3). This invariably presupposes that events and individuals that receive minimal media attention can be easily perceived or misconceived as being insignificant. From the constructionist perspectives, framing has been described as “definitions of a situation that are built on principles of organisation, which govern social events and our subjective involvement in them” (Goffman, cited by Carter, 2013: 3). Since framing involves a subjective process of selection and accentuation of aspects of reality which the media perceive as salient, it does not only have a significant influence on the perceived importance of an event but also on individuals’ interpretation of events or social issues (Borah, 2011: 248). This study found the propositions of the Framing Theory useful in identifying and analysing the dimensions of the portrayal of women political leaders in the selected media articles.

The second theoretical point of departure for this study is Media Hegemony Theory (MHT). This theory has its roots in Gramsci’s concept of Cultural Hegemony (Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006: 965–966; Altheide, 1984: 477). Proponents of MHT assume that the media are active agents in the process of socialisation and social construction of reality. Like other media effects theories, MHT presupposes that the media (radio, television, press and digital) are powerful tools for entrenching ideologies of a dominant class among members of the society. The process of entrenching the ideology of the dominant class is carried out through repeated portrayal and framing consistent with the ideology of the dominant class until it is ingrained into the consciousness of other members of society (Liebes, 1997: 10). This theory is relevant to this study because it can explain how media have perpetuated patriarchal ideology in Nigeria through the stereotyped and biased portrayal of women in political leadership positions. Also, MHT is useful in explaining how media, through their (mis)representation, have undermined the capabilities of women in leadership positions.

The third theory for this study, namely Feminist Theory, was borne out of feminism – a socio-political movement and praxis which focuses on the liberation of women from perceived oppression and inequality caused by male hegemony. For over four decades now, feminists have not only actively challenged the binary construct of gender, but they have also been pushing the boundary to eradicate all forms of stereotypes and biases against women to allow more people the freedom to express and be themselves (Berg, cited by Hooks, 2015: 25). Feminist Theory also seeks to redress all forms of institutionalised gender inequalities by proposing that identities and roles are not determined by birth sex, but socially constructed by society (Appelrouth & Edles, 2011: 315–316). In addition, it challenges existing notions of gender identity which have led to gender inequality through the misrepresentation of women (Butler, 2010: 2; Reichert, 2008: 430). Feminist Theory is relevant to this study because emancipation of women is its central focus and it aligns with seeking increased political visibility for women by challenging misrepresentation of women in various discourse forms. Therefore, Feminist Theory will be used to examine and highlight the identified forms of gender stereotypes and biases against women in the selected media articles as forms of social injustice against women politicians in Nigeria.

1.4.3 Research questions

The central research question and the research sub-questions which this study seeks to answer are presented in this section.

1.4.3.1 Central research question

The central research question formulated for this study is:

- What is the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership roles in selected Nigerian media?

1.4.3.2 Research sub-questions

The following are the research sub-questions:

- Do the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions?

- Have the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions changed between 2007, 2011, and 2015?
- What are the opinions of journalists, politicians, and gender advocates about the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria?

1.5 Research design and methods

1.5.1 Research design

This study, from a qualitative research design approach, takes the form of a case study. A case study is one of the approaches to qualitative research designs which allows for in-depth exploration and description of a programme, event, activity, process, individual(s) or community (Creswell, 2013: 21; Bryman, 2012: 66; Creswell, 2009: 15). According to Gerring (2004: 342), a case study is “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units”. A case study can consist of both qualitative and quantitative forms. It can also be longitudinal, cross-sectional, or comparative (Bryman, 2012). Employing the case study research design for this study will create a better understanding of media construction and representation of women in politics in Nigeria. This approach also enabled the researcher to select, within the case study design, cases based on criteria that are relevant to the study, as described by Seawright and Gerring (2008: 300–301).

1.5.2 Methodology

The primary data for this study were gathered from media articles about Nigerian women politicians published in selected national news outlets⁵ in Nigeria around the election periods of 2007, 2011, and 2015. Specifically, media articles were selected from the following national newspapers in Nigeria, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day*, spanning periods within two months before and two weeks after the election periods of 2007, 2011, and 2015. The aforementioned newspapers were selected not only because of their national outlook and reach, but also because of the similarity in their ownership structure, that is, that they are privately owned. Similarly, all of the newspapers, except one,⁶ have men in their key editorial

⁵A detailed discussion on the selected news outlets is contained in Chapter Five (Research Design and Methodology).

⁶The information is true as at the time of writing this report. However, the researcher could not ascertain whether *This Day* newspaper has a similar organisational structure.

positions of the daily titles, while women were assigned the role of weekend editors.

In addition, journalists, politicians, and gender advocates were interviewed. The interviews examined their perceptions of media representation of women in leadership positions, and their views on gender stereotypes and biases deployed by the media against women in politics. The interview participants consist of men and women from the above-mentioned fields. This was done to give room for representativeness, inclusivity, objectivity and balance in the findings of the study. To have an in-depth understanding of media construction and representation of women political leaders in Nigeria, the qualitative approach was adopted for data collection and analysis. Specifically, the researcher made use of Content Analysis (CA) to examine the media contents collected from selected news media in Nigeria. This was complemented by data from In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with some stakeholders in media and gender-related fields. The two methods, namely Content Analysis and In-Depth Interviews, will be briefly discussed in the next paragraphs as part of the Introductory Chapter.

Firstly, CA is one of the commonly used media research methods. It involves a systematic and objective analysis of communication content like media texts, video recordings or photographs. CA is mostly used to evaluate media contents to measure variables, identify recurring patterns and draw inferences from identified message characteristics (Kerlinger, cited by Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 156; Dunphy, Smith & Ogilvie, cited by Macnamara, 2005: 2). CA is mostly used for the examination and evaluation of data sets which can be in the form of text, photographs, or film. In the use of CA, much credence is given to careful selection of samples, rigorous categorisation, and coding to achieve a high degree of objectivity, reliability, and generalisability of the findings (Walliman, 2011: 86).

For this study, relevant media texts from the selected news media over the designated period were identified and coded according to themes relevant to this study. The coding was done using Atlas.ti 8 – a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software programme (see Chapter Five for details on coding). Following this, the coded data were analysed to answer the following research questions:

- What is the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership roles in selected Nigerian media?

- Do the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions?
- Have the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions changed between 2007, 2011, and 2015?

Although CA is an established method in Media and Communication Studies, some scholars still recommend that the method should be combined with other research methods for best results. This recommendation is premised on the argument that CA alone cannot serve as the basis for making causal claims (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 159). Therefore, to enable the researcher to make up for this perceived methodological weakness of CA, it was complemented with In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with selected stakeholders in media, politics and gender-related fields.

In-depth interviewing is one of the qualitative research methods that can be used to elicit responses from experts or people who have broad knowledge or experience in an area of interest to a researcher (Bryman, 2012: 209). These sets of people can be experts in a specific field of study or people with relevant information related to a research topic to create knowledge about the social world. One of the methods of data collection for interviews is face-to-face interaction with participants using a list of semi-structured questions as a guide to the interviewer (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003: 138–142). Three formats of interviews have been identified by scholars, namely Structured, Semi-structured or In-Depth, and Unstructured interviews (Bryman, 2012: 212; Merriam, 2009: 89–95; Seidman, 2006: 15). Of the three identified interview formats, I adopted the In-Depth Interview format because it is more coordinated than the unstructured format, and gives room for probing the participants to clarify ambiguous statements (Bryman, 2012). The participants for this segment of the study consist of journalists, politicians and gender advocates in Nigeria. These respondents were chosen because they are informed about gender and the media and the gender situation in Nigeria (see Chapter Five for details on the selection of interviewees and Addendum A for the list of respondents).

The participants for the interviews were selected using the purposive and the snowball sampling techniques. The sampling techniques were considered suitable for this study because of the nature of the project, which requires that the participants have knowledge of gender-related issues, politics and media operations. Each interview session lasted about 30 minutes

on average. The major instrument for gathering data for the IDI method is the In-Depth Interview Guide. The IDI Guide for this study contains a list of open-ended questions that served as a guide during the semi-structured interview sessions (see Addendum B for the Interview Guide). Stellenbosch University's ethical clearance policy was observed in executing these interviews, as will be discussed in further details in Chapter Five under "Ethical considerations".

The data generated through the IDI method were used to answer the following research question:

- What are the opinions of journalists and stakeholders in gender-related fields on the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigerian media?

1.5.3 Data analysis

The major data analysis method for this study is CA which was done using Atlas.ti 8 as mentioned earlier (see Chapter Five, section 5.5 and 5.7 for details). As stated earlier under the methodology section (1.5.2), media articles published by the selected media organisations in Nigeria were collected and analysed using a deductive approach. This method involves analysing data based on pre-existing codes identified in extant literature (Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2014; Campus, 2013; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Braden, 1996). The codes were selected from a list of recurrent themes in similar studies across different socio-cultural contexts (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.1 for details). In addition, the data collected during the interviews conducted with journalists, politicians and gender advocates were analysed using thematic frames drawn from the interview contents.

1.6 Chapter layout

The chapter layout of the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the entire study. It specifically describes the rationale and motivation for this study, problem statement, research questions, theoretical points of departure, research design and methodology.

Chapter Two: Definitions of terms and research context

This chapter contains the definitions of some of the key concepts related to the study. The concepts include media construction and representation, gender, and leadership. An overview of women and political participation is also given to contextualise the study.

Chapter Three: Literature review

This chapter contains a review of relevant studies on the concepts of gender construction, gender representation, and media. Also reviewed in this chapter are studies related to media portrayal of women in political leadership in the Global North and Global South, with a specific focus on Nigeria.

Chapter Four: Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical foundations or frameworks for this study, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, and Feminist Theory, are discussed. The chapter also includes discussions on the relevance of the theories to the study.

Chapter Five: Research design and methodology

This chapter contains detailed explanations on the research design, which is a case study, as well as the chosen methodologies, sampling technique and sample size. The research instruments, method of data analysis as well as the credibility (or validity) and integrity (or reliability) are also presented in the chapter.

Chapter Six: Presentation of findings I

This chapter contains the presentation and analysis of data collected through the method of CA. These data are used to answer the central research question as well as the first and second research sub-questions as described earlier (see sections 1.4.3.1 and 1.4.3.2 above).

Chapter Seven: Presentation of findings II

The findings of the data collected through the IDI method are presented in this chapter. The results are used to answer the third research question as described earlier (See 1.4.3.2).

Chapter Eight: Analysis and discussion of findings

The results of the two data sets are discussed in this chapter in relation to the theoretical frameworks on which this study was hinged.

Chapter Nine: Summary, conclusion and recommendations

This chapter contains the summary and conclusion of this study as well as recommendations for various stakeholders and for future studies.

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter established the context of this study by providing a brief overview of the rationale for the study, preliminary study, problem statement, research questions, theoretical points of departure, research design and methodology as well as the chapter layout for this dissertation. The next chapter focuses on the definitions of the key concepts in this study. The chapter also provides a discussion on the status of women in relation to political participation from the global context as well as the local context of this study, namely Nigeria.

Chapter 2

Definitions of terms and research context

Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world ...

– Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 33

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains an overview of the key concepts related to this study, namely media construction and representation of women political leaders. After this, a discussion of gender and political leadership shall be presented as part of the research context. Following this is, I shall present a discussion on women and political participation within the global context, as well as the local context of this study. These fundamental concepts are presented in the following order:

- Media construction and representation
- Gender and leadership
- Women and political participation

2.2 Media construction and representation

2.2.1 Introduction

Construction and representation are two of the most elusive concepts to define in the Humanities and Social Sciences. These two concepts are relevant to this study because they provide insight into how people use language to define and shape their understandings of the world and other people's views of the world as well (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009: 893). The multiplicity of meaning and applicability of these concepts in various fields of study have conferred on them a chameleonic, seemingly controversial nature (De Beer & Botha, 2007: 198; Hacking, 1999: 1–2; Birch, 1971: 13–14).

Construction, as used within Media Studies, has its roots in the sociological theory of social constructionism, or the social construction of reality, which was first promoted by Berger and Luckmann (1966). These academics drew from the thoughts of scholars such as Schutz, Weber, Durkheim, and Mead, to explain how people form their understandings of the world, and how this knowledge of reality differ according to socio-cultural contexts or orientation (Strong & Lock, 2010: 29; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009: 893; Adoni & Mane, 1984: 324;

Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 8–9). According to Hacking (1999: 5), social construction or constructionism is one of the widely utilised and misapplied concepts in the Social Sciences. The concept shall be discussed in further details later in this chapter.

Representation, another concept used in this study, and, as is the case with social construction, has found wide-spread applicability in academia (Celis, 2008: 72; Reid, 2007: 198). Proponents of the concept have built on earlier works of scholars such as Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Galileo, Francis Bacon, Saussure and Foucault (Reid, 2007: 204; Hall, 1997: 15). Representation is commonly theorised as a process of “substituting” or “standing in” for a “real thing” (Webb, 2009: 3–5). The term has also been conceptualised as a symbolic process that governs humans’ understanding of the world (Kidd, 2016: 3). In Media Studies, representation is commonly used to describe the process of meaning-making or identity construction through media content (Kidd, 2016; Webb, 2009).

This section is dedicated to the deciphering of these two seemingly contentious concepts. The next section discusses the etymology and definition of social construction and its usage in Media Studies. After that, a discussion of representation follows, with the usage of both concepts in media-related studies. Lastly, the application of the concepts in this study is explained, using a conceptual framework with a definition.

2.2.2 Construction: An overview

As stated earlier, media construction stems from Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) notion of the construction of social reality. According to them, “everyday life is ordered in an unconsciously prearranged pattern independent of an individual’s understanding or perception.”. With this, they seek to explain how humans use language in relation to time and social interactions with others to objectify, order and coordinate their understanding or knowledge of everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 34–36). Using the notion of intersubjectivity, they, therefore, posit that even though the world exists as an objective reality, humans impose their own subjective meanings on these objective realities, thereby socially constructing all the physical phenomena around them. This results in the existence of multiple realities which are subject to various meanings and interpretations based on performativity and social interactions among individuals within the social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 37). Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann (1966: 78–84) maintain that the process of meaning-making involves a complex process of socialisation through which individuals internalise the existing meanings of a phenomenon. These meanings are

maintained by society through the process of institutionalisation and legitimation over a period of time.

Similarly, Searle (1995), building on the foundational works of Weber (1864-1920), Simmel (1858-1918), and Durkheim (1858-1917), adopted a binary positionality to delineate between objective and subjective realities. To Searle, social construction is a combination of ontological description and epistemological judgement. Ontologically, intangible or immaterial phenomena are assumed to be subjective, while tangible or material phenomena are said to be objective. From the epistemological perspective, however, the subjectivity or objectivity of phenomena is not determined by the intrinsic quality of the phenomena, but by the virtue of human judgement (Searle, 1995: 7–9). This presupposes that a physical phenomenon can be assumed to be objective when its description or taxonomy is based on its intrinsic features devoid of the interference of men. On the one hand, the same phenomenon can be regarded as subjective when its description is based on its perceived utility. Searle’s attempt at delineating between two forms of realities – objective and subjective realities, also draws attention to the challenge of making a clear-cut distinction between which aspect of the world is socially constructed and which is not.

Taking a philosophical stance, Hacking (1999) described social construction as a process which involves the stimulation of peoples’ consciousness of the world and its various constituents through complex interactions with others within society. He explained that these interactions do not only create awareness in individuals, they also influence how individuals conceptualise themselves and act within their environment. He posited that the application of social constructionism to objects, ideas and individuals, helps to classify as well as reify these constructs. The classifications need not have a single meaning, as social construction involves a series of “taken for granted” social processes (Hacking, 1999: 24–27). Also, more often, social construction research are targeted at challenging identifiable social practices which are needlessly put in place by society. This is often done to draw attention to misconceptions or to evoke change (Hacking, 1999: 6). For instance, using the principles of constructionism, feminists’ have sought to challenge the assumed mutual inclusivity of sex and gender and its attendant influence on gender power imbalances (Hacking, 1999: 7).

Furthermore, to distinguish sex and gender, Haslanger (2017) theorised social construction from four dimensions, namely ideas or concepts, illusion, objects, and kinds. From this perspective, she described social construction as a social intellectual process through which ideas or concepts are formed, as well as a process of reification through which

a hitherto non-existent category is produced. Social construction can be a social categorisation process of all “material objects” into identificatory groups. It can also be a process of social groupings aimed at establishing socially unifying or distinguishing categories within the social reality. Applying this notion to the gender/sex classification, Haslanger (1987: 54–57) asserted that the gender/sex categories are contextual variables that were constructed to categorise humans based on anatomical features and social roles which are mutable (Haslanger, 2017: 165). She argued further that some of the notions about gender are fictional ideas that are not only created to establish gender divisions, but also to perpetuate gender reality. Based on the social constructionist view of gender, Haslanger suggests that social construction can be applied differently to create new gender practices. While Haslanger’s suggestion seems to echo the yearnings of feminist scholars, it will be difficult to completely dislodge existing gender practices, as scholars have noted that “if differences between men and women begin to blur, society’s sameness taboo goes into action” (Rubin, cited by Lorber, 1987: 58).

Lastly, from the perspective of Media and Communication Studies, Leeds-Hurwitz (2009: 892) described social construction as “a process whereby people continuously create, through their actions and interactions, a shared reality that is experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful”. Leeds-Hurwitz did not only reiterate that meanings are co-created and shared through interactions among individuals, she also highlighted the role of repetition in the sustenance and perpetuation of shared meaning. In deconstructing the concept of social construction, Leeds-Hurwitz (2009: 893) noted the centrality of language in the construction of social reality. Language, which is a socially constructed and culture-specific phenomenon itself, is used by people not only to reify the world around them but also to create social categories, as well as to share meanings among their group. Therefore, media as social actors, play a central role in the construction of reality through news and other media contents (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009: 894). Studies which have sought to situate social constructionism within the field of Media and Communication Studies include that of Carter (2013), Gergen (2001), Van de Bulck (1999), Gamson, Hoynes and Sasson (1992), and Adoni and Mane (1984). The concept has also been widely applied to study a vast area of interests such as gender, sexuality, and race, to mention a few (Berkowitz, Manohar & Tinkler, 2010; Risman, 2009; Vespa, 2009; Hacking, 1999; Lorber, 1987).

In this section, I have described the concept of social construction, its origins, and application across different disciplines. In the next section, representation shall be discussed in order to present a working definition of the concepts for this study.

2.2.3 Representation: An overview

As stated earlier, the concept of representation is based on the works of scholars such as Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas. All of them theorised representation from different perspectives, creating a web of complexity around a seemingly common concept. Undoubtedly, the concept of representation has evolved and its usage has expanded, thereby increasing its complexities. The challenge of defining the concept stems from its varied usage and connotations across different disciplines. This is why scholars have called for a cautious approach to its deconstruction to avoid oversimplifying or streamlining the concept (Celis, 2008: 73; Reid, 2007: 198). In the following paragraphs, I shall be discussing the usage of the concept in some fields in the Humanities and Social Sciences within which this study is premised.

The origin of the concept of representation can be traced to the Latin word *repraesentare* which means to “make present again” (Celis, 2008: 72). In one of its earliest usages, representation was used to describe the re-enactment or presentation of abstract or inanimate concepts. However, the meaning of the term began to expand as it found applicability in various disciplines (Celis, 2008: 72–73).

Within the field of the Political Sciences, the concept has been defined from three angles based on its usage within the field. Firstly, as a process of designating an individual to assume a duty, or act on behalf of a principal who is not present (Celis, 2008: 74–75; Birch, 1971: 15); secondly, as a subset of a larger group or population selected by statistical procedures to reflect the traits or characteristics of the larger class to which it belongs; and, thirdly, as the emblematic usage of individuals or symbols to describe a class or a group of people or an abstract entity. Representation as one of the core concepts in Political Science largely focuses on the inclusion or exclusion of individuals or groups in political processes (Celis, 2008: 73). Therefore, representation can be categorised along three dimensions of usage, namely substantive, descriptive, and symbolic representations (Lombardo & Meier, 2014). However, unlike earlier categorisations, Lombardo and Meier extended their conceptualisation of symbolic representation to include discourses. They argued that the inclusion of discourses as agents of symbolic representation will not only provide a means of unveiling the underlying meanings of discourses, but also the possible implications of such

meanings for the group being represented, especially in the case of gendered discourses (Lombardo & Meier, 2014: 10). Furthermore, they argued that the use of humans as agents in the process of symbolic representation gives insight into the discursive construction of gender and its symbolic meanings, as well as the underlying power structures and relations (Lombardo & Meier, 2014: 15). The usage of representation in Political Science is similar in some respects to the usage of the concept in the field of Media and Gender Studies, especially in relation to representation as a descriptor of numerical presence, or a means of signification. This, in a way, is related to the focus of feminist scholarship and activism, especially with respect to the achievement of equality for women in governance and political participation (Omotola, 2007: 35).

From the broad field of Cultural Studies, representation can be described as the “production of meaning through language” (Hall, 1997: 16). This presupposes that representation involves the use of signs, words and all other constituents of language as a means of interpreting or translating one’s understanding of the world. Representation can be said to be the “the link between concepts and language which allows us to refer to either the world of objects, people or events, [and, even] imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events” (Hall, 1997: 17). To do this, representation occurs at two different levels, namely the mental level and the language level. Representation at the mental level involves the use of mental images or concepts which are embedded in our thoughts which help us to organise, interpret and give meaning to the things in the world. The second dimension of representation, in this respect, is the language level. At this level, representation involves the use of signs or symbols to represent ideas or concepts and to exchange meanings attributed to the concepts identified by our mental frameworks or mind maps. The use of language to assign meaning to concepts brings representation within the domain of social constructionism which assumes that humans objectivate, order and coordinate their understanding of the reality through the use of language and social interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 34–36). Furthermore, Hall (1997: 21) noted that “meaning is constructed by the system of representation”. This assertion is based on the argument that the identity markers or meanings assigned to things around us are not necessarily the actual or real meaning of the things. Instead, these meanings are arbitrary choices which are products of sustained “social conventions” which have been unconsciously internalised and taken as the norm over time. There are three distinct theoretical approaches to the study of representation, namely the reflective or mimetic approach, the intentional approach, and the constructionist approach (Hall, 1997: 24–26). The

reflective approach holds that meaning is embedded in the “referent”. Simply put, objects and ideas in the world have inherent meanings which are only reflected or “mirrored” through the process of representation. The second approach, that is, the intentional approach, states that the author or producer of a message “imposes his own unique meaning unto the world”(Hall, 1997: 25). This presupposes that it is individuals who personally determine the meaning of objects and events in the world. Lastly, the third approach, which is the constructionist approach, assumes that meanings are neither inherent in things nor the individuals who conceptualise them. Rather, meaning is constructed using “representational systems” of “concepts and signs”(Hall, 1997: 25–26). Constructionists argue that the production of meaning through representation is more a matter of social conventions than reflexivity or intentionality. This argument is premised on the belief that social actors use their conceptual systems, that is, mental representations and language, to confer meaning on the material world.

Within Media Studies, representation can be approached both as a theory or praxis (Reid, 2007: 198). Theoretically, representation involves the utilisation of philosophical or theoretical approaches to deconstruct and create an understanding of the concept of representation (Reid, 2007: 199). As a theory, representation serves as an interpretive means of understanding the inherent potentials of media content (Alleyne, 2009: 539–540). The theoretical approach to representation is premised on the proposition that a critical analysis of any form of media content could provide insights into the ideological underpinnings of media content. As a praxis, representation involves the use of signs or symbols to describe aspects of reality (Reid, 2007: 198–199). These signs or symbols could consist of texts, visuals, as well as any other mode of signification which can be used to construct or make sense of the social reality (Watson & Hill, 2012). According to Watson and Hill, the complexity of the world around us makes it such that some events or phenomena are not physically perceptible to the human senses. Therefore, people often use physical or perceptible elements around them to interpret or give meaning to the intangible aspects of reality. Even though media representations are simply renditions of reality, researchers have argued that representations influence our perception of reality because it is through them that we make meaning of reality (Watson & Hill, 2012: 259).

Representation, within Feminist Media Studies, has been viewed in relations to politics and language as a means of increasing women’s political visibility and legitimacy as well as the use of language to promote or stereotype women (Butler, 2010: 2). Situating

representation within the precinct of politics and language has enabled feminist scholars to understand the usage of language as a means of creating “exclusion” or “inclusion markers”, especially those through which women have been marginalised and oppressed (Butler, 2010: 164). Representation can be studied within the precinct of ideology perpetuation and hegemony because of the usage of language for creating markers of inclusion and exclusion. More so, the usage of language and symbols for meaning-making or ordering of the social reality is usually fused with latent ideological intentions (Kidd, 2016: 4–5). Ideology can be described as a set of beliefs and values which guide individuals’ consciousness and interpretation of reality (Watson & Hill, 2012). This is usually done through representations which, itself, is a product of ideology (Gunn, 2009: 499). Representations, sometimes, serve as a means for the propagation of ideologies within society (Kidd, 2016: 3; Reid, 2007: 203). Consequently, feminist scholars and activists have sought to analyse the representations of gender within various discourse types to identify traces of gender power play and hegemony.

The interest in the study of gender representation within media stems from the assumption that media representations contain narratives which invariably influence audience perceptions of themselves and their social roles (Kosut, 2012: xx). This is premised on the assumption that gender is socially constructed (Segal, 2005: 45–46), and that media is one of the active agents in the process of gender socialisation. Representations have been observed to contain underlying meanings in relation to gender identity and gender roles (Kosut, 2012: xx). Hence the argument that media shape and influence individuals’ perceptions of reality through mediated or filtered representations of the world, which often form the basis of audiences’ knowledge of reality (Wasserman, 2007: 159). Aside from this, representation is useful in understanding the dearth of women in media content (Kimani & Yeboah, 2011; Wood, 2009).

In the following section, the interrelatedness of media construction and representation will be discussed.

2.2.4 Media construction and representation

While it is not immediately clear when exactly the notion of social construction entered into Media and Communication Studies, the term, however, had already gained so much prominence within the field of Media and Communication Studies by the late 1990s that scholars sought ways to expand the usage of the concept within the field (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2016: n.p). This is because communication and interaction, which is central to social

construction, is at the heart of Media Studies (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009: 891–894). As Adoni and Mane (1984: 327–328) rightly pointed out, mass media play a vital role in stimulating and moulding peoples' awareness of everyday life by blending different levels of reality, namely objective, symbolic and subjective forms of reality, with social elements, based on direct experience. Also, media, through its various messages, do not only teach values, ideologies and beliefs, they also provide a frame of reference through which people interpret the world (Kidd, 2016: 3–8). Therefore, it will be apt to refer to media as active agents in the construction of social reality (Wasserman, 2007: 259).

Unlike gender construction, the study of gender representation in media could be traced back to the Second Wave Feminism in the 1970s when feminist activists, especially in the Western world, began to realise the potentials of media as a means of influencing peoples' perception of gender (Buonanno, 2014: 8). Since then, scholars have sought to understand how different segments of society and media interact. Feminist scholars and activists are concerned with how media contribute to the process of gender construction through the portrayal, or representation, of presumed socially acceptable gender roles and norms which are central to the formation of socially acceptable gender identity (Wood, 2009: 31–36). Studies on gender and media have focused on understanding how media space is negotiated in the process of the construction of the female/male identity dichotomy.

In Media and Communication Studies, construction and representation are terms that have been used interchangeably to quantify or describe the coverage and portrayal of certain individuals, issues, events or phenomena (Kidd, 2016: 8). This might be because, within Media Studies, both construction and representation deal with the process of creation or re-enactment of social reality through methods of selection, coding and decoding, stylistic variations, as well as an active arrangement of elements which come as close as possible to the media's perception of the idea which they are trying to convey (Watson & Hill, 2012: 259). Construction and representation are concepts which have been synonymously used in Media and Journalism Studies in relation to gender as a means of analysing media coverage, or the portrayal of events, or people (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015; Oyinade *et al.*, 2013; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a).

Representation has also been used to represent the frequency of coverage or prominence given to an individual, group or event by the media. When representation is used as a numerical descriptor in a study, such studies usually focus on a quantitative evaluation of a phenomenon in the media. Some of the studies on representation have been targeted at

examining the (in)visibility of women politicians in the media (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Ouahidi, 2018; Humprecht & Esser, 2017; Ross, Evans, Harrison, Shears & Wadia, 2013; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a; Blackwood, 1983). Conversely, when representation is used as a qualitative descriptor, such studies examine the themes and frames embedded in media content (O'Brien, 2014; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Lundell & Ekström, 2008). Representation at this level goes beyond the analysis of the denotative meanings of media texts; rather, it involves an examination of the underlying meanings which might be suffused with ideological undertones (Hall, 2011: 24).

As stated earlier, the concepts of construction and representation have various connotations across different disciplines which are sometimes different from its usage within Media and Journalism Studies. Yet, for this study, the two concepts will be used synonymously to describe the nature of the media portrayal of the subject under study, that is, women in political leadership positions. The perceived relationship between the two concepts is described in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Diagrammatic representation of the relationship between media construction and representation (Source: author's model as developed by her personally based on the discussions)

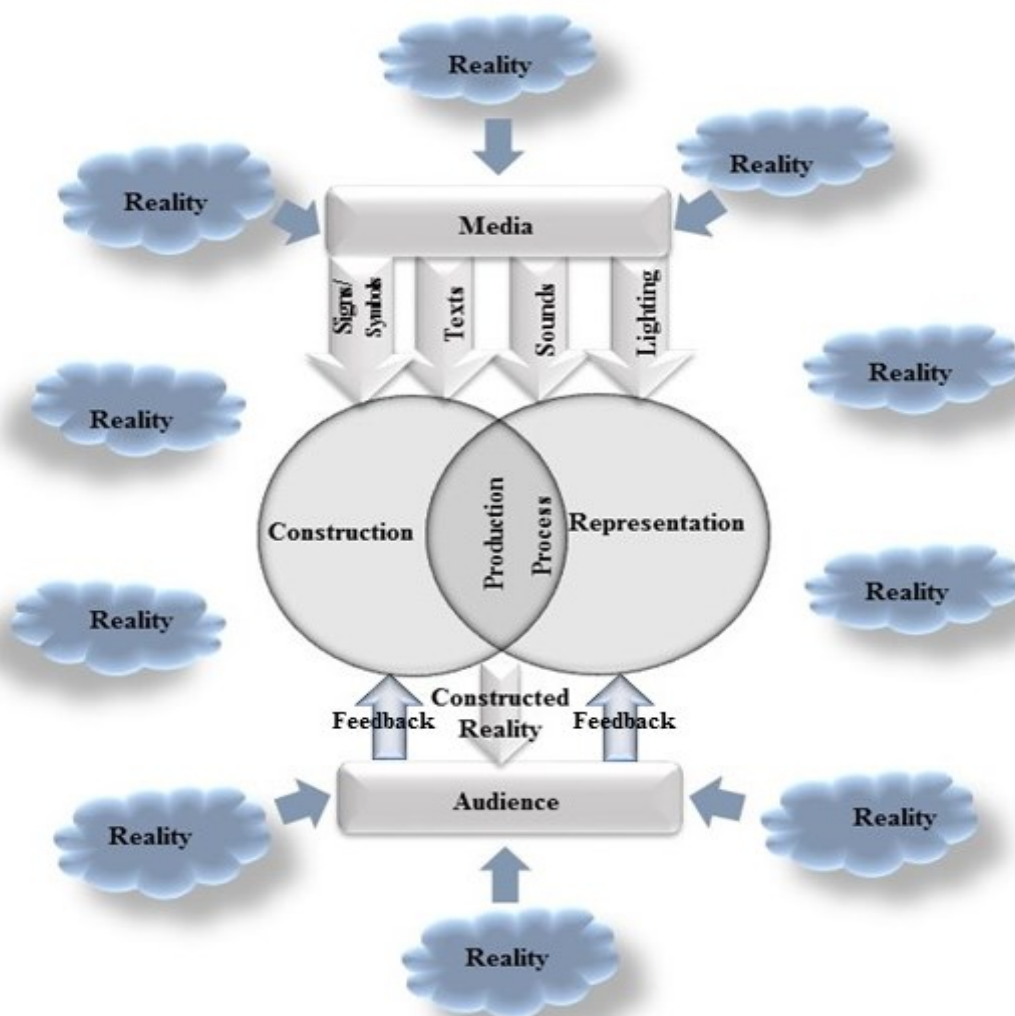


Figure 2.1 displays a schematic representation showing the interplay between construction and representation in the media as I have modelled it for myself, based on extant literature as discussed. As can be seen in the diagram, media, and their audiences, are entities within reality or the real world. This assumption is based on the argument that the existence of humans and society is mutually constitutive (Berger, 2013: 31). Berger's assumption is premised on the belief that humans draw from society, as well as their mental frame of reference, to form their knowledge of the world and to negotiate reality (Berger, 2013: 34–35). Aside from this, the diagram shows that media as entities within the social reality draw ideas (perceptions) from the reality around them. These ideas are then interpreted by the media, using a combination

of signs or symbols, texts (written or spoken language), sounds (music or sound effects), and other elements which they consider suitable to represent and construct their messages within their socio-cultural contexts (Carter, 2013: 11). These elements are combined in the production process to construct or represent the aspect of reality which the media had earlier perceived (Watson & Hill, 2012). The production of media contents involves a complex blend of processes through which the media select, interpret and construct aspects of the physical world which interest them (Parry-Giles, 2000: 210). It is important to note that the production process is guided by several factors, among which are professional guidelines and organisational policies, news determinants, the audience wants or needs, and prevailing socio-cultural practices and orientation, as well as economic and political policies (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2014: 9; De Beer & Botha, 2007: 232–233; Altheide, 1984: 480). Lastly, the output of the production process that is “constructed reality” can be regarded as a representation or the mediated version of reality which the media relay to their audiences (Watson & Hill, 2012; De Beer & Botha, 2007). This assumption is confirmed by Carter (2013: 3) who asserted that “the act of making news is the act of constructing reality”. Although the media’s central function is to help their audiences make sense of reality through constructions and representations (Watson & Hill, 2012), the audiences also receive the message within a specific frame of reference which is based on their perceptions of reality (Carter, 2013; Gamson *et al.*, 1992). This to some extent determines how media audiences perceive and interpret the message they receive from media. Also, audiences’ perception and interpretation of media messages often determines their reactions of feedback to the media.

Therefore, based on the assumption that humans’ perception or knowledge of reality can be objectified using mutually understood signs and symbols or language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 85–86), I submit, firstly, that construction and representation are interwoven because both concepts involve the use of language and social interactions to make meaning and create an understanding of the social reality (Hall, 2011; Wasserman, 2007: 260). Secondly, I base my argument for the conflation of construction and representation within this study on the assumption that the use of conceptual systems and language, as means for the construction of reality, places the two concepts within the same precinct (Berger, 2013: 31–46; Wasserman, 2007: 261; Hall, 1997: 28).

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, these two concepts are used interchangeably and are defined as the conscious selection and use of signs, symbols, texts, graphics and other

related elements which are considered appropriate to depict different aspects of reality within media discourses.

I will now proceed to discuss the concepts of gender and (political) leadership.

2.3 Gender and (political) leadership

This study aims to understand media construction and representation of women in (political) leadership positions. After discussing construction and representation as well as their application within this study, the next pertinent concepts are gender and political leadership. These are discussed in the following sections. I first attempt a broad description of gender and leadership, after which specifically political leadership is discussed in relation to gender.

2.3.1 Gender: An overview

Gender, like other concepts in the Humanities and Social Sciences, is a contentious concept which has been approached from divergent points of view (Thompson, 2001: 72–90; Hawkesworth, 1997: 650). The two major standpoints on the definition of gender have been mentioned in Chapter One, section 1.2.1. Although gender was initially viewed as a synonym for sex differences, it has been redefined within the Humanities and Social Sciences to include more nuances than a single study can fully explore (De la Rey, 2005: 6).

Within the Humanities and Social Sciences, gender has been conceptualised as a social construct, system of stratification and social structure for distinguishing between the two dominant sexes (Berkowitz *et al.*, 2010: 132–133; Wood, 2009: 20–30; Lucal, 1999: 782). As a socio-cultural classificatory system, gender, feminists have argued, is less about sex distinction than the imposition of identities and location of groups within a system of social relations (Haslanger, 2017: 165). Gender identity and relations are usually established and internalised through “socially guided” “interactional” and micropolitical processes which are meant to naturalise certain gender norms and social practices, differentiating such practices as masculine and feminine (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 126–129). This process of naturalisation of gender norms often perpetuates gender stereotypes and sustains patriarchal ideologies (Darling-Wolf, 2009: 430). To this end, feminists have sought to examine all sites of ideological perpetuation – one of which is the media. They do that usually to understand some underlying social practices through which women have been marginalised and excluded.

Gender is also an analytical category in feminist scholarship because of its centrality in the struggle for the emancipation of women from societal injustices rooted in gender differences (Budgeon, 2014: 317; Butler, 2010: xiv; Hawkesworth, 1997: 650–651). Historically, women have been denied some rights and privileges within society because of their sex, which is considered inferior to that of men. The need to challenge such hegemonic patriarchal ideologies led to the formation of the First Wave feminist movement through which women at the time advocated equal rights for women and men in some aspects of society. Gender is, therefore, a useful analytical category in feminist scholarship for examining gender power imbalances which exist in various spheres of societal life.

It has been argued that gender goes beyond the binary conceptualisation of masculinity or femininity to many overlapping areas within the continuum and that there is no universality to the struggles or experiences of women (Butler, 2010: 5; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Luce, 1999). Within this study, I use gender to refer to the socio-category of men and women with a specific focus on women as the category of interest. This is based on the argument of Haslanger (2017: 161), namely that the category women can be described as a social kind, or single group, which consists of people who situate themselves among societal practices of femininity.

In the next section, I shall present an overview of the concept of leadership.

2.3.2 Leadership: An overview

Leadership is a universal phenomenon necessary for the survival of humans and the effective running of human society (Storey, Hartley, Denis, 't Hart & Ulrich., 2017: 433; Elgie, 2015: 1; Keohane, 2010: 3). For centuries, scholars have sought to define leadership from various perspectives based on the works of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, and W.E.B. Du Bois, to mention a few, who laid the groundwork for the modern study of leadership (Wren, Hicks & Price, 2004: xiii). Fundamentally, leadership involves the act or process of leading a team or a group of people to achieve a common goal (Watson & Hill, 2012: 155).

Traditionally, leadership is perceived as an innate ability which comes through the possession of some traits such as intelligence, sociability, confidence, persistence, courage, and dominance (Campus, 2013: 11; Northouse, 2009: 4; De la Rey, 2005: 5). This approach presumes that leadership is a natural ability which is acquired at birth. Therefore, personal attributes such as confidence, ambitiousness, and assertiveness are some of the stereotypical

features of ideal leaders. When an individual is lacking in these features, such is presumed to be lacking in leadership qualities. Leadership has also been viewed as an art, a craft, and an act of spiritual practice which is associated with hierarchical positions and control or domination (Storey *et al.*, 2017; Kezar, Carducci & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

Central to the concept of leadership is the concept of power which is often used to influence or gain social control (Kezar, Carducci & Contreras-McGarvin, 2006; Campus, 2013). Given the centrality of power to the traditional conception of leadership, it is not surprising that the traditional attributes associated with leadership include strength, force, or authority – all of which are considered “masculine” attributes (Storey *et al.*, 2017; Campus, 2013; Keohane, 2010). It is surmised that such an approach to the notion of leadership might be responsible for the bias against women’s ability to be effective leaders (Campus, 2013: 12–14). The traditional view of leadership is such that men are assumed to be “naturally born leaders”, and are, therefore, socialised to take charge of domains of public discourses, while women are brought up to take care of the home and family. Aside from this, the socialisation process is such that women are trained to be reserved, compliant, caring and submissive, compared to men who are socialised to dominate and control (Liu, 2019: 13; Gillet, 2004: 540). Therefore, men tend to personally seek out leadership positions in order to continually exercise dominance. Women, mostly, shy away from leadership, although women are becoming more aware of the need to participate in public leadership. Still, the ideological bias which Drew, Moore, Siemienska and Vianello (2000) referred to as “organised patriarchy” against women, seems difficult to fully dismantle – also why a study of this nature is still necessary after decades of women’s struggle for equality in leadership representation.

Having given a general overview of gender and leadership, in the next section I shall be discussing political leadership in relation to gender.

2.3.3 Gender and political leadership

As stated in the preceding section, men have always had an advantage over women in terms of leadership. Before the advent of modern democracy, men have always been preferred to take up leadership positions, while women have been marginalised (Carli & Eagly, 2001: 633). Globally, only a few women were able to attain public leadership positions before the 19th century; the majority of these women got the positions because of the unavailability of male candidates for such positions at the time (Campus, 2013: 11; Jensen, 2008: 1–2; Drew *et al.*, 2000: 6). It is not surprising then that even though women constitute more than 50% of

the world's population presently, there are far more men than women in leadership positions (United Nations, 2015b: 119–120). The question then follows: Is it because women are unfit to hold leadership positions? What is the association between gender and leadership? And is the imbalance in leadership representation between women and men a result of longstanding gender stereotyping?

The first question can be answered relatively easy. Even though past ideological and socio-cultural beliefs viewed women as being biologically ill-equipped for leadership (Jensen, 2008: 4–10), the presence and performances of women in various leadership positions across the world is a simple proof that this assumption was wrong. From an academic perspective, the plethora of studies on gender and leadership provides another answer (Spark & Corbett, 2018; Inal, 2017; Lundell & Ekström, 2008; Omotola, 2007; Swers, 2001; Moen, 1995). Studies have shown that women have the same capability for efficiency, or ruthlessness, in leadership, as the case may be, as their male counterparts (Campus, 2013: 19). The major challenge for women, however, stems from social-cultural beliefs and norms which downplay women's ability based on their gender (Ayman & Frame, 2004: 550–557).

The second question raised above borders on the association between gender and leadership. This calls to mind the assumption that individuals' gender impacts their leadership style, and, invariably, the effectiveness or otherwise of their leadership. The veracity of this claim is still subject to debate. While some scholars have opined that there is a relationship between gender and leadership, as the former influences the latter, others have opposed the notion of a correlation between the two constructs (Campus, 2013: 14; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001: 782). The first thread of argument is based on assumptions that leadership traits are inherent. Therefore, biological differences are thought to be a major distinguishing factor in peoples' ability to lead, and their leadership style (Campus, 2013: 12; Spary, 2007: 103; De la Rey, 2005: 5–6). Also, this perspective presupposes that all individuals within similar gender groups would exhibit similar leadership traits (Keohane, 2010: 127). However, scholars have argued that differences in leadership traits are more rooted in socialisation processes and life experiences than biological notions of gender (De la Rey, 2005). Although women in leadership positions are known to adopt transformational or interactive leadership styles, which is different from the authoritative leadership style of men (De la Rey, 2005), this does not make them less effective leaders (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001: 795). The less confrontational, non-aggressive and more participatory nature of women's leadership style is considered more advantageous to the effectiveness of women in leadership positions

than the authoritarian style adopted by most men (Campus, 2013: 15–21). As stated earlier, another school of thought proposed that women do not differ from men in leadership style and behaviour. From this point of view, the assumption is that women in leadership positions sometimes conform to existing male leadership traits to function effectively in leadership positions (Campus, 2013: 11; 264 Spary, 2007; De la Rey, 2005: 8). Whatever the case may be, the argument is that women, just like men, can successfully assume leadership positions and discharge leadership duties effectively.

This, therefore, leads to the last question. Is the imbalance in leadership representation between men and women a result of some longstanding gender stereotyping? Despite years of struggle for gender parity in political leadership representation across the world, it is undeniable that significant disparity still exists globally between women and men in leadership positions across different sectors of society (Baxter, 2018: 4; Laher, 2014: 103; Carli & Eagly, 2001: 629). According to certain scholars, leadership is usually defined in purely masculine terms (Baxter, 2018: 5). Aside from this, attaining leadership positions is largely dependent on the desire of followers to yield or grant power to the leader (Spary, 2007: 265). This observation underscores the importance of the perceptions of the followers about people vying for leadership positions. The lack of adequate representation of women in leadership positions across the world, therefore, shows that attainment of leadership positions is still mediated by gender norms. As scholars have noted, globally women and men favour men over women in political leadership positions as women leaders are usually stereotyped deviants of traditional gender norms (Liu, 2019: 13; Bierema, 2016: 125). This is because most of the stereotypes militating against women's political participation stem from traditional gender norms about gender roles. While some of these longstanding stereotypes are not always negative, it is observed that gender stereotypes often undermine women's leadership potentials (Campus, 2013: 6).

Having described the concept of gender and political leadership, women and political participation from a global and local perspective will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 Women and political participation: A global overview

It is generally believed that, in most countries, men dominate women in terms of representation in leadership and decision-making positions (Suleiman, 2017: 15; De la Rey, 2005: 4; Carli & Eagly, 2001: 626). Therefore, saying that women have been subverted or subjugated in society when it comes to leadership both in the corporate and public-sectors

will not be an overstatement. As referred to earlier, the term “glass ceiling” was coined to explain men’s domination of leadership positions and women’s inability to rise above a certain boundary in the hierarchical leadership structures in the corporate and public spheres (Stainback & Kleiner, 2016: 110; Jensen, 2008: 7). In most countries of the world, women continue to be underrepresented, both corporately and politically (United Nations, 2015b). Despite decades of struggling for emancipation and inclusivity, globally, it is still a challenge to shatter the metaphoric “glass ceiling” which has kept women relegated and excluded from major decision-making positions, especially in the political sector. Twenty five years after the implementation of the Beijing Declaration, women’s parliamentary representation across the world has reached 24.9% while only 6.2% of heads of government are women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). The pace of women’s progress in the quest for gender equality lends credence to the assumption that gender parity in political representation is still a global challenge.

Despite gaining the right to vote through the women’s liberation movements in the 19th century, women’s struggle for equal representation in political participation is yet to bring about the parity which women seek. For instance, even though the United States elected its first female congressional representative in 1916 (Lawless & Pearson, 2008: 67), the country is yet to have a woman head of state more than a century later. Although the number of congresswomen in the United States has increased since then, Hillary Clinton, who would have been America’s first woman president, narrowly lost in the 2016 general elections. Similarly, the United Kingdom, despite having its first woman Prime Minister in 1979, did not have another female head of government until 2016. Women in the United Kingdom, despite constituting over 50% of the country’s population, are also yet to attain gender parity in political representation. Women’s political representation in the country as of 2010 was 22%. It only increased to 33.85% in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020b: 8). From the foregoing, it is evident that even in some advanced democracies women still experience disproportional political representation compared to men.

In Africa, just like in some other parts of the world, women have been largely underrepresented in politics and public affairs. Although there are records of women who have held leadership positions in monarchical capacities, it was not until the 1990s that women began to have visibility in political leadership positions in some African countries (Tripp, 2007: 1). This period marked an upsurge of African women seeking greater participation in the politics and governance of their countries through party nominations for

elective positions at the national levels. Women like Agathe Uwilingiyimana, former Prime Minister of Rwanda (1993 – 1994), Specioza Wandera Kazibwe, former Vice President of Uganda (1994 – 2003), and Ruth Perry (Chair of the Council of the Liberian State in 1996 – 1997), set a precedent by becoming the first “non-monarchical” female head of an African state in their respective countries (Tripp, 1999: 2). Even though most of the past attempts made by African women to attain political leadership positions were unsuccessful, women have not relented in the pursuit of their vision for greater political participation and power-sharing on the African continent.

Part of the efforts of African women for gender equality is the call for the implementation of international statutory instruments on human rights and gender equality, such as CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration. As a result of this, more African countries have moved up the gender equality ladder in political participation (Tripp, 1999: 21–22). Although, in the 1960s, the African continent as a whole had the lowest representation of women in parliament (Tripp, 1999: 2), presently, some countries on the continent have not only caught up with but have surpassed the global gender benchmark on women political representation. Countries such as Rwanda, with a total of 61.3% and 38.5% in the lower and upper legislative houses, has the highest number of women in parliament on the African continent, and indeed the world. This is followed by South Africa with 46.5% and 37.7% in the lower and the upper legislative houses. Senegal, which runs a unicameral legislative system, also falls within this league with 43.3%. Another country with a high percentage of women in parliament is Namibia which has 42.7% in the lower house, while the upper house consists of only 19.5% women. The Mozambican single house of legislature also has 41.2% women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020a: 3, b: 8). A further breakdown of the Inter-Parliamentary Union report shows that six other African countries, namely Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and Angola have at least 30% women representation in parliament. While some African women are gaining more ground in their campaign for gender equality, statistics emanating from other African countries show that women in some parts of the continent are still largely underrepresented in political leadership.

Furthermore, the Inter-Parliamentary Union report (2020a: 3–9) shows that there are 41 African countries among the 132 countries which fall below the 30% global benchmark. In terms of appointive positions, statistics also show that women are still highly underrepresented in ministerial positions across the African continent, with only 12 countries reaching the 30% global benchmark (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020c: n.p). Not only are

women marginally represented in political leadership positions, when they get appointed into ministerial positions they are also mostly assigned portfolios related to social issues (United Nations, 2015d: 119, c: 30). Presently, Ethiopia is the only African country with a female Head of State (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020c: n.p). Nigeria, the focus of this study, has consistently been among the African countries below the global benchmark for gender representation, with 5.6 and 6.5% of female representation in the upper and lower house of legislature in 2017 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2017: 13; United Nations, 2015d). The country which was previously ranked 181 out of the 193 countries on the global political empowerment ranking scale in 2017, slipped further down to 185th position on the ranking scale with 3.6% and 7.3% women in the lower and upper house of parliament respectively (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020b: 9; World Economic Forum, 2017: 13). It is evident that gender disparity regarding political participation still constitutes a major challenge for women in many countries on the African continent.

In this section, I have discussed the participation of women in political leadership positions from a global perspective. In the next section, I shall be discussing women's political participation in relation to the specific focus of this study, namely Nigeria.

2.5 Women and political participation in Nigeria

As in other parts of the world, it is clear that Nigerian women have been discriminated against and marginalised in the political sphere. As stated earlier, Nigeria is one of the African countries with the highest gender disparity in political participation (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017, 2020b; World Economic Forum, 2019). The underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics might create the impression that the marginalisation of women in governance and public affairs have a longstanding cultural undertone (Adefemi & Agunbiade, 2019: 1–2; Agbalajobi, 2010: 78–80). However, scholars have sought to disprove such assumptions. It has been argued that the exclusion and subsequent marginalisation of Nigerian women in politics and other public decision-making positions stem from the colonial indirect rule, which foisted on the country a gender ideology which undermined women's leadership potentials contrary to the "indigenous gender practices" from different parts of the country at the time. Under colonial rule, Nigerian women were largely denied the privilege of participating in governance and public decision making (Suleiman, 2017: 23–24; Nnaemeka & Korieh, 2011: 14–21; Pereira, 2010: 74). Literature evidence has shown that women were better represented in governance and public affairs before the colonisation of Nigeria (Egwu,

2015; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013; Mama, 1995). For instance, women like Queen Amina of Zauzau, Queen Moremi of Ife, Queen Emotan and Queen Idia of Benin, Omu Okwei of Ossoromari, Princess Inikpi of Igalaland and Iyalode Efunsetan of Ibadanland, were among the few women who distinguished themselves in public leadership in the different kingdoms that eventually made up the country (Oloyede, 2016; Eme, Onyishi & Nwaoha, 2014; Olufemi, Ighodalo, Igbokwe, Justine & Chukwuemeka, 2012; Afigbo, 2011). Scholars posit that colonialism heralded reduced participation of Nigerian women in governance and the resultant dominance of men in the political sphere (Egwu, 2015; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013).

It is unarguable that the colonialists' government set the structure for sustained marginalisation of women in politics and public decision-making as women in the country were not fully granted franchise until twenty years after the expiration of colonial rule in the country (Pereira, 2010). Women in the southern parts of Nigeria were the first to be enfranchised in 1949 while their counterparts in Northern Nigeria got the right to vote in 1979 (Suleiman, 2017: 26; Eme, Onyishi & Nwaoha, 2014: 8; Pereira, 2010: 82). It is, therefore, not surprising that at Independence in 1960, Nigeria had a single woman in the parliament in the person of Chief Wuraola Esan. One year later, another woman, Mrs Margaret Ekpo, won a seat at the Eastern Region House of Assembly (Egwu, 2015; Eme *et al.*, 2014; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013). During this period, there was no woman among the 312 members of the lower parliament, while women in the predominantly Muslim North were still disenfranchised (Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013). From that time, Nigerian women did not have another chance at political leadership until 1983, when another woman, Franca Afegbua, became the only female among the 100 parliamentarians at the time (Oloyede, 2016; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013).

Shortly after Afegbua was appointed, a military regime came into power which began the official allocation of quotas for the representation of women in governance (Eme *et al.*, 2014). The allocation of quotas led to the appointment of at least one woman on state executive councils across the 19 states in the country at the time. However, no woman was appointed to decision-making positions at the federal level (Eme *et al.*, 2014: 9; Mama, 1995: 45–46). From 1983 to 1999 Nigeria was under military rule which had no interest in gender equality. Therefore, Nigerian women had no representative at the central government, aside from the wives of the Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces. Since these were not constitutionally recognised, most of these military “First Ladies” were initially silent and

docile on the rights of women and related issues. However, Maryam Babangida changed the status of the office in 1987 when she inaugurated the “Better Life for Rural Women Programme” which converted the erstwhile ceremonial post of the First Lady into a vibrant office championing the cause of Nigerian women across various socio-economic divides. Maryam Babangida’s initiative served not only as a rallying point of political participation for Nigerian women, but also as an eye-opener on the need for the hitherto stifled voices of women to be heard in the places of decision making (Ezumah, 2010: 195–196; Mama, 1995: 47–50).

The return of Nigeria to democratic governance in 1999 allowed Nigerian women to be actively involved in politics and governance (Ette, 2017: 1480). However, contrary to expectations, Nigerian women continued to be met with opposition to their participation in politics. For example, in 1999, out of the 8 574 total elective positions from the federal to ward level, only 116 (1.4%) women got elected (Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013: 94–95). The higher concentration of these women was at the state and local government levels with only 10 women parliamentarians out of the 469 available seats at the National Assembly. In the 2003 general elections, again, out of the 8 638 elective positions, about 347 (4.1%) women won elective positions from the federal to the ward level. During this period, the number of women in the national assembly had increased from 10 to 25 out of the 469 elective positions. There was an insignificant numerical increase in 2007 during which 355 (4.1%) women got elected out of the 8 604 total elective positions in the country. Available data for 2011 showed that women won 101 out of 1496 positions from Federal to state-level (Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 285–286; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013: 95–97; Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013: 41; Pogoson, 2011: 108–110). In 2015, however, 82 (5.5%) women were elected between the federal and state levels (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018). It is evident that since the inception of the Fourth Republic, that is, 1999 till date, female political representation in Nigeria has not only been fluctuating, but indeed, Nigerian women are still way behind in attaining the stipulated percentage of 35% of female representation as contained in the Beijing Declaration and Nigeria’s National Gender Policy.

Meanwhile, scholars have sought to understand the underlying causes of the persistent underrepresentation of Nigerian women in politics and public decision-making positions. The following are some of the identified causes:

- socio-cultural practices and gender norms which favour men as leaders and authority figures above women (Oyewole & Olisa, 2017: 23; Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 286; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013: 101);
- financial incapability (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018: 202; Quadri, 2015: 15; Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013: 45; Pogoson, 2011: 113–114);
- the volatility of the Nigerian political environment (Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 287; Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013: 101);
- systematic bias against women within political parties (Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 287);
- stigmatisation and misconception of women in politics as social deviants (Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 287; The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2006: 37); and
- lack of support from other women (Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 288).

Lastly, one area which is seldom considered as constituting an impediment to women's political participation in Nigeria is the media.

Although the media have been accused of perpetuating patriarchy and gender role stereotypes, the common arguments only focus on the (in)visibility of women politicians compared to their male counterparts, with little consideration given to the role of media in the promotion or subordination of women in politics through media framing (Oyewole & Olisa, 2017; Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 288; Pogoson, 2011: 102). Meanwhile, studies which have examined the impact of the media in Nigeria on the underrepresentation of women in politics have focused on the quantity of coverage given to women, rather than the subtle nuances in media content on women politicians (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Ette, 2017; Ojebode, 2013). Research has shown that media bias⁷ against women transcends quantity of coverage into the quality or tone of coverage, which can also impinge on public perception of women politicians, and, invariably the success of women politicians (Eberl, Wagner & Boomgaarden, 2016; Hayes & Lawless, 2015; Hooghe *et al.*, 2015; Campus, 2013: 39–43; Skalli, 2011; Robertson, Conley, Szymczynska, Thompson, 2002; Lawless & Fox, 1999).

Premised on the assumption that media are highly influential in shaping the public's understanding of political issues as well as serving as an avenue for citizens to form political opinions or set agendas through public discourse (Ette, 2017: 1481), I consider it pertinent to

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examine the Nigerian media's construction and representation of women political leaders to identify stereotypical themes which could impinge on Nigerian women's political participation.

2.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented and defined the two fundamental concepts to this study, namely media construction and representation. I have also given an overview of gender and (political) leadership, as well as the state of women's political participation from the global and local context. The next chapter focuses on a review of relevant literature on media construction and representation of women in politics.

Chapter 3

Literature review

A man enters public life and not the slightest attention is paid to the fact that he is a man. A woman runs for office and there is more interest in the fact that she is a woman than in her qualifications for the job she seeks. It is then she learns how tenacious the tag woman is[,] how palpably she is a woman, how completely shackled by her sex ...

– Pratt, cited by Braden, 1996: 31

3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a review of literature relevant to this study, namely the media portrayal, coverage and reportage of women politicians. Portrayal, coverage and reportage are terms that have been used synonymously for construction and representation studies in media (see Chapter Two, section 2.2.4). The studies that will be reviewed are inclusive of the media portrayal of women politicians from different socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, this review is grouped into two sections, namely studies from the Global North and studies from the Global South. Firstly, the section focusing on studies emanating from the Global North is presented, while studies from the Global South are discussed in the second section. This was done to systematically provide a background for establishing the bias against women politicians within media as a global challenge as well as to provide a brief overview of studies in the local context on which this research is built. The categorisation will also aid in the mapping of contextual variations and similarities that exist among the reviewed study.

The literature search for this study included using online search engines to identify relevant extant literature on media construction and representation of women politicians, as well as the other key concepts, as discussed, relevant to this study. Especially, the researcher made use of online catalogues through the Stellenbosch University Library to search for available literature. The search was executed six times with different search strings which are synonymous to the key concepts of this study, namely media construction and representation. This was done to ensure that a higher number of relevant texts could be found. The searches yielded results from the online repositories *EBSCOhost*, *Scopus*, *JSTOR*, *Sage Open*, *Elsevier*, and *Taylor & Francis*. *Google Scholar* was also used for general searches. I also set up alerts on *Google Scholar* to keep abreast of developments in the field. Lastly, my search also

included using the *Google* search engine for “grey”⁸ literature from different websites. This was done to locate other useful resource materials that were not indexed by the scholarly library databases and online repositories to complement the resource material for this study.

The following are key phrases used for the literature search:

- “Media representation of female politicians”
- “Media construction of women in politics”
- “Media portrayal of women in politics”
- “Media reportage of women in politics”
- “Media coverage of women politicians”
- “Media framing of women politicians”

The initial search on the Stellenbosch University Library online catalogue yielded a total of 21 638 results comprising of books, journal articles, theses and dissertations, which were streamlined using the titles and abstracts of the articles to judge for relevance. The literature search was carried out over a period of three months spanning June to August, 2018. Meanwhile, additional materials were sourced based on updates received through *Google Scholar* alerts and suggestions from colleagues. The high number of sources yielded by the literature search attests to the fact that media and gender is a vibrant research area which is still generating high academic interest over a mostly three-decade period (O’Neill & Stewart, 2009).

3.2 Media portrayal of women in political leadership positions

3.2.1 Introduction

The importance of media to a successful political campaign or career cannot be underestimated. Most voters do not have the opportunity of meeting with politicians in person and as such rely mostly on media reportage on politicians (Devitt, 2002: 445). Media also serve as interpretive platforms through which citizens engage with politicians and the political process (Adcock, 2010: 138); hence the assumption that media play a pivotal role in influencing voters’ perceptions, which could be either in favour of or against a political

⁸Grey literature consists of “non-peer reviewed sources such as reports, theses, dissertations, conference literature, [and] popular literature”, to mention a few (Okoli & Schabram, 2010: 19).

candidate (Eberl *et al.*, 2016: 1–2; Funk & Coker, 2016; Eshiet, 2015: 136). Although the extent to which media influence voters' perceptions of political candidates is still a subject of scholarly debates (Hayes, Lawless & Baitinger, 2014: 1205–1209; Campus, 2013: 122–125; Bligh *et al.*, 2012: 588–590), the importance attached to media coverage is such that politicians assume that any mention in media is worthwhile because it enhances public recognition of such politicians (Braden, 1996: 2). Media is not only influential in setting the agenda for members of the populace, but very effective in shaping the public's perceptions of issues, events and people (Ouahidi, 2018; Watson & Hill, 2012). The relationship between media and politicians can be described as that of “mutual dependency and mutual loathing” (Ross *et al.*, 2013: 7; Mavin, Bryans & Cunningham, 2010: 557). Given the centrality of media to politics, more attention has been focused on media portrayal of politicians to understand the dynamics of media discourses on politicians, and how this seemingly powerful tool can be harnessed to enhance the prospects of politicians. This is especially so for women who have been consistently underrepresented in politics and public decision making as well as in media reportage. Needless to say, media is very powerful in entrenching the ideologies of dominant groups within society (Darling-Wolf, 2009: 429). Therefore, scholars have redirected their attention into understanding how media have promoted and sustained (deliberately or inadvertently) structures of patriarchal ideologies which have ensured the continued subjugation and marginalisation of women within society (Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012: 422–423; Tuchman, 2000: 150–151).

In the following sections, I shall be reviewing studies on the portrayal of women politicians across various media. The review shall be subsumed under two broad headings, namely Studies from the Global North and Studies from the Global South, as explained earlier.

3.2.2 Studies from the Global North

Studies of media portrayal of women have a history spanning about four decades. One of the earliest studies is that by Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Walker Bennet, leading to their seminal work being published in 1978 in which they coined the term “symbolic annihilation” to describe the biased portrayal of women in media based on sex-role stereotypes (Humphrecht & Esser, 2017: 440). In their study, Tuchman *et al.* argued that continued objectification and denigration of women by the media have a potential influence on people, particularly young women's perceptions of women as being inferior and less

important than men (Tuchman, 2000: 160–168). This is premised on the argument that media play a central role in the socialisation of individuals within society (Campus, 2013; Collins, 2011). Years after this ground-breaking study several studies on media portrayal of women in various sectors of society have been conducted to understand the dynamics of media representations in relation to the persistent gender imbalance in media content across various social contexts. Some of these studies, specifically studies focused on the portrayal of women politicians, are reviewed in the following paragraphs.

From the United States, studies analysing media portrayal of women politicians have argued that even though women politicians in the country are being given equal opportunity for coverage, they are treated differently in media compared to their male counterparts (Atkeson & Krebs, 2008; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). These differences include disparity in the quantity of coverage given to women as opposed to men, as well as the nature or quality of such coverage. Although few studies have reported that women politicians in the United States are given an equal amount of coverage compared to men during certain election campaign periods (Devitt, 2002; Bystrom, Robertson & Banwart, 2001; Smith, 1997), these studies still confirmed the existence of gender stereotypes in media reportage of women politicians. For instance, women politicians tend to receive more attention in terms of their sex, marital status and children (Bystrom *et al.*, 2001: 2009), while in other cases their personality traits and appearance are significantly highlighted by media (Devitt, 2002: 449). Other studies from the United States have also shown that media sexually objectify women politicians, sometimes by portraying them as young and attractive, or old and unappealing, as was the case with media portrayal of Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton (Funk & Coker, 2016; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). It has been argued that the cumulative effects of the persistent sexual objectification of women politicians in relation to other factors within the socio-political system can have potentially negative influences on voters' behaviour or their perception of candidates (Funk & Coker, 2016: 446; Campus, 2013: 58). Aside from this, laying undue emphasis on a female candidate's sexuality at the expense of more serious discussions relating to the offices the women vied for, is one of the ways in which women are being subjected to gender double bind. It has been noted that women in public leadership positions can be negatively evaluated for either exhibiting masculine leadership traits, or for exuding their femininity (Baxter, 2018: 137; Campus, 2013: 58).

Another finding from studies in the United States which resonates with other studies of female political candidates is the “dutiful wife/mother” stereotype. This is another cause of

gender double bind for candidates who were not only framed in relation to their familial roles, such as good wives and mothers, but are quizzed on their ability to effectively juggle homemaking with public office, without one affecting the other negatively (Campus, 2013: 94). This is similar to Lee's (2015: 215) "perfect woman" trope as used by the Hong Kong media which described the perfect female public official as one who can effectively cope with domestic chores and official duties "without breaking". The "dutiful wife/mother" stereotype still evokes the gender double bind as in the case of Hillary Clinton who had a proven track record of work and family balance, yet was still constructed as a mean and calculative mother by the American media (Campus, 2013: 71; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009: 332–335). Studies have also shown women politicians in the United States are sometimes dehumanised or vilified for trying to conflate gender roles by expressing themselves as efficient home-makers and competent political leaders (Ritchie, 2013: 114–115).

The gender double bind women politicians are subjected to is such that women politicians are also vilified and mocked for a display of emotions that can be typically considered feminine (Curnalia & Mermer, 2014). Related to this is the "outsider" trope which is a result of framing politics in purely "masculine terms", which perpetuates the notion that politics is a masculine domain (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a: 210). The masculinised notion of media and politics is thought to be rooted in the longstanding exclusion of women in media and politics which has resulted in the utilisation of purely masculine rhetoric within both fields (Meeks, 2013b). Framing women as outsiders in male-dominated fields could have both positive and negative implications. Firstly, it could evoke imagery of a "broad-based societal or organisational change" (Adler, 1997: 187), especially in times of economic or political crises (Jensen, 2008: 45–46). Secondly, the outsider frame could deny women politicians agency and cause voters to question the competence of female candidates for a political position (O'Neill, Savigny & Cann, 2016: 303; Rich, 2016: 102). Furthermore, Gidengil and Everitt (2003a: 572–573) observed that not only are political news framed in confrontational terms according to journalistic conventions, but the media pay more attention to women politicians' display of emotions than men. The scholars argued that paying undue attention to confrontational behaviour in women politicians could translate to more visibility for women politicians. However, such coverage further reinforces the stereotype of gender role incompatibility (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003b).

Furthermore, in a study of female politicians in Hong Kong, Lee (2015) while acknowledging the existence of negative media coverage of female politicians, argued that

the utilisation of gender stereotypes is a means of foregrounding or granting visibility to female politicians in Hong Kong. Scholars have argued that even though gender stereotypes might appear harmless, the overall implication of “benevolent sexism” might be inimical to peoples’ perceptions of a woman’s skills and competences (Ramos, Barreto, Ellemers, Moya & Ferreira, 2018; Campus, 2013). Similarly, Lündell and Ekstrom (2008), in a complex visual analysis of media portrayal of three women politician’s political scandals, offered a more nuanced interpretation of media content which transcends the conventional belief of stereotypes often involving foregrounding the femininity of women politicians. They argued that the gendering of women politicians in the media could sometimes involve unflattering visual representations which are meant to evoke sympathy or condemn the subject (Lundell & Ekström, 2008). This can also be related to the ambivalent sexism notion in which the media further entrenches gender stereotypes and inequalities, whichever way women are portrayed (Ramos *et al.*, 2018; Campus, 2013). Lee’s study also revealed that even though women politicians in Hong Kong are not vilified by media for publicly displaying feminine vulnerabilities, they get negative media coverage when they are entangled in political controversies.

In another study, O’Brien (2014) evaluated some of the frames in the Irish national media’s representation of women’s engagement with politics in the 2011 Irish general election. The study revealed that despite constituting about 50% of the Irish population, women are marginalised and framed out of the Irish political discourse as they are seldom seen or heard in media discussions on politics within prime-time Irish national television. The study further revealed that the few women that made it into the media space were constructed as appendages to male political leaders and were always side-lined from discussions of hard or technical issues in which men are considered to be the experts (O’Brien, 2014: 506). This is congruent with the observation of Mavin *et al.* (2010). The results of O’Brien’s study also showed overwhelming domination of women politicians by their male counterparts, a study that showed more evidence of the perceived universality of the underrepresentation of women political leaders in media.

Lünenborg and Maier (2015: 192), in their evaluation of media representations of German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and her (then) male challenger, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, observed that not only does gender continually constitute a central part of political reporting, but that the political discourse is still prevalently masculinised by the German media. Aside from this, the use of various descriptors to mark the candidates’ gender and

personal characteristics served in a way to uphold the traditional gender dichotomy which placed each candidate within the context of their gender – thereby marking Merkel as an outsider in the political process (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015: 193). This is similar to the findings of Gidengil and Everitt (2003a) on the side-lining of women in politics through masculinised political discourse in the media. Unlike Ritchie (2013), Lünenborg and Maier observed that Merkel was not denigrated for exhibiting a masculine leadership style and personality traits – implying that the gender double bind did not apply in the case of Merkel and that emotional detachment might be effectively utilised by women to enhance their political viability without derision or denigration, albeit that it could be context-dependent (Campus, 2013).

O'Neill, Savigny and Cann (2016) examined the visibility and extent of coverage given to women MPs by the media in the UK. Their study focused on four key areas of media coverage: The quantity of coverage received by women, the nature of coverage given to women compared to men, the frequency of coverage, and the difference or progression in coverage across time (O'Neill *et al.*, 2016: 298). Their study revealed that women MPs in the UK became less visible in the media across the two decades of a data sample, while male MPs consistently enjoyed higher visibility in the UK media. The findings also revealed that, as women's participation in UK politics increased, the nature of coverage given to women changed to intense scrutiny and personal focus on women MPs' lives, compared to that of men. Although the researchers identified a number of reports on women which had a neutral non-sexist stance, however, in the majority of the articles, women were objectified, infantilised and denigrated. O'Neill *et al.* concluded that the nature of coverage given to women by the UK press confirms the notion of politics being an exclusively male domain.

Eberl, Wagner and Boomgaarden (2016) analysed the contents of six Austrian national newspapers to determine the effects of media bias on audience perception of political leaders. In the study, Eberl *et al.* combined three data sources, namely media articles, press releases and panel surveys to examine the changes in voters' perception of candidates' traits over a six-week election campaign period. They focused their study on the effects of three types of media biases, namely visibility bias, tonality bias and agenda bias on voters' perception of political candidates' traits, such as competence, leadership, integrity and empathy. The findings of their study revealed that voters adjusted their assessment of candidates' competence and assertiveness in relation to the visibility and tonality of media coverage of

political candidates. Their study confirms that media bias affects voters' perceptions of political candidates' viability (Liu, 2019: 14–15; Robertson *et al.*, 2002: 115–116).

Although Eberl *et al.*'s study claim to have established effects of media bias on voters' perception, the extent to which gender stereotypes influence voters is still subject to debate (Liu, 2019: 13). It is important to note that Eberl *et al.*'s study did not attempt to distinguish the extent to which the identified bias impact each gender group. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain how such bias would play out in relation to gender.

In another study, Lachover (2017) analysed Israeli media's reportage of leading and peripheral female political candidates. Her study revealed that the leading candidates were not only prominently featured in the Israeli media, but they were also mostly given gender-neutral coverage. The peripheral candidates, on the other hand, were not only underrepresented, but media reportage about them was highly gendered. Lachover further observed that although media did not adopt gender stereotypes in their reportage of the leading politicians, the women themselves utilised the media in constructing a gendered image which is consistent with accepted societal gender norms to improve their chances of winning the elections. Although Lachover's findings are slightly different from what has been reported in other studies, it points to the fact that media are not solely responsible for the stereotypical representation of women, as women themselves fall back on societal gender norms to promote their causes or endear themselves to their electorates (Campus, 2013: 27).

Lastly, findings from a cross-national study of six Western countries have shown that gender inequality in political news coverage has been carried over into online news publications in which women are given less coverage than men in political news stories even though their opportunity to be quoted is lower (Humprecht & Esser, 2017). The researchers utilised a three-level predictor approach, namely story, organisational, and country-level predictors, to determine the difference in media coverage of men and women. Their study revealed that men dominated women in straight news,⁹ with a specific focus on political affairs. The researchers, therefore, postulated that women are more likely to be featured in highly opinionated media items. Aside from this, women are likely to be given more coverage in popular media which rely more on visual representations and gender stereotypes. Women received more coverage in countries with a high degree of gender inclusivity compared to countries with high masculinity values. In all, the research revealed that there is a correlation

⁹ These are factual, concise, and objective news stories which are usually a direct and unopinionated account of events and occurrences.

between the dominance of masculine values and the underrepresentation of women in political news (Humphrecht & Esser, 2017). While the persistent global marginalisation of women in public life can be attributed to a complex interplay of socio-cultural barriers, it is unarguable that the media is pivotal in shaping traditional perceptions of gender which has kept women at the margins of public life (Norris & Arbor, 2007: 12–13).

3.2.3 Studies from the Global South

Having discussed some of the studies on the media portrayal of women politicians from the Global North, this section shall focus on a review of studies from the Global South. Although there is a paucity of literature on media coverage of female politicians from the Global South, still, studies emanating from the Global South have also established the existence of bias in media coverage of politicians as usually biased towards female politicians. It is noteworthy that most of the studies emanating from the African continent have basically focused on the quantity of coverage given to women generally, and specifically to women in politics, compared to their male counterparts, with only a few examining the underlying meaning in content of the media articles.

Yeboah and Kimani (2011), in a study of the Ghanaian media to ascertain how women are prominently featured in news by six Ghanaian newspapers, revealed that women are less quoted as news sources compared to men. In relation to the percentage of presentation of each gender as news sources, the researchers found that there was no significant difference between men and women quoted as experts and spokespersons by the media in the study sample. Lastly, in photographic appearances, the findings of the study revealed that there is an insignificant difference between the number of times male news sources appeared alone in photographs compared to women. In terms of the degree of prominence given to women as news sources, the findings of Yeboah and Kimani are consistent with that of other studies (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Hooghe *et al.*, 2015; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a) in which it was established that women have fewer chances of being quoted as news sources compared to men. However, in terms of the difference between men and women being quoted as experts and news sources, as well as appearances in photographs, their findings contradict the findings of Pozzi (2012) who affirmed that women have more tendency to be represented pictorially in media than men. While the differences in the findings of the two studies might not be unrelated to the contextual variation in the studies, it is also likely due to the difference in the focus of the researchers. Lastly, Yeboah and Kimani argued that, although women are

marginalised by the media, the marginalisation exists only in the numerical representation of women as news sources, rather than the prominence they receive within the news.

Similarly, Thuo (2012), in a study of female parliamentarians in Kenya, revealed that the female MPs were given fewer media coverage and less prominence compared their male counterparts, as most of the stories about them were placed in the inside pages of the newspapers. As in other studies, Thuo identified the influence of social-cultural gender norms in the women MPs' interaction with the media. Another study emanating from Africa is the comparative study of African and international media reports on former Liberian president and the first elected female African Head of State, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and George Weah, the incumbent President of Liberia, who was Johnson-Sirleaf's political opponent during the 2005 Liberian election campaign (Anderson, Diabah & hMensa, 2011). The researchers argued that not only was gender made central in the media reportage of Johnson-Sirleaf, but the majority of the bias identified in their study were also from foreign media. That is not to conclude that the African media are objective in their reportage of women politicians; however, the veracity of this claim is yet to be verified by other studies.

Unlike most of the studies from the Global South, Akinwehinmi and Ojebode (2012), whose study of print media portrayal of women political aspirants during the 2007 and 2011 general elections in Nigeria indicated that even though women were underrepresented in the media, the coverage given to them was positive. Akinwehinmi and Ojebode's study revealed that the media portrayed women aspirants as competent rather than incompetent. They also reported that women aspirants were portrayed more as "professionals and leaders" than as "layabouts and followers". The dissimilarity between the findings of Akinwehinmi and Ojebode's study and most of the other studies emanating from the Global South is understandable, considering that it might be a result of a difference in theoretical perspective or ideological inclination. While most of the other studies utilised a combination of gender/feminist and media perspectives, Akinwehinmi and Ojebode adopted a pure media perspective, specifically, utilising the Ambiguous Mirror Theory which proposes that media reflect vague and ambiguous images of phenomena which already exist in society. The major argument of this thesis is that media are incapable of creating a culture or an image which does not already exist in society (Akinwehinmi & Ojebode, 2012: 91; Loevinger, 1969: 289–291).

In an evaluation of media representation of a former Argentinean president, Cristina Fernandez Kirchner, Van Dembroucke (2014) identified three recurrent themes in which the

Argentinean media represented the president. Firstly, the researcher observed that Kirchner's capability to rule effectively was subverted as the media repeatedly portrayed her as a "political puppet" who could only do the bidding of her husband. Despite Kirchner's prior political experience, media denied her agency by framing her as unable to personally make rational decisions or sound judgment without the support of her husband. This is similar to the findings of Carlin and Winfrey's (2009) study in which Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin were framed as being dependent on the male politicians promoting their campaigns. This also confirms the assertion that the media tend to cast female politicians in the shadows of their husbands (Campus, 2013: 103). Secondly, Van Dembroucke also observed in her study that media transitioned from framing Kirchner as an unstable and emotional woman, to portraying her as a cold and icy widow when she started campaigning for re-election after her husband's death. This theme confirms the gender double bind stereotype identified by other scholars (Campus, 2013; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). Lastly, in consonance with what was reported in other studies, the Argentinean press also fixated on Kirchner's appearance, from her hairstyle to her make-up and clothes. Such portrayals can be prejudicial to public perceptions of the viability of a female politician. As scholars have noted, when media focus on a female politician's personality, people's attention tends to be shifted away from her political skills and competence to her character dispositions (Bligh *et al.*, 2012: 580).

Regarding the focus of this study, Eshiet's (2015) analysis of Nigerian media reportage of political scandals involving former Speakers of the House of Representatives in Nigeria revealed that not only was the reportage gendered, but the case involving the female Speaker was also sensationalised, while her competence as a politician was trivialised compared to her male counterpart. This corroborates the assertion of O'Neill and Stewart (2009) that women politicians are usually subjected to more severe criticism from the media than their male counterparts. In another study, Ette (2017) analysed media reportage of four female politicians in Nigeria during the 2015 election campaign. Her study revealed that not only were the women given minimal attention by the media, they were also represented as "political outsiders" who lacked the competence required to effectively handle the office the women were contesting for. Aside from undermining the women's competence, the study also revealed that the achievements of the women were also trivialised by the media.

In the same vein, Ojebuyi and Chukwunwike (2018) evaluated media coverage of the 2015 election campaign in which Nigeria had its first female presidential candidate. Their study revealed that media coverage of the campaign was gender-biased. Firstly, in terms of

prominence, the two male presidential candidates were given more prominence by the media than the only female contestant (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018). While both male contestants had their stories on the front and back pages of the newspapers, the female candidate had none. Secondly, the study revealed that the female presidential candidate had only 1.4% of the total media articles published in the three newspapers analysed, while the remaining 98.6% was divided between her two male opponents. The researchers argued that the media in Nigeria relegated the only female presidential candidate through the systematic application of media frames as seen in the placement of stories, space allocated to stories, as well as the format of stories in which each of the political candidates was featured. These studies did not only highlight the marginalisation of Nigerian women in politics, they also showcase the gendered nature of media coverage of women politicians in Nigeria. Also, these studies confirm the role of the Nigerian media in the promotion of gender bias and the entrenchment of patriarchal ideology in Nigeria.

In another study, Oladapo (2019), in a study of the representation of women in politics in nationhood contestations in selected Nigerian media, observed that not only were women marginally represented, but the only woman who was represented was also denigrated compared to the men in the same media discourse. Oladapo concluded that newspapers' exclusion of women's voices in the media space indicates that newspapers in Nigeria are gender-blind and committed to the preservation of male hegemony in Nigeria. Although the studies reviewed did not directly establish the relation between stereotyped media portrayal and the success or otherwise of women in politics, the studies, however, have revealed that sexism, bias, and gender stereotypes in media coverage of female and male politicians is still a global challenge. This is not to disprove the relationship between biased media coverage and the underrepresentation of women in politics. However, one can only assume their interrelatedness until strong empirical evidence is presented.

In addition, the studies from different parts of the world that were reviewed also showed that media across the world exhibit various degrees of gender bias against female politicians, possibly because of the differences in socio-cultural contexts, ideological leanings and social practices. However, one can conclude that no matter how subtle it may seem, media across the world still exhibit sexism and gender bias in their coverage of women politicians.

3.3 Recurrent themes in the media portrayal of women politicians

This section contains a discussion of identified themes in the media portrayal of women politicians from different studies.

Braden's (1996) study of female politicians in the United States has revealed that stereotypical and biased portrayal of women by media is a longstanding social challenge. Some of the themes evident in Braden's study at the time include sensationalisation, trivialisation, novelty, or first-female trope, political outsider, and objectification, to mention a few. Over twenty years after Braden's study, women politicians in the United States, and, indeed, around the globe, are still subjected to biased media coverage as evidenced in the preceding section. Some of the recurrent themes in media representations of women politicians will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.1 Sensationalisation

Studies have shown that women politicians have often been completely ignored by media and, in cases where they were given coverage, their involvement in politics have been sensationalised with the media paying more attention to aspects of their femininity, while trivialising their competence (Campus, 2013: 54–78; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a: 560). While some of these stereotypical media coverage are outright hostile, the others that seem “friendly” are denigrating endearments (Ross *et al.*, 2013; Braden, 1996). Scholars have opined that when media continuously portray women in leadership positions as anomalies or intruders, members of the public are wont to view them as such, thereby subverting their real intent in participating in public office and governance (Braden, 1996: 2). Although it has been argued that most times, media portrayal of women are not deliberately done to denigrate female politicians, however, studies have shown that media perspectives on women in politics are mostly guided by the guidelines for determining what is newsworthy which, themselves, were enacted by men (Braden, 1996: 11). Therefore, to make their stories “catchy” to their audiences, media most often end up sensationalising stories about women in politics by either using the novelty theme to frame stories just to foreground such women's activities as an oddity or unusual occurrence in relation to their gender or by amplifying women's errors (Braden, 1996: 123).

3.3.2 Appearance

Another dimension of portrayal that is prevalent in the media is the undue attention paid to female politicians' physical appearance, which is not usually the case with that of male politicians (Funk & Coker, 2016; Campus, 2013: 22–38; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). A sub-focus of the media's focus on female politicians' appearance is either as emphasising or de-emphasising their femininity. The media either blow up the candidates' feminine features to foreground their vulnerability and make them appear weak or downplay female politicians' femininity to the extent of villainising them by conferring on them hyper masculinised features (Ritchie, 2013; Lundell & Ekström, 2008). Scholars have also argued that the media sometimes focus more on women politicians' looks than their professional or academic background, competence, or political ideologies (Funk & Coker, 2016; Anderson, Diabah & hMensa, 2011). Similarly, studies have also shown that women politicians are less likely than men to be given direct quotations in news articles (Adcock, 2010). Even though some scholars have disputed the extent to which appearance influences voters' perception of politicians (Hayes *et al.*, 2014), others have argued that excessive focus on female political candidates' appearance or attractiveness could impinge on public perceptions of a female political candidate's credibility or likability (Lizotte & Meggers-Wright, 2017; Campus, 2013; Bligh *et al.*, 2012).

3.3.3 Personality/Name-calling

Studies have highlighted the media's use of sexist or gender-specific tags such as “bitch”, “Iron lady”, “mad hatter”, “busy bee”, “Ice queen”, and “bad mother” as descriptors for female politicians' attitudes (Curnalia & Mermer, 2014; Lundell & Ekström, 2008; Anderson, Diabah & hMensa, 2011). Research has shown that the media sometimes resort to describing women politicians using deprecating appellations, which allude to their femininity (Mavin *et al.*, 2010). As noted in previous studies, sometimes these names are outrightly meant to malign, while other times, they are used as endearments by “media men”. Irrespective of how such names are used, scholars have pointed out that such name-calling tends to have a reductionist effect on the public's perceptions of female politicians (Braden, 1996; Lundell & Ekström, 2008: 899; Walsh, 2015).

3.3.4 Trivialisation

Another visible frame in media portrayal of women politicians is the “pet/children” stereotype in which the candidates were framed as the weaker sex who needed the protection of a male surrogate to attain success in their political career or as puppets in the hands of men (Campus, 2013: 46; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009: 336). This trope is consistent with findings from studies conducted in the UK where women politicians were referred to by the media as “Blair’s babes”, “Gordon’s gals” and “Nick nymphets” (Mavin *et al.*, 2010: 563). Such “infantilisation” tropes have not only been regarded as trivialising, but also disempowering and marginalising for women politicians (O’Neill *et al.*, 2016: 301; Campus, 2013: 74).

3.3.5 Social-cultural gender roles

Furthermore, studies have shown that women politicians are usually portrayed by media with respect to their gender roles and family relations or marital status (Anderson, Diabah & hMensa, 2011; Campus, 2013). For example, media usually portrays female politicians in respect of their traditional gender roles as housewives, mothers, caregivers or homemakers, to a mention a few. In some instances, female politicians are reported to have suffered serious setbacks in their campaigns when the media hold them responsible for the misdeeds of family members, whether husband or children. Unmarried, divorced or widowed women seeking public office are not spared from this “observed media brutality”, as they are also often portrayed as being incompetent on the account of their marital status (Braden, 1996: 101–119). It must also be said that the gender role stereotypes are not always used in the negative, as shown by the studies of Lee (2015: 214–216) and Campus (2013: 94–98), which indicated that media may utilise gender role stereotype to gain public support for women in politics by highlighting their conformity to certain societal gender role expectations, or their ability to competently combine traditional gender roles with their political career. With such portrayals, media promote women in politics by showcasing the dynamism of perfect womanhood along the trajectories of motherhood, wifehood and career among others.

3.3.6 Novelty/first female

The “novelty” or “first-female” stereotype is another dimension of stereotype to which women are subjected in media. Studies have shown that women have always been treated as “novelties” in politics, based on the longstanding assumption that women’s rightful place should be at home, where they are expected to be caring for their husbands and children

(Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012: 425; Adcock, 2010: 146–148; Braden, 1996: 8–10). This might explain why even up till today women are still being considered as “novelties”, not only in politics, but also in most other leadership positions outside the home considered to be male-exclusive turfs.

Most of the identified gendered themes in the media coverage of women politicians have subjected women to what scholars have referred to as the “gender double bind” in which women are placed in a comprising situation for deviating from, or conforming to, societal gender norms (Campus, 2013). For instance, when women display feminine vulnerabilities or emotions, they are portrayed as incapable of taking tough leadership decisions because they are naturally tender-hearted. The situation is even more tricky, as women who have tried to distance themselves from the weakness of emotions associated with femininity have often been branded by the media as cold and calculating, or emotionally detached, which is “unfitting” for women (Walsh, 2015; Curnalia & Mermer, 2014; Ritchie, 2013; Lundell & Ekström, 2008). With this longstanding stereotypical media coverage, women have been constantly faced with the challenge of having their actions misconstrued. Therefore, women have had to “perform a balancing act trying to show themselves as assertive without being aggressive, committed without being emotional, confident without being pushy, and attractive without being too sexy” (Braden, 1996: 66).

Also, the argument that the biased or stereotypical portrayal of women by media may not be a conscious or deliberate act to undermine women may be plausible to an extent because, despite years of research highlighting the influence of stereotypical media coverage on women in politics, the problem persists (Anderson, Diabah & hMensa, 2011). A plausible reason for the persistent stereotypical portrayal of female politicians by media may be the existence of established rules of practice guiding the conduct of journalistic practice globally (Montiel, 2015; Ross *et al.*, 2013). These rules, as argued by Braden (1996), were put in place by men in the male-dominated media space through male-centred perspectives. Therefore, even women that find themselves in the journalistic profession, find themselves unconsciously adopting the masculine language of media and politics as a result of professional convention. Hence, the persistence of gender bias in media.

In conclusion, the reviewed studies have established that media hold women politicians to different standards of evaluation compared to their male counterparts in political leadership positions. It is also evident that biased or stereotypical presentation of women politicians in media could diminish, trivialise and influence how women in politics are

perceived by voters (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003b). Hence the persistent call for objectivity and fairness in media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions because of the perceived influence of biased media content on (young) women's perception of women's participation in politics and the overall success of women in politics (Fox & Lawless, 2011; Braden, 1996). This is important, considering the assumption that media exert significant influence on public opinion and perception of issues.

3.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed extant literature relevant to this study, namely media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. The review has been subsumed under two headings, namely studies from the Global North and studies from the Global South. In the next chapter, I present a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings for this study.

Chapter 4

Theoretical framework

Journalists, like everyone else, understand the world through a largely unconscious frame or pattern that help structure new experiences and ideas ... journalists may not be aware of the way their perspectives can unconsciously work to shape their conception of the news ...
– Braden, 1996: 10

4.1 Introduction

As stated in the preceding chapters, studies from different parts of the world, including Africa, have shown that the media's portrayal of women has always been stereotypical. This is especially so for women politicians. Studies have shown that women in politics tend to be given more biased coverage compared to male politicians (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Hooghe *et al.*, 2015: 395; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009: 112; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a: 560). This study, therefore, analyses media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria, with the following aims:

- to understand how Nigerian women holding political leadership positions are constructed and represented in selected news media;
- to ascertain whether the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions;
- to understand whether the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions changed between 2007, 2011, and 2015; and
- to examine the opinions of journalists and stakeholders in gender-related fields on the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria.

To achieve the foregoing aims, this study is hinged on three relevant theoretical points of departure, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, and Feminist Theory. Because of the qualitative approach adopted for this study, the selected theoretical approaches are considered relevant because they offer a means of understanding the inherent meanings of media contents while regarding such as social constructs with underlying ideological and social power contestations. By combining these theories, the researcher's intent is not only

that the theories serve complementary purposes, but also that they provide an all-encompassing means of identifying and analysing how women are constructed and represented by the media in Nigeria.

The selected theories are discussed in the following sections, in the order in which they are listed. In discussing Feminist Theory, reference will also be made to feminism and the various ideological paradigms, or waves, that exist within the concept to provide context.

4.2 Framing Theory

This section first discusses the theory and how it has been applied to Media and Journalism Studies in previous studies, as well as its relevance to this study.

Framing Theory is an interdisciplinary model which has found immense relevance within the Social Sciences and Humanities (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010: 2; Van Gorp, 2007: 60; Druckman, 2001: 226; Entman, 1993: 51). The theory has roots in two distinct fields, namely Sociology and Psychology (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 53). Generally, within both fields, the concept of frames and framing has been used in two ways. Firstly, it is used as a psychological process for describing how individuals perceive, understand and interpret a given situation or phenomenon. Secondly, it is used as a sociological process to describe how individuals use words, phrases and presentation styles differently to communicate or disseminate information (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 57). These two usages of framing, which have been referred to as frames in communication and frames in thought (Borah, 2011: 247; Druckman, 2001: 227–228), presuppose that framing is central to human interactions, as frames guide the process of production and consumption of communication contents.

From the psychological perspective, the concept of framing emanated from Jean Piaget's theory in the 20th century in which he compared frames to Immanuel Kant's concept of schemas. Piaget (1976: 14) described schema as "the figurative aspects of thought [or] attempts to represent reality without altering it". A schema has also been described as any diagram, pattern, outline, or representation of objects or constructs which can be taken as the general (Qin, 2015: 167; Danesi, 2009: 261). The basic function of a schema is the preservation and organisation of information within the human thought. It serves as a framework or as building blocks for information retrieval, and perception of new pieces of information (Watson & Hill, 2012).

From the sociological perspective, the concept of framing was first advanced by Erving Goffman in his seminal work *Frame Analysis* which was first published in 1974

(Schram, Ruckert, Labonte & Miller, 2016: 160; Qin, 2015: 167; Borah, 2011; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009: 115; Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 56). Goffman described frames as subjective definitions or interpretations of situations which are based on social principles of organisation (Goffman, 1986: 10). Goffman's concept of framing underscores how individuals organise their experiences of reality using primary frameworks which he describes as schemata of interpretation. Through the schemata of interpretation, individuals give meaning to an aspect of reality or an occurrence which would have been meaningless (Goffman, 1986: 21).

From the media perspective, Gitlin (1980: 6) defined framing as the “principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters”. Gitlin's work focused on media framing processes in relation to the process of political ideology formulation and perpetuation. A widely cited definition of framing within media studies is that of Entman (1993: 52), which stated that framing is the process of “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in communication content in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described”. Similarly, Durham (2001) described framing “as an exercise in the construction of meaning [which] codifies some social experiences or voices into discrete units of social meanings known as ‘frames’”. Framing within media, therefore, involves what is reported in media, as well as how media shape and present an event or situation to their audience, using predetermined themes or “frames”, as well as how media audiences perceive and interpret media messages (Watson & Hill, 2012: 105; De Beer & Botha, 2007: 239).

Also, other scholars within the social sciences have not only sought to define the concept but also to understand:

- the interrelationship between framing and other media effects theories (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007);
- its effect on political communication and public opinion (Wagner & Gruszczynski, 2016; Matthes, 2012; Druckman, 2011; Chong & Druckman, 2007);
- its role in the construction of social reality (Carter, 2013; Van Gorp, 2007);
- the theory has also been applied to understanding gender “power play” in the discursive construction of women in politics in media across various contexts vis-à-vis “visibility, dominance, and gendered mediation” in media (Ojiakor, Nkwam-

Uwaoma, Tubo, & Okalla, 2018; Oyewole & Olisa, 2017; O'Neill *et al.*, 2016; Wright & Holland, 2014; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Devitt, 2002; Bystrom *et al.*, 2001); and lastly

- as a methodological approach in feminist research (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010), to mention a few.

From the constructionist perspectives, framing is an interactive process through which journalists and their audience construct their knowledge of social reality (Carter, 2013; Van Gorp, 2007: 70). This conception of framing underscores the role of the media and their audiences as co-constructors of meaning (Watson & Hill, 2012). The social construction notion of framing seems to suggest that both the media and their audiences might have a similar frame of reference in their interpretation of reality. Even though scholars have argued that media frames guide a receiver's understanding of the world (Carter, 2013: 10), the frames embedded in communication content may differ from the frames of interpretation applied by the recipients (Druckman, 2001: 246; Entman, 1993: 56). This implies that the interpretation of media messages may sometimes be at variance with the meaning of the message intended by media.

An understanding of the concept of framing as it relates to media is important because it aids the study of media content by creating an understanding of the operation of media in the selection and dissemination of events and occurrences competing for attention within our social milieu (Entman, 1993: 55). Through framing, media practitioners, using a set of prescribed guidelines, select elements which they consider suitable to represent an aspect of social reality which they intend to portray, and then present the message in a manner which they consider as most effective (Watson & Hill, 2012). Framing is pivotal to any analysis of media content because framing is not only at the core of the process through which media interpret and define reality, it also helps in describing the power of a communicating text (Watson & Hill, 2012: 105; Entman, 1993: 51). Besides, framing cannot only eliminate voice, but it can also weaken arguments, and implicitly favour a particular argument or ideology (Tankard, 2001). The promotion of a particular thread of argument at the detriment of other possibly contradictory arguments places the concept of frame building in media within the precinct of ideology and hegemony (Watson & Hill, 2012: 122; Chong & Druckman, 2007: 111; Durham, 2001: 126).

Also, an understanding of the process of framing is useful in explaining the difference in angles of the reportage of events in media. In so doing, framing helps to foreground the nuances or “richness in media discourse” (Tankard, 2001: 96). Angles of reportage or media perspectives of issues often differ among media organisations because, in addition to universal principles or conventions guiding media practice, there are policies and guidelines from government and the media organisations themselves, as well as social-cultural norms which influence media reportage (Braden, 1996: 3–11). Consequently, media tend to give salience to some aspects of reality through inclusion or exclusion of issues, events or people in media content. Unarguably, the aspects of the social reality promoted by media might not only gain popularity, but it might also influence audiences’ perception of the phenomena, while aspects that are not included in the news might be relegated or considered unimportant (Borah, 2011: 248). Aside from this, the choice of words used to represent an idea or occurrence, and the degree of prominence given to the communication content are some of the factors that create distinction in frames employed by the media (Entman, 1993: 52). Furthermore, scholars have argued that the existence of divergent views, otherwise referred to as competing frames, in the media does not only serve the role of inclusivity and power play, but may also help to mitigate the effects of framing on media audiences (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993).

According to Entman (1993: 52), framing takes place at four locations in the communication process, namely:

- the communicator,
- the message/text,
- the receiver, and
- culture.

The communicator, in this case, the media, as stated earlier, deliberately determine what to disseminate to their audience, albeit, sometimes, with unintentional bias. According to De Beer and Botha (2007), framing involves “the selection of certain thematically related news attributes for inclusion on the media agenda, when a particular news object is reconstructed and represented as news report”. This shows that news articles or media contents do not just appear in the media. Rather, they are carefully selected with a predetermined purpose. After

making the selection of what goes into news,¹⁰ they select different elements with which to represent or convey their messages to their audience. Although it has been argued that several factors such as political actors and other policy influencers within society have an impact on prevalent news frames, research has shown that journalists and editors also take some decisions that may not be congruent with the intention of political actors (Lawrence, 2010: 265). To achieve the desired effect through framing, journalists have to select and give salience to frames that are congruent with the audiences' existing schemata (Watson & Hill, 2012).

The second element is that of the message or text. Framing within media texts involves the inclusion or exclusion of certain communication elements such as words, phrases, sentences, images and sources of information which reinforce certain themes (Entman, 1993: 52). The selection of these elements is guided by several factors relating to professional conventions, guidelines, formats and presentations (Watson & Hill, 2012).

The third location of framing within the communication framework is the audience or receiver (Entman, 1993: 52). Studies have shown that frames have both micro and macro effects. At the micro-level, prevalent media frames can influence peoples' attitude or perception individually, while at the macro level it can influence social processes, political socialisation and public opinion (Vreese, 2005: 52; Druckman, 2001: 225). Although earlier studies on framing effects assumed that "framing has a common effect on a large portion of the receiving audience" (Entman, 1993: 54), scholars have argued that media audiences are not passive receptors of media messages as they are framed by journalists (Matthes, 2012: 250). Rather, media audiences interpret the received message(s) based on their own frame of reference (Druckman, 2001: 246). These divergent views on the effects of framing on media audiences make it evident that framing is a complex process which may, sometimes, influence media audiences (Druckman, 2001: 246–247). This does not presuppose that framing does not influence. Rather, it is an indication of the complexity of framing. As Druckman (2001: 246) rightly pointed out, "framing effects are remarkably complex, sometimes they work and sometimes they do not".

Lastly, framing within communication can also be located within culture. According to Entman (1993: 53) "culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames". This presupposes that culture serves as a basis for common thinking and shared meanings. Culture also serves

¹⁰ News is used in this study as a generic term for all forms of media reports, such as straight news, editorial, commentary and opinion articles.

as a “bedrock” for knowledge and meaning creation, as well as a means of comprehending the world around us (Hall cited by Van Gorp, 2007: 61). Aside from this, invoking culturally familiar concepts or elements within media frames also create a sense of familiarity with the promoted media message among the audience (Borah, 2011: 250).

One of the strengths of Framing Theory is that it serves as a means of analysing several research areas within the communication process, such as the production process, content, and probable effects of media content on audiences (Matthes, 2012: 247; Vreese, 2005: 51; Entman, 1993: 51–52). The importance of framing within media presentations of news and events, therefore, cannot be overstated. This is especially so with political news in which the promotion or relegation of certain aspects of reality has been noted to influence audiences’ perceptions or reactions. This may explain the interest of politicians in media promotion, or neglect, of issues (Entman, 1993: 55). As Pan and Kosicki (1993: 70) rightly noted, “choices of words and their organisation into news stories ... hold great power in setting the context for debate, defining issues under consideration, [and] summoning a variety of mental representations ...”. This underscores the power inherent in media framing of issues and events and its relevance to public perception and the success of political candidates (Braden, 1996). The use of a dominant or resonating frame by the media have been observed to, sometimes, influence policy as well as public opinion (Entman, 1993: 55).

Therefore, within this context, and for this study, an analysis of the frames invoked by the media in Nigeria is necessary to understand the construction and representation of women in political leadership roles as well as whether the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of these women; and lastly, to ascertain whether there has been a change in the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria within the periods under review, that is, from 2007, 2011 to 2015.

4.2.1 Criticism of Framing Theory

Although framing is one of the valuable analytical approaches which has been used to challenge the status quo within the different aspects of societal and media discourse, the theory is not without flaws (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010: 317). One of the major criticisms of Framing Theory as an analytical approach lies in its lack of a unified methodological approach, as well as the inexactitude in the operationalisation and measurement of frames (Vreese, 2005: 60; Hertog & McLeod, 2001: 141). This lack of a clear-cut explanation in the

methodological application has impinged on the validity of some studies on framing, as it is difficult to ascertain the reliability of the identified frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 260). To mitigate this perceived flaw, researchers have suggested alternate methods of frame analysis to ensure uniformity in practice and provide a means for validation of previous frame analysis studies by other researchers (David, Atun, Fille & Monterola, 2011: 347).

Another criticism of Framing Theory is that there is a tendency for researchers to pick a “fugitive” aspect of communication content and present such in ways that oppose the dominant meaning of the text (Entman, 1993: 56). To mitigate this, scholars have suggested ways of identifying the dominant frames in communication texts. According to Entman (1993: 56), “the dominant meaning of a text usually consists of the problem, causal, evaluative, and treatment interpretations with the highest probability of being noticed by the audience”. Aside from this, scholars have suggested the use of computer-assisted frame identification approach as a means of reducing researcher bias within framing studies (Hertog & McLeod, 2001: 261). However, even computer-assisted methods are not without their drawbacks (Hertog & McLeod, 2001: 262).

4.2.2 Relevance of Framing Theory to this study

Despite criticisms of framing as an analytical approach, Framing Theory is relevant to this study for several reasons. Firstly, I submit that it is useful in identifying the presence or absence of some elements in media texts. Secondly, it is useful for analysing the salience of identified themes in media discourses in relation to audiences’ frame of reference or schemata (Entman, 1993: 57). In relation to this study, Framing Theory will be used to identify the types of frames employed by the Nigerian media in the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions, as well as audiences’ views and possible interpretation of such frames. Also, framing is an ideal theoretical underpinning for this study because it offers a means of understanding media as a site for ideological promotion and perpetuation (Durham, 2001; Gitlin, 1980), as well as a means for “describing the power of communication text[s]” (Entman, 1993: 51). In the case of this study, one of the aims is to understand how the media in Nigeria promote patriarchal ideology through their construction and representations of women in political leadership positions.

According to Entman (1993: 55) frames in media discourses are the imprint of power which registers the identity of actors or interests that compete to dominate media texts (Entman, 1993: 55). Therefore, framing is an invaluable analytical tool for the study of various

facets of the social reality represented within media discourses, such as gender and political relations. This is because the theory offers a means of understanding media as an arena for power contestations.

Furthermore, Framing Theory is relevant within the field of Media and Gender Studies because it offers a way of analysing media messages and creates an understanding of the power of media content on audiences' consciousness (Watson & Hill, 2012). By so doing, framing offers feminists and scholars within the field of Media and Gender Studies a means of analysing media portrayal of women and the issues related to them (Hardin & Whiteside, 2010: 314–315). Within the precinct of this study, framing will, therefore, be utilised to describe the identifiable frames in media content on women political leaders in Nigeria.

Lastly, even though framing is a concept that originated from the Global North, the concept is relevant to this study because it is a useful analytical approach for the study of media content and public opinion (Borah, 2011; Chong & Druckman, 2007), which are the foci of this study. Aside from this, framing is an appropriate analytical approach to this study because of the argument that the nature or dimension of frames adopted by media in their representation of an event may influence audiences' attitude or perception of such events or persons. This study, therefore, will utilise framing as a theoretical point of departure to understand the views of some media audiences – in this case, politicians and gender advocates – about the Nigerian media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. The theory will also be used to highlight the possible influence of the identified frames on audiences' views of women in political leadership positions.

4.3 Media Hegemony Theory

The second theoretical underpinning for this study is Media Hegemony Theory (MHT). This section will also first discuss the theory, how it was applied to Media and Journalism Studies, and then motivate why it is of relevance for this specific study.

MHT is premised on Hegemony Theory as propounded by Gramsci (1891 – 1937). Gramsci's concept of hegemony drew upon Marx's (1818-1883) concept of ideology to explain the workings of power within capitalist societies. Gramsci sought to explain how dominant groups within capitalist states maintain their hegemonic ideologies and leadership by securing the consent of the subordinated groups without the use of force or coercion (Gaudio, 2012: 159; Marmura, 2010: 5; Carragee, 1993: 330; Altheide, 1984: 477). Central

to the concept of hegemony is an emphasis on control gained through consent, rather than force (Hearn, 2004: 54).

Central to Gramsci's hegemony theory is culture, which, scholars have argued, serves as a premise for ideology building (Gaudio, 2012: 160; Martín-Barbero, 1993). This presupposes that the dominant class draw on culture to perpetuate their ideologies by creating a shared worldview between the dominant and the subjugated classes (Schram *et al.*, 2016: 160). Culture does not only serve as a premise for the shaping of social relations and values, but it also helps to legitimate existing political order through social institutions like mass media (Carragee, 1993: 330). As Altheide (1984: 477) rightly noted, hegemony is the "dominance of [a] certain way of life and thought and to the way in which that dominant concept of reality is diffused throughout public as well as private dimensions of social life".

Within the field of media studies, the concept of hegemony has been used to describe media as a site for ideological contestation and re-production of hegemonic ideologies (Lee, So, Leung, Lee & Chan, 2017: 341; Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006: 966; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992: 382). Also, media hegemony has been described as a struggle among competing groups who strive to outperform one another in attempts to gain public favour and achieve cultural relevance through the promotion and perpetuation of hegemonic ideologies (Marmura, 2010: 6). This presupposes that media is an arena for political and cultural ideological contestations, and, invariably, a means for the promotion and perpetuation of ideologies through news and other media contents (Marmura, 2010: 6; Knight, 1998: 122; Carragee, 1993: 342).

The concept of hegemony is also widely applied in studies within the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. Some of the studies in which researchers have applied the concept of hegemony include

- to analyse the role of the media in the perpetuation of hegemonic ideologies within political discourse (Schram *et al.*, 2016; Marmura, 2010; Chan & Chan, 2002; Liebes, 1997)
- globalisation and cultural domination through media content (Artz & Kamalipour, 2003); and
- online media as a site for counter-hegemonic discourse (Lee *et al.*, 2017).

Scholars have also advanced the concept of hegemonic masculinity to describe gender power play and hierarchy in gendered social relations within society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), as well as the subversion of the female gender through the promotion of patriarchal and hegemonic ideologies within media discourses (Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2014; Wood, 1994, 2009; Kian, Vincent & Mondello, 2008; Len-Ríos *et al.*, 2005; Tuchman, 2000). The foregoing are a few of the areas scholars have sought to theorise the dynamics of hegemony concerning media and society.

In summary, the concept of hegemony does not only deal with consensual subversion or marginalisation, but also a continued contention for power or recognition within society (Haywood, Johansson, Hammarén, Herz & Ottemo, 2018: 22). Therefore, adopting a gender perspective, it can be argued that media serve as sites for gender identity and gender role contestations, particularly, in considering the prevalence of the masculine gender in leadership positions – especially in politics and media which are the specific foci of this study. This study, therefore, considers the role of the media in the promotion of patriarchal ideology and hegemonic gender relations in media content on women in political leadership positions in Nigeria.

4.3.1 Criticism of Media Hegemony Theory

One of the major criticisms against MHT is embedded in the origin of the theory as proposed by Gramsci, namely that hegemonic meanings are not fixed or stable (Carragee, 1993: 333–334), but are, rather, “continually disestablished in a lived-process” (Martín-Barbero, 1993: 74). Given the notion of hegemony being a constant struggle among groups seeking political or cultural relevance, it means that hegemonic meanings or interpretations of reality proposed by a dominant group can only stand for as long as dissenting/alternative views from members of the minority or subordinated groups within society are smouldered or kept in abeyance (Martín-Barbero, 1993: 75). The implication of Gramsci’s focus on structural change, rather than historical change, is that hegemony is a cultural model of domination which cannot be displaced by new ones (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 831).

In relation to media and gender, it is evident that hegemonic ideologies are not immutable. This assumption is based on the number of pedagogical efforts which have sought to challenge dominant gender ideologies by advancing counter-arguments against the binary notion of gender (Butler, 2010; Risman, 2009; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; Lorber, 1987). These scholars argued that the categorisation of gender roles based on biological sex categories is a

patriarchal ideology meant for guiding power relations within society, and has come to be regarded as the norm within many societies (Santos, 2015: 1). For instance, as a counter-hegemonic discourse, feminists have sought to challenge discourses or ideologies that justify systematic domination based on gender (Thompson, 2001: 21).

Applying the concept of hegemony to gender studies has been criticised for tending towards being ahistorical and reducing the concept to issues of cultural control alone (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 831). However, scholars have argued that the adoption of gender as an analytical category is beneficial in creating an understanding of the cultural processes underlying gender power relations (Hawkesworth, 1997: 653). Furthermore, while gender as a universal abstraction cannot be useful as an analytical tool, perceiving its relations with other systems of identification and hierarchy, will be useful (Alcoff & Potter, 1993: 3).

4.3.2 Relevance of Media Hegemony Theory

MHT is relevant to this study, firstly, because the concept of hegemony is useful in analysing issues of power relations within society (Haywood *et al.*, 2018). Also, scholars have identified media as one of the institutions central to the production and perpetuation of hegemony within society (Lee *et al.*, 2017: 341; Carragee, 1993: 330). Media have also been noted to wield great influence in shaping public policy or perception of events through its “agenda-setting” and “framing” role (Schram *et al.*, 2016: 160–161). Therefore, MHT is useful in analysing media content for ideological or hegemonic views (Carragee, 1993: 333). In this study, media content will be analysed for the presence or absence of themes or frames that advance or perpetuate gender hegemony. The dominant themes identified using Framing Theory will be further analysed based on their relevance to the perpetuation of patriarchal ideology which promotes the subordination of women in political leadership positions through media discourses. This will be done to verify the claim that media frames are means of ideological perpetuation with respect to gender, identity, and gender roles (Kim, 2008: 393).

As stated earlier, hegemony theory is a Western analytical approach which has been applied to studies on ideological perpetuation within various contexts and aspects of society, such as the media. I consider this theory relevant to the context of this study because this study focuses on understanding the role of the Nigerian media in the promotion of patriarchal ideology through the perpetuation of gender stereotypes within media contents.

4.4 Feminism and Feminist Theory

4.4.1 Feminism

This section will first discuss the theory, how it was applied to Media and Journalism Studies, and then motivate why it is of relevance for this specific study.

Feminist Theory is grounded in feminism, which, itself, is a movement for the emancipation of women from subjugation and injustices based on gender. Historically, feminism was born in the mid-1800s out of women's liberation movements against political injustices which women were subjected to at the time (Danesi, 2009: 121). The term feminism was coined from a combination of the French word for "woman" and the suffix for "political position", that is, *femme* and *-ism* (Wood, 2009: 3). Therefore, feminism can be described as "women's political position". There have been varying arguments regarding the definition of the concept that feminism can be listed as one of the most controversial concepts to define in terms of unifying acceptability of its application across contexts (Browne, 2014: 4). Also, Ahikire (2014: 8) noted that

[f]eminism is a myriad of various theoretical perspectives emanating from the complexities and specifics of the different material conditions and identities of women and informed by the many diverse and creative ways in which we contest power in our private and public lives.

This is not surprising, as the feminist movement, from its inception, was birthed in ideological contestations that continues to "bedevil" the concept even today (Wood, 2009: 69).

In its broadest sense, feminism can be described as a movement or collection of people who are concerned with challenging subordination, oppression and marginalisation of women within male-dominated societies (Browne, 2014: 4–5). To say that women have been historically subjugated and undermined in political participation will be stating the obvious. For instance, in the United States women were not allowed to vote until 1920; in Britain, until 1928; in France until 1944 and in Switzerland only from 1971 (Scholz, 2012). In Africa, the right to vote came to women even much later in the 20th century as African countries were granted independence by their colonisers (Wood, 2009: 68; Historynet, n.d.: paragraph 13: line 5). In South Africa, white women got the franchise in 1930 (Scher, 2012: 267). In Nigeria, which is the focus of this study, women were enfranchised in batches, beginning from the

South in 1949, while women in the Northern part of the country became enfranchised in 1979 (Suleiman, 2017: 26; Eme, Onyishi & Nwaoha, 2014: 8; Pereira, 2010: 81).

From a different perspective, Wood (2009: 4) advanced a more encompassing definition of feminism as “an active commitment to equality and respect to all forms of life ... this includes respecting all people, as well as nonhuman forms of life”. Wood’s definition is peculiar because it extends the concept of inclusivity in the struggle for emancipation, as suggested by Alcoff and Potter (1993: 4), beyond women, to include everything in the world both human and inanimate. In contrast, Thompson (2001: 4) defined feminism specifically as “a moral and political struggle of opposition to the social relations of male domination ... [as well as] a struggle for a genuine human status for women outside male definition and control”. Thompson explained that feminism is an ethical stance that is rooted in the moral values of right and wrong. Thompson noted further that feminism strives to situate the injustices suffered by women, and their challenges, within the domain of public discourse, just like politics (Thompson, 2001: 7).

Thompson’s definition situates feminism within the context of power relations and dominance which is the focus of this study. Based on the foregoing, I will define feminism within this study as a socio-political movement geared towards the emancipation of women from male domination and all forms of social injustices issuing from cultural gender norms as well as other forms of institutionalised ideologies through which women have been pushed to the side-lines in society.

The foregoing shows that feminism is not only a movement for the socio-political emancipation of women but also a scholastic field with divergent schools of thought advocating for the same good, albeit from divergent perspectives. As Appelrouth and Edles (2011: 316), rightly noted, “feminism has never been a unified body of thought”. The advancement of various cognomen to distinguish the different strands and ideological leanings of feminism showcases the variability in the voices of women in challenging their suppression through hegemonic patriarchal ideologies in society over the ages. Although divergent in views and approaches, nevertheless, feminists are unified in their conception of the origin of women’s liberation on all fronts (Thompson, 2001: 3). Therefore, terms such as First Wave feminism, Second Wave feminism, Third Wave feminism, Womanism, or Black feminism, Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, as well as Black or African feminism (Mpfungu, 2017), are all nomenclatures used to mark the variance in perspectives among feminists.

Furthermore, classification of feminism into waves and approaches goes beyond mere “temporal distancing” or distinction. It serves as a “demonstration that women have not yet received equal rights and that [the] women’s movement is an on-going process” (Trier-Bieniek, 2015: xv). It is also a means of marking the shifts in understanding of the concept (Browne, 2014: 21), as well as the difference in political or ideological leanings (Appelrouth & Edles, 2011: 316). Although it is believed that feminism in all its forms and typologies practised across the world derives from the Western world’s (Western Europe and North America) women’s movement, some scholars have challenged such postulations as hegemonic (Browne, 2014: 52). Whatever the case may be, streamlining the origin of feminism is beyond the scope of this study. I shall, therefore, limit my discussion to some of the waves and phases in feminism as related to this study. This is in part based on the argument that feminism in contemporary times is an umbrella term which transcends class, race, age, or ethnic differences among women who seek to pull down all semblance of patriarchal domination globally. Irrespective of the variation in the appellation, scholars have pointed out that there is no clear-cut distinction among most of the categories and classification of feminism, as shall be seen in the following sections (Scholz, 2012: 22).

4.4.1.1 First Wave feminism

The First Wave of feminism is assumed to have begun in the mid 19th century to the early part of the 20th century (1840-1925) with women’s liberation movements in different parts of Europe and the United States (Wood, 2009: 66). While some scholars believe that the concept of feminism goes further down in history, others have considered Mary Wollstonecraft’s 1792 essay, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, in which she created awareness of the plight of women at the time, the beginning of the feminist movement (Trier-Bieniek, 2015: xiv; Scholz, 2012: 44–46). Whatever the case may be, the major concern of the feminists of this era was to seek legal and economic rights as well as political inclusion, especially the right to vote. Among other things, the women also campaigned for the right to own property, the right to birth control, female education rights, and the abolition of slavery (Trier-Bieniek, 2015: 114–115; Mendes, 2011: 3; Wood, 2009: 66–70). The major thrust of the feminist movement then was that women should be accorded equal rights, like their male counterparts.

The major gain of the American women’s movement of this period was securing the right to vote in 1920 (Mendes, 2011: 4; Wood, 2009: 68). The progress recorded by proponents of gender equality was slow due to a prevailing ideological belief at the time of

“true womanhood” as domesticity. The “true womanhood” ideology promoted belief in the role of women in the sustenance of good homes and families. Therefore, the women’s liberation movement was ignored by most of the women at the time, especially those who were part of a less socially threatening social movement to abolish slavery (Welter cited by Wood, 2009: 68). Although this set of women soon realised the need to join the movement to make women’s voices heard through political participation, this event is a classic example of how deep ideological divergence can prevent women from supporting or seeking emancipation, even in situations where they are oppressed. As Hooks (2015: 5) rightly states:

Many women do not join organised resistance against sexism precisely because sexism has not meant absolute lack of choices. They may know that they are discriminated against on the basis of sex, but they do not equate this with oppression ... patriarchy is structured so that sexism restricts women’s behaviour in some realm even as freedom from limitations is allowed in other spheres.

The foregoing buttresses how systematically structured ideological underpinnings can becloud the reasoning of some women, thereby rendering them complacent and unwilling to seek social change. The fact that women have experienced a slow progress in their quest for emancipation and gender equality shows that the domination of women and the resulting injustices suffered by women are steeped in cultural ideologies that continually justify men’s supremacy (Appelrouth & Edles, 2011: 368).

After the First Wave of feminism achieved its major goal, the tempo of the women’s movement in the United States waned for over three decades until the next generation of women picked up the gauntlet for women’s liberation (Wood, 2009: 70).

4.4.1.2 Second Wave feminism

The Second Wave of the women’s movement was generally believed to have been ignited by the publication of Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* in the late 1960s (Hooks, 2015: 3; Buonanno, 2014: 9; Wood, 2009: 80). Friedan’s book raised consciousness for the plight of women in society through her proposition of “[t]he problem that has no name” (Trier-Bieniek, 2015: xvi–xviii; Wood, 2009: 70). The major preoccupation of the women’s movement at this stage was the socio-economic emancipation of women into the labour force as well as other aspects of oppression which were not addressed during the First Wave of feminism (Scholz,

2012: 64). Essentially, Second Wave feminism focused on women's rights to pursue careers outside the home, gender-based violence, sexual objectification, equal pay, and reproductive health issues, to mention a few (Mendes, 2011: 4).

Even though feminist discourses at the time focused on the emancipation of women, their efforts were criticised for adopting a universalist approach to the suffering of women by assuming that the experiences of white, middle-class women are the same as those of women from other races and social statuses, especially, the African-American or black women (Hooks, 2015: 5–6; Trier-Bieniek, 2015: 21). It is important to note that second-wave feminism experienced the advancement of divergent ideological perspectives about the nature of the women's struggle, some of which I shall touch on in the following sections.

4.4.1.3 Radical feminism

Radical feminism is an ideological form within the Second Wave of feminism (Wood, 2009: 70). Radical feminists regard inequality against women as a form of social injustice caused by patriarchy (Mendes, 2011: 5). Like other waves of feminism, radicals also advocate for equal recognition of women in society. Radical feminists conceptualised the oppression of women in society as a political problem. They, therefore, argued that oppression against women is embedded within the social structures in society (Wood, 2009: 73; Thompson, 2001: 8–10). This implies that social structures and practices are at the bottom of the challenges of women's oppression. Radical feminists argue that focusing only on the state as the only site of patriarchal domination would make the important aspects of the oppression of women go unchecked (Thompson, 2001). They, therefore, advocated for the conflation of the public/private dichotomy of patriarchal domination and the extension of the site of struggle into the wider sphere of state and society (Kantola, 2006: 6). In addition, Radical feminists argue that the oppression against women can only be tackled by dismantling all social practices that promote patriarchy and male hegemony (Hooks, 2015: 159).

Radical feminists also argue that the notion of the social construction of gender is not enough basis for women to challenge male hegemony, as doing so would be tantamount to arrogating supremacy to men – the very notion which feminism seeks to dislodge (Karam, 2008: 312; Thompson, 2001: 8). To tackle this challenge, Radical feminists advocated for the adoption of “androgyny” or a genderless state (Karam, 2008: 311), which would afford women a “human status where rights, dignities and benefits are gained at one's own expense”.

4.4.1.4 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism, like Radical feminism, did not derive its name from temporal delimitation. Rather, it was derived from the political ideology of Liberalism. This brand of feminism was said to have been in practice since the First and Second Wave of feminism (Mendes, 2011: 4–6; Wood, 2009: 78). Liberal feminists also advocate for equal legal rights and opportunities for women by challenging the domination of women within the precinct of state (Scholz, 2012: 23). The Liberal feminist school of thought argue that women are human beings like men and therefore can rationalise like men. Hence, they advocate for equality in access to education, the opportunity for career advancement among women, as well as equal pay for women (Scholz, 2012: 22–23; Wood, 2009: 78–79).

4.4.1.5 Marxist feminism

Another ideological strand of feminist thought is Marxist feminism. This variant of feminism situates the oppression of women within the precinct of capitalism and social class (Scholz, 2012: 24; Lay & Daley, 2008: 52). This school of thought of Feminist Theory argue that men’s acquisition and control of the production process gives them leverage over women (Scholz, 2012: 25). Marxist feminists perceive equality in terms of the absence of social class divisions and the ability to satisfy material needs (Scholz, 2012: 25). They also argue that women became increasingly insignificant as men took over the production process. This brand of feminism advocated that women should be remunerated for performing house chores and for their reproductive duties. Lastly, Marxist feminists did not only call for more inclusion of women into the production of labour within society but, most importantly, they also situated equality within the precinct of civil rights (Scholz, 2012: 25; Kantola, 2006: 8).

4.4.1.6 Third-wave feminism

Third Wave feminism was said to have begun in the 1990s as a generational shift to mark the birth of a new generation of feminists whose stance are different from that of the previous waves of feminists (Mendes, 2011: 7). Feminism during this period experienced a gradual shift from the universal sisterhood approach adopted by earlier forms of feminism into a more diversified approach (Scholz, 2012: 16). During this phase of feminism, a high degree of attention was vested in personal and cultural consciousness. Third Wave feminism is distinct from other forms of feminism because it adopted an intersectional approach to theorising oppression and domination. Specifically, it identified sexuality and sexual identity, race and

social class as sites for oppression and discrimination (Mendes, 2011: 7). Within the intersection of oppression and domination, Third Wave feminists also theorised thought and language as the site of struggle (Scholz, 2012: 17). Most importantly, Third Wave feminists challenge metaphysical theoretical category descriptors because of their totalising tendency. Rather, they advocated for narratives or language as a new way of challenging women's oppression and dominance. As Scholz (2012: 98) rightly noted, "when male dominance is embedded in norms, values, language, and consciousness, women's position as a subordinate class or caste might be hidden." Hence the increased interest of Third Wave feminists in all discourse forms, for example, in media texts, as platforms for the perpetuation of and for challenging gender ideologies (Mendes, 2011: 18).

In addition, Third Wave feminists also expanded their conception of politics to include individual and collective actions of valour aimed at tipping the status quo (Scholz, 2012: 99). Meanwhile, like previous waves of feminism, Third Wave feminism is also riddled with divergent ideological and epistemological stance.

4.4.1.7 Black feminism

As feminism gained popularity, women of other races and social classes began to call for the modification of the concept to suit the socio-economic and cultural status and purpose of "non-white" women. Black feminism, Womanism,¹¹ or Afrocentrism, are some of the terms used to describe the brand of feminism that relates with the challenges associated with black women or women of colour generally (Sterling, 2015: 95). This approach to feminism was advanced by Black-American feminist scholars in response to the exclusionary nature of second-wave feminism. Black feminists challenged the notion of "common oppression" as was being promoted by Western feminists (Hooks, 2015: 43) based on the assumption that the struggles of black women are incomparable to that advanced by the champions of Western or White feminists. These sets of scholars argued that feminism, up to that point, only catered for white middle-class women with the exclusion of black, lower-class women (Browne, 2014: 21). To challenge the notion of a universal commonality of women's struggle, black feminists situated the struggles of Black-American women within the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality (Hooks, 2015: 53; Appelrouth & Edles, 2011: 337).

¹¹ The concept of Womanism was coined by Alice Walker in her book "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" (Wood, 2009: 80–82).

Black feminists, therefore, seek to address inequality and oppression on the bases of gender, race and class with a major focus on raising consciousness, improving the quality of life and standard of living of blacks or women of colour (Wood, 2009: 80–81). Proponents of Black feminism believe that to truly achieve the revolutionary and transformative impact which feminists desire, feminists need to adopt a more inclusive, all-encompassing and a mass-based approach to its struggle (Hooks, 2015: 163). Meanwhile, like all other variants of feminism, the overarching aim of Black feminism is to dislodge intersecting oppressive practices and the ideas that foster them (Appelrouth & Edles, 2011: 337). Despite the seeming homogeneity in Black-American and other Black women's struggles, scholars have argued that there is no universal archetype for Black women's struggle (Hooks, 2015: 59; Mendes, 2011). The advancement of other variants of feminism subsumed under Black feminist thought was aimed at describing the struggles of Black women in other socio-cultural contexts as being distinct from that of Black-American women. An example of this is African feminism that sought to describe the experiences of women, specifically, on the African continent within the peculiarities of their socio-cultural context.

4.4.1.8 African feminism

African feminism, also referred to as African Womanism, or just Womanism, is a variant of feminism whose boundary cannot be clearly distinguished because the concept has been applied to describe the struggles of women of African descent in the diaspora, as well as that of women on the African continent (Nkealah, 2006: 136; Guy-Sheftall, 2003: 31; Lewis, 2001: 4). Some other schools of thought as summed African feminism was birthed in the wake of the independence of various African countries and the various social economic and political crises that characterised the continent at that period (Mikell, 1997: 3).

Early African feminists sought to understand, among other things, post-colonial legislations which exclude women from governance and economic development (Mama, 1995: 38–39). As a result of this development, women in post-independence Africa took advantage of the period to advocate for the integration of women into developmental issues (Arnfred & Adomako Ampofo, 2010). Other scholars assumed that the development of feminism in Africa can be traced to the 1990s because of the upsurge in scholarly interest in studies on gender relations on the African continent (Ahikire, 2014: 10). This increased consciousness in women studies can be tied to this variant of feminism targeted at understanding the multiplicity of the struggles of women on the African continent at the

intersection of gender, imperialism, race, culture, sexuality and religion (Ahikire, 2014: 9; Lewis, 2001: 4). Feminism on the African continent can be described as a combination of scholarship and activism which is the preoccupation of many African feminists (Arnfred & Adomako Ampofo, 2010). According to Ahikire (2014: 9), African feminism is an “ideological force that poses fundamental challenges to patriarchal orthodoxies of all kinds”. African feminists perceive patriarchy as the fulcrum for the oppression and marginalisation of African women in different spheres of societal life (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 93).

Based on the foregoing, I will describe African feminism as a body of academic and emancipatory work which employs the general principles of feminism to combat all forms of institutionalised patriarchal oppression to liberate and empower African women within the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres.

4.4.2 Feminist Theory

The previous section discussed the origin and development of feminism. This section will discuss some of the theories derived from this worldview.

Feminist Theory as a body of scholarship has been adapted and modified by feminist scholars in different historical and geopolitical contexts to suit certain needs and purposes (Mpofu, 2017: 72; Appelrouth & Edles, 2011: 316). Generally, Feminist Theory is related to the bodies of philosophical approaches which seek to understand human behaviour and social relations based on women and women’s issues (Lay & Daley, 2007: 49). To this end, the major motivation of feminist theorists is the creation of new understandings associated with sex, gender and other oppressive social categories such as race, class, ethnicity and sexuality as well as the longstanding values and practices associated with the objectification of these social identity markers (Espinosa, 2010: 9).

Feminist Theory can also be described both as a subfield and a methodological approach. As a subfield, Feminist Theory can only be applied to several issues within a field, while as a methodological approach, it can be applied to every subfield within a field (Scholz, 2012: 12). Mostly, feminist theorists utilise gender as an analytical tool for addressing ways through which women have been systematically side-lined within society. Central to Feminist Theory is the perceived relation between gender and power. Gender, to feminist theorists, is pivotal to authority and its attendant privileges in society (Segal, 2005: 48–49). Hence, adopting gender as an analytical tool allows feminist theorists to study the complexities of gender power imbalances in different spheres of society. In addition, Feminist Theory as a

multidisciplinary analytical approach seeks to critique the struggles and experiences of women from a diverse socio-cultural background to provide new insights and understanding on theory and practice as they affect women (Scholz, 2012).

Feminist theorists conceptualise gender as the diverse, culturally acquired and mutable ways of becoming a woman or a man (Thornham, 2007: 4; Segal, 2005: 45). Hence, the utilisation of gender as an analytical tool within feminist discourse is based on the assumption that gender is a social category through which society has dominated and oppressed women (Mpofu, 2017: 72; Bosch, 2011: 28). Using gender as an analytical approach, feminist theorists have sought to contextualise the oppression of women within the precinct of gender (Lay & Daley, 2007: 50), as well as create an understanding of the societal structures which fosters domination and inequality (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017: 328).

The utilisation of gender as an analytical tool within media studies can be traced back to the era of second-wave feminism during which feminists directed their focus on media as one of the sites of institutionalised marginalisation and oppression of women (Thornham, 2007: 2). One of the earliest and most cited studies in this respect is Gaye Tuchman's (1978) study in which she advanced the notion of the "Symbolic Annihilation" of women. Tuchman's Symbolic Annihilation concept was used not only to explain the absence of women in the media but also their trivialised and distorted representation (Crothers & Lockhart, 2000: 154). Since then, feminist theorists have sought to analyse the marginalisation and oppression of women using the notion of gender and femininity and its representation within media while regarding media as a site for ideological struggle (Lee *et al.*, 2017; Darian-Smith, 2016; Carroll, 2009; Norris & Arbor, 2007; Johannessen, 2006).

Feminist theorists' interest in the application of gender as an analytical tool within media studies is premised on the assumption that media play a pivotal role in the construction of reality as well as the inherent feature as sites of ideological contestations (Mendes, 2011: 2; Marmura, 2010: 6). This is done not only to challenge the status quo that has kept women subjugated, but also to foster a new way of understanding gender categories and gender power relations within society.

Within the purview of Feminist Theory, this study adopts gender as a useful analytical tool to understand media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. Specifically, I situate this study within the precinct of the African feminism approach. This was done to ascertain whether the media in Nigeria differs in its portrayal of female and male politicians. By so doing, the researcher hopes to highlight the influence of

gender in the subjectivation and marginalisation of Nigerian women within the intersection of media and politics.

4.4.2.1 Criticism of Feminist Theory

One of the major criticisms of Feminist Theory is the exclusionary nature of the paradigm from its inception. For instance, even though a few African-American women were part of the Women's Liberation Movement at its inception, some feminist scholars have criticised First Wave feminism for not taking into consideration the plight of Black-American women who were subjugated not only on account of their sex but also race and social status or class (Hooks, 2015: 3; Trier-Bieniek, 2015: xvi; Wood, 2009: 67). Similarly, Second Wave feminism was criticised for universalising the oppression of women across the different socio-political and race backgrounds (Segal, 2005: 38). Thornham (2007: 2) succinctly explained this by saying

The assumption that the politicised intellectual can speak on behalf of all women can no longer be made. The category "all women" itself has become suspect, as "sisterhood" reveals itself to be fractured by power differences along lines of class, race, age and sexual orientation; and women as a group can no longer line up so easily with "other oppressed" people.

Radical feminism, also, has been criticised not only for its extreme or radical stance to displacing oppression (Karam, 2008: 311) but also for adopting a universalistic stance to the experiences and struggles of women (Hooks, 2015: 35; Kantola, 2006: 7). To challenge this notion, Thompson (2001: 56) expounded that the concept of patriarchy is not only applicable to women in the West but also that male domination is the pivot from which all forms of oppression against women emanate. The criticism against Liberal Feminist Theory lies in its focus on institutionalised forms of oppression only. Critics of the theory believe that failure to challenge the deep structures of patriarchy which exist at different levels within society could create new forms of patriarchy which could be more powerful than earlier forms of domination (Kantola, 2006: 4).

In addition, Womanism, as a variant of Black feminism, which has come to be associated with feminism emanating from the African continent, and which sought to

understand the struggle of Black women, has been criticised for failing to recognise the diversity that exists among African women by totalising the label “Black women” (Mpfungu, 2017: 76). Lastly, African feminism has been criticised for overgeneralisation because of the adoption of the label “African”, which has made the delineation of the extent and scope of its application unclear (Nkealah, 2016: 65). Also, African feminism has been critiqued for being overly conservative, especially with regards to sexuality (Nkealah, 2016: 66).

Generally, the use of gender as an analytical tool within feminist epistemology has been criticised for being constitutive and totalising. To this end, feminist scholars have advocated for a deconstruction of gender as a concept to unearth the complexity and multidimensional nature of the concept (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017:328). While deconstructing gender is outside the scope of this study, the term will be applied within this study as a distinguishing category for women and men.

4.4.2.2 Relevance of Feminist Theory

Feminist Theory is relevant to this study because feminist theorists seek to understand the dynamics of gender power relations within every sphere of society to dislodge oppressive ideologies. To achieve this, feminist theorists make connections between abstract notions and concrete problems to change the status quo through a call for political action (Lay & Daley, 2007: 50). Therefore, within this study, I intend to create an understanding of the difference (if any) in media coverage of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria with the aim of problematising such relations to the marginalisation and underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics.

This study is also hinged on the Marxist and African feminist theoretical points of departure. Firstly, I argue such because both theories offer a way of understanding the struggles of women in capitalist and colonialist contexts, such as Nigeria. Secondly, because African feminist theorists seek to understand the peculiarity of the struggles of women on the African continent with the major aim of emancipating and empowering them by displacing all forms of institutionalised patriarchy. Lastly, although Feminist Theory originated from the Western world, the concept has been applied to studies in various contexts utilising gender as an analytical tool. Therefore, I consider this theory useful for this study, as it also adopts gender as an analytical tool to understanding the misrepresentation (if any) of Nigerian women in politics through an analysis of media content.

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the theoretical points of departure for this study, which are Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, as well as Feminist Theory. In discussing Feminist Theory, in particular, I have integrated feminism and some of the waves and ideological perspectives that exist within the concept, as it concerns this study. In the next chapter, I shall be outlining the research design and the methodological approaches adopted for this study.

Chapter 5

Research design and methodology

Social theories created solely by men, which has been the norm, run the risk of an unrecognised bias ...

– Babbie, 2013: 67

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present discussions on the research design and methodology adopted for this study. Specifically, the chapter contains details of the methods of data collection, data management and analysis, as well as the justifications for prioritising these methods above other methods which could have been adopted for this study. Besides, the sample selection techniques, the quality assurance criteria, as well as the ethical considerations for this study, are presented in this chapter. However, before delving into a discussion of the research design and methodology, the researcher first presents the underlying paradigmatic assumptions which informed the research design and methodology.

5.2 Research paradigm

A paradigm can be described as a set of underlying philosophical assumptions, beliefs, values, and dictates which influence the nature and conduct of research across various disciplines (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 26; Bryman, 2012: 630; Thomas, 2010: 292). In other words, research paradigms can also be described as worldviews or philosophical inclinations held by researchers which guide them in some key decisions such as “what to study” and “how to go about a study” (Creswell, 2014: 6-7; Bryman, 2012: 714). Essentially, a research paradigm consists of a combination of ontological,¹² epistemological,¹³ methodological,¹⁴ and axiological¹⁵ assumptions underpinning any research process (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

¹² Ontology is a branch of philosophy which focuses on the nature of being or constituents of reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 27; Creswell, 2007: 16).

¹³ Epistemology focuses basically on the nature of knowledge and methods of acquiring knowledge (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007).

¹⁴ Methodology consists of the research design, methods and procedure adopted for data collection and analysis in a research work (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

¹⁵ Axiology refers to moral and ethical considerations in the conduct of a research project (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Creswell, 2007).

There are several paradigmatic approaches available to scholars in the conduct of socio-scientific research, among which is the positivist and the interpretivist paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The positivist paradigm is concomitant with scientific research which perceives reality as factual, objective and independent of human thought (Babbie, 2013: 60). Research within the positivist paradigm lays credence on experimentation, hypotheses formulation, theory testing, generalisability, as well as the replicability of research. The positivist paradigm mainly emphasises objectification of facts and quantification of research results as the basis for knowledge acquisition and a means of understanding reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The interpretive or constructionist paradigm, unlike the positivist approach, views reality as subjective constructions of individuals. With this approach, the emphasis is placed on individuals' experiences, perceptions and interpretations of reality (Creswell, 2014: 8). It is assumed that there are multiple realities which can be studied through interactions with individuals in their natural settings. Hence, the approach utilises qualitative methods such as interviews, discourses, texts, and other forms of qualitative data as a means of understanding reality. Also, the interpretive approach allows researchers to critically engage with research data gathered through their interactions with participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It is worthy to note that, even though each of these paradigms has its areas of strength and weaknesses, none of the approaches is considered superior to the other. Rather, each of the paradigms seeks to complement the perceived weaknesses of the others (Creswell, 2007: 16). Consequently, a researcher's paradigmatic inclination is assumed to be determined by several issues, such as the nature and focus of the research problem, research objectives, the researcher's personal experiences, and the intended audience of the research report (Creswell, 2014: 3–7; Babbie, 2013: 59; Bryman, 2012: 41; Thomas, 2010: 292).

The interpretive paradigm is considered appropriate for this study because it utilises a qualitative methodology which is central to the feminist research method (Bryman, 2012: 491). Qualitative research is the preferred research strategy in Feminist Studies because it allows for voices of women to be heard while reducing exploitation by focusing on issues that are beneficial to the promotion and emancipation of women (Bryman, 2012: 410–411; Creswell, 2007: 26–27). Also, the interpretive or constructivist approach is considered the most suitable for this study because it believes in the multiplicity of meaning within reality, compared to positivism which believes that truth is universal (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 9; Savin-Baden & Major, 2010: 1; Creswell, 2007: 16–17). To this end, the emphasis is laid on

participants' views or perceptions of a situation rather than postulations and experimentation based on observable evidence (Creswell, 2014: 8). The interpretivist paradigm is also a non-invasive approach that allows for an in-depth study of research participants in their natural environments, as opposed to the positivist approach in which researchers seek to control some variables that could interfere with the results of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 18–20; Creswell, 2007: 36).

This research intends to examine the construction and representation of Nigerian women politicians in selected news media to ascertain whether the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes which could influence people's perceptions of women's participation in politics. One of the central foci of feminism and, indeed, feminist scholarship, is to emancipate women by identifying sites of oppression in order to alleviate conditions of oppression (Babbie, 2013: 64; Bryman, 2012: 411). Therefore, this study offers a feminist critique of media content as a site for gender construction and power imbalance which have led to the suppression of women in politics. This is also in line with the tenets of Feminist Media Studies which seeks to create an understanding of the media as a site for the propagation of gender ideology through taken for granted representations and processes in media (Bachmann, Harp & Loke, 2018: 3–7).

To achieve the foregoing, the case study research design was adopted, utilising Content Analysis (CA) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) as methods of data collection and data analysis (details are given in sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2). An overview of the research design will first be presented after which the methodology, consisting of the methods of data collection and analysis, namely CA and IDI will be presented. Discussions on the sample selection techniques as well as the subsequent sample size, data management and analysis, will also be presented. Axiological considerations in terms of quality assurance and ethical considerations are also discussed. However, I shall first discuss the goals and the research questions guiding this study.

5.3 Goals and research questions

5.3.1 Goals

This study seeks to examine the construction and representation of female politicians by the Nigerian media between 2007, 2011, and 2015 to ascertain how the media portray female political leaders and to understand how the media contribute to the perpetuation of gender bias and stereotypes through news reportage and opinion pieces.

To this end, the specific goals of this study are to:

- examine how Nigerian women in political leadership positions are constructed and represented in selected news media;
- evaluate the role of the Nigerian media in perpetuating stereotypes of gender roles;
- ascertain whether media construction and representation of women political leaders have evolved; and
- ascertain how members of society (female journalists, politicians and gender advocates) perceive the media construction and representation of women in leadership positions.

5.3.2 Research questions

Research questions are central to every research project. Suffice it to say that carefully formulated and clear research questions are pivotal to the conduct of credible and successful research. This is because research questions provide a guide for researchers on some salient steps, such as determining the overall research design, selection of literature, collection of data and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012: 91). To this end, four research questions were formulated for this study.

In line with the conceptualisation as described by Creswell (2007: 107–109), the questions consist of one central research question and three research sub-questions as presented in the following sections.

5.3.2.1 Central research question

The central research question formulated for this study is:

- What is the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership roles in selected Nigerian media?

5.3.2.2 Research sub-questions

The following are the research sub-questions:

- Do the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions?

- Have the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions changed between 2007, 2011, and 2015?
- What are the opinions of journalists, politicians, and gender advocates about the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria?

5.4 Research design

A research design offers a “framework for the collection and analysis of data” following certain criteria that are suitable for answering the research questions guiding a study (Bryman, 2012: 45–46). In other words, a research design serves as a guide for the entire conduct and structure of a research project as it provides a logical connection between the research questions, data and the conclusion of a study (Creswell, 2007: 5; Yin, 2003a: 20–21). Invariably, a research design involves making decisions about the various strategies available to a researcher in effectively proffering answers to research questions or the objectives of a study. A research design does not only help in determining the most suitable methods for the execution of a research project, but it is also useful in alerting the researcher to methodological or procedural flaws that might likely occur in a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001: 93).

There are two major research strategies employed in socio-scientific research, namely the quantitative research design and the qualitative research design (Bryman, 2012: 25–37). The quantitative research design which is an offshoot of the positivist/objectivist paradigm prefers numerical data and quantitative measures in the collection, analysis, and the presentation of data. The strategy is mostly utilised in the natural sciences in which reality is perceived as external and objective. Conversely, the qualitative research strategy is an offshoot of the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm in which knowledge is considered as a product of constantly changing interaction among individuals and their contexts. Qualitative research emphasises the importance of textual data and interactions as a means of understanding the shifting nature of reality as it is continually constructed by individuals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 14–16; Yin, 2016: 9). Although attempts have been made to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research strategies, it is worth noting that scholars have argued that both strategies overlap in some areas (Bryman, 2012: 36; Yin, 2003b: 15). For instance, theory testing which is generally associated with quantitative research can also be carried out within qualitative studies and *vice versa* (Bryman, 2012: 36).

In this study, the qualitative research design is considered suitable to proffer answers to the specific goal of this study, which is, to examine the construction and representation of

Nigerian women politicians in the media to understand how the media perpetuate gender stereotypes. The suitability of the qualitative design for this study is premised on its interpretive and naturalistic features (as discussed in section 5.2), as well as its holistic nature which allows for the utilisation of multiple data sources in resolving a research problem (Creswell, 2007: 37–39).

Furthermore, in conducting socio-scientific research, there are several approaches available for researchers to choose from, such as narrative design, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, experimental design, survey, historical analysis, and case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 22; Creswell, 2014: 12–13; 2007: 7–10). Narrative research focuses on the life story of individuals gathered by a researcher and retold in a chronological style. Phenomenology, on its own, involves the study of a concept or phenomenon as experienced by individuals in everyday life. Grounded theory studies actions, processes or interactions with the intent of generating a theory based on the data collected from participants. Ethnography focuses on the study of a group within a specific cultural context. The experimental design is used to establish causality and predict the pattern of occurrence among phenomena in a controlled environment (Yin, 2011: 8; Merriam, 2009: 5). Survey research is employed for the study of phenomena in realistic settings and is mostly applied to understanding the disposition or attitude of a large number of people to certain phenomena around them (Babbie, 2013: 229; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 185), historical research, on its own, focuses on the retrospective study of phenomena or occurrences. Lastly, the case study design is usually utilised for the in-depth study of contemporary events or occurrences in natural settings (Merriam, 2009: 48).

The case study approach is considered suitable for this study because, unlike the experimental approach, it does not detach the research subject from its natural environment. Compared to Ethnography, which lends itself to theory building after data collection, case study allows for the specification of a theoretical approach at the outset of a study. Case study research design also focuses on contemporary phenomena, unlike historical analysis which evaluates events retrospectively (Yin, 2003b: 7–8). Furthermore, case study allows for more in-depth evaluation of phenomena within any given context as opposed to survey, which is somewhat limited in its ability to provide deep insights about the context of a study (Yin, 2003b: 13).

The case study design is discussed in further details in the following section.

5.4.1 Case study

As stated in the preceding section, case study research design involves the in-depth study of a process, event, activity or people within a bounded system (Bryman, 2012: 67–68). Although case study shares similarities with some other qualitative research approach in some respects, the major difference, however, lies in the definition and delimitation of the “case” or focus of study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 38).

Case study as one of the widely utilised qualitative approaches in the Social Sciences and Humanities has different connotations across the various disciplines (Babbie, 2013: 338; Gerring, 2004: 342). However, in relation to qualitative research, Creswell (2007: 73), described a case study as “a qualitative research approach in which the researcher explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information ... and reports a case description and case-based themes”. A bounded system as used in Creswell’s definition can be a programme, event, activity, process, individual(s), as well as social or political occurrences within a social context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 38; Creswell, 2014: 14; Yin, 2003b: 12). Case study has also been defined as an “in-depth study of a single instance or unit [of social phenomenon] for the purpose of understanding of a larger class [of similar phenomenon]” (Babbie, 2013: 549; Gerring, 2004: 342). “Unit” in case study design is used in relation to any spatially or temporally bounded phenomenon being explored by a researcher (Gerring, 2004: 342). Furthermore, case study can be applied to studying a single phenomenon within a specific social context, or across multiple contexts simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 30; Creswell, 2007: 74; Yin, 2003b: 21–23). Scholars have advanced various categorisations of case study, such as single unit case study, multiple case study, longitudinal, and cross-sectional or comparative case study. A case study can also be intrinsic, descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 40; Babbie, 2013: 338–340; Bryman, 2012: 70–71; Creswell, 2007: 74; Yin, 2003b: 22–23). The case study design is further categorised in terms of an analytical approach, namely as holistic analysis, embedded analysis, within-case analysis, and cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2007: 75).

It is also worthy to note that all forms of case study allow for the use of multiple data sources to foster an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Walliman, 2011: 94; Creswell, 2007: 75; Yin, 2003b: 13). Aside from this, the approach allows for the utilisation of existing theoretical propositions as a guide to data collection. Another merit of case study is that both

qualitative and quantitative evidence can be used with the approach. Although case study is a well-utilised approach, some of the major criticisms against the method as highlighted by Yin (2003b: 10–11), Bryman (2012: 71) and Merriam (2009: 50–53) is that case study

- lacks systematic procedures and rigour,
- has the potential for bias to influence the findings, and
- cannot be used as a basis for generalisation.

Publication of design and methodological texts which are meant to serve as a methodological guide to researchers deploying the case study approach is one of the means of mitigating the perceived systematic flaws in case study research design (Yin, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Bryman, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2007; Yin, 2003b). Also, Yin (2003b: 14) argued that case study as a research strategy “comprises an all-encompassing method with the logic of design incorporating specific research approaches to data collection and data analysis”. Scholars have also argued that although there is no unified structure for the design of case study, the approach can be as rigorous as any socio-scientific research. Rigour in qualitative research is achieved through extensive data collection and in-depth data analysis procedures (Creswell, 2007: 40–46).

Concerning the interference of bias, scholars have argued that case study is not more prone to bias than other research strategies, such as Experiments, Surveys, and Historical analysis, to mention a few (Yin, 2003b: 10). One of the major constraints of case study research is that case study research brings to the fore the uniqueness of each context being studied, thereby making generalisation difficult (Creswell, 2007: 74). Therefore, the goal of the case study approach oftentimes is not to establish numerical frequencies or make a statistical generalisation, but rather to establish theoretical propositions, or make an analytical generalisation (Yin, 2003b: 10–11). Also, researchers can analyse multiple data sources or cases to mitigate for the lack of generalisability of case study findings (Babbie, 2013: 340; Baxter & Jack, 2008: 556).

One of the major distinctions between case study and other qualitative research approaches lies in the emphasis on defining the case being studied. In this study, the case is the media in Nigeria, with four different media organisations, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *This Day* newspapers serving as cases or sub-units within the case study through which the researcher sought to understand the construction and representation

of women politicians in Nigeria. Employing the case study research design for this study created a better understanding of media construction and representation of female politicians in Nigeria. This approach also enabled the researcher to select case units based on criteria that are relevant to the study, as described by Bryman (2012: 417–423).

5.5 Methodology

The researcher applied the triangulation¹⁶ approach both in the data collection methods and theoretical underpinnings of this study. Specifically, the researcher utilised a combination of Content Analysis (CA) and In-Depth interviews (IDI) to examine media contents published in selected newspapers in Nigeria, as well as to examine the perceptions of some stakeholders in media, politics, and gender-related fields respectively. The two methods will be discussed in this section. Aside from this, the researcher drew on extant literature from different socio-cultural and geo-political contexts across the world theories to gain more insight into the research focus, and which will aid with corroborating findings. In addition, three different theories were utilised (see Chapter Four) to provide further analytical grounding to the media construction and representation of women political leaders in Nigeria. This was also done to increase the consistency of the data collection and analysis process with a view to enhancing the credibility of this study in line with the principles of quality assurance in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009: 215–216; Yin, 2003a: 84).

5.5.1 Content analysis

Content Analysis (CA), as stated earlier in Chapter One, is a commonly utilised method in Social Sciences and Humanities research generally, and, specifically in communication and media research (Riffe *et al.*, 2014; Bryman, 2012; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The method is mostly used for analysing communication contents in whatever form they occur (Babbie, 2013: 295). CA is one of the unobtrusive¹⁷ research methods which involves “making systematic inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics

¹⁶Triangulation involves a combination of approaches, methods, theories or data sources within a single study (Bryman, 2011).

¹⁷Unobtrusive methods, also known as non-reactive measures, allow researchers to access and examine a pre-existing phenomenon such as communication content without interference at any level of the message production or manipulation of any of the variables leading to the production of the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2016: 153; Riffe *et al.*, 2014: 10).

of messages” (Holsti cited by Bryman, 2012: 289). CA is an objective and systematic data analysis technique because it entails transparency and consistency in the coding and analysis of research data. As Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2014: 3) rightly noted, CA involves a “systematic assignment of communication content to categories and according to rules”. This is done to suppress the interference of researchers’ bias in the coding and analysis process (Bryman, 2012: 289). CA is a technique well suited for hypothesis testing or theory-building, as well as for descriptive and comparative studies, as a means of drawing inferences or understanding the real world (Riffe *et al.*, 2014; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The method is also suitable for examining the media portrayal of a certain minority or notable groups (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 158–159). CA was chosen over methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because CDA does not take into consideration the origin of competing discourses and their relation to social interests, diversity of social accounts as well as the influence of external factors on media practice, among other things (Philo, 2007: 175).

CA can be used both as a quantitative¹⁸ or qualitative technique for evaluating communication texts (Riffe *et al.*, 2014; Babbie, 2013; Bryman, 2012; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Quantitative CA involves coding of communication contents into categories which are then analysed and described using numeric codes or statistics. Qualitative CA, on the other hand, involves the coding of communication texts into themes with the intent of unearthing the underlying meaning and patterns in the coded texts (Bryman, 2012: 557; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). Quantitative CA is regarded as an objective technique because it focuses solely on the manifest meaning of communication texts, while qualitative CA takes it a step further to examine the latent meaning of messages by identifying the possible meaning of texts in relation to the context of its production and audience (Macnamara, 2005: 5). Although qualitative CA has been criticised for lacking in clear-cut and identifiable approach to coding, as well as relying on the researcher’s intuition, the method is well-suited for qualitative research because it allows in-depth investigation of themes or issues embedded in communication (Bryman, 2012: 578; Riffe *et al.*, 2014: 30; Macnamara, 2005: 14–15). For this study, relevant media texts from the selected news media over a specified period were identified and coded according to themes relevant to this study (see section 5.5.1.1). Following this, the coded data were analysed to answer the research questions stated in sub-sections 5.3.2.1 and 5.3.2.2.

¹⁸Quantitative data were used in some parts of this study to clarify and reinforce the claims made in those sections (Chapter Six, Seven and Eight); its incorporation and application in this study will be explained later.

Although CA is an established method in Media and Communication Studies, some scholars still recommend that the method should be combined with other research methods for best results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 159–160). To enhance the credibility of studies utilising unobtrusive methods, scholars have proposed the adoption of methodical, theoretical or data triangulation within such studies (Bryman, 2012: 390–392). To this end, In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with relevant stakeholders in media, politics and gender-related fields were utilised as sources of supplementary data for this study.

First, however, I will discuss the notion of the unit of analysis within case studies and CA, as construed within qualitative research, and as will be applied in this study.

5.5.1.1 Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis is an important concept within qualitative research as it delineates the observational or analytical focus of a study. The term is often used with reference to the specific focus of data collection or observation as well as the categorisation of the observational units into segments used for analytical purposes (Yin, 2016: 91). The unit of analysis within a case study is usually used interchangeably with the case to describe the specific phenomenon that is being examined. This is usually bounded by temporal, spatial or other delineating variables (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 38–39; Baxter & Jack, 2008: 545–546). Furthermore, the unit of analysis, in relation to CA, is the smallest part or specific item that is being studied (Bryman, 2012: 295–298). It is also one of the most important elements in CA because it is used to create a clear definition of the elements which a researcher will be analysing (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 164).

Considering the focus of this study, which is media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions, four out of the top ten national newspapers in Nigeria, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *This Day*,¹⁹ were taken as the case or units of analysis within the case study while media articles published by the selected media organisations were taken as the classificatory or observational units (Babbie, 2013: 297–298). Within this study, media articles are described, based on the definition of Danesi (2009: 212), as accounts or reports of an event or narrative contained in a single write-up of any length,

¹⁹ Due to the unavailability of a functional Audit Bureau of Circulation, the researcher relied on independent ratings of media organisations provided online, as well as the historical background provided by the selected media organisations on their websites. The selected news media, from own experience, are the most popular among Nigerians.

published in a mass communication medium to inform, educate, entertain or enlighten members of the public.

5.5.1.2 Content Categories

Carefully designed content categories are central to conducting an effective CA study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 165–166). Content categories are descriptive or classificatory frames consisting of a single, or several, words created as themes for the grouping or analysis of communication texts (Riffe *et al.*, 2014: 60–61; Babbie, 2013: 302–303; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 165–166; Weber, 1990: 15). Traditionally, CA requires well-formulated content categories which are “exhaustive”, “mutually exclusive”, and “reliable” (Riffe *et al.*, 2014: 63–64; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 165–166). Qualitative research allows for the use of multiple codes on a single text segment and *vice versa* to capture the richness and complexity of qualitative data (MacPhail, Khoza, Abler, Ranganathan, 2015: 5–6). In this study, carefully defined content categories on different gender themes were developed for the evaluation of the selected media articles. The categories (see Table 5.1) comprise of 13 basic themes which were further sub-divided into 24 sub-themes, with descriptions for each sub-theme. The coding scheme below contains the content categories which are presented as themes and sub-themes. The themes developed for the purposes of this study were drawn from and are based on recurrent themes in previous studies on media construction, representation and gender (Ette, 2017; Lee, 2015; Walsh, 2015; Van Dembroucke, 2014; Campus, 2013; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Lundell & Ekström, 2008; Bystrom *et al.*, 2001; Braden, 1996).

Table 5.1 below contains a list of themes identified from extant literature to guide the researcher in the identification of frames utilised by the Nigerian media in their reportage of women in political leadership positions. The table is divided into three main segments comprising of basic themes, sub-themes and descriptions. Each of the basic themes is regarded as the overarching or mainframe for each category. The sub-themes are considered as frames within the overarching frame. In other words, each main frame consists of minor frames which fall under similar categories. The description column contains definitions of the sub-themes meant to aid the researcher during the coding process. Typological statements containing keywords or commonly used expressions were given where necessary to further aid the researcher in the coding process. Among the benefits of such classification is that it aids specificity and precision in the frame identification process. It also aids replicability while

reducing subjectivity in the frame identification process (Gamson & Modigliani, cited by Tankard, 2001: 99–103).

Table 5.1: Coding scheme

Basic themes	Sub-themes	Description
Empowerment	Novelty	This deals with discussions that describe a woman politician mentioned in a story as the “first woman/female” or “only woman/female” to have attained certain political positions from a community or geo-political zone.
	Agents of change	This focuses on articles in which women are presented as candidates that are set to bring about change in the socio-economic as well as the political sectors of society. This also includes articles in which they are described as agents of development or transformation.
Subordination	Outsider	This focuses on statements which regard women as political outsiders, intruders, gatecrashers or ignorant of political issues.
	Trivialisation	This deals with statements or stories that suppress the identity of a female politician by referring to her with a gender or age marker instead of her name; or statements that belittle the achievements of a female politician, or her ability to make sound judgements on issues of social significance. For example, “A 23-year-old woman ...” or any other statement which can have devaluating connotations.
	Sexualisation	This has to do with statements which unnecessarily impose sexual appeal or allure on a woman politician.
Gender identity	Positive	This involves media articles that acknowledge male domination of politics but do not reinforce the notion that politics is a male-exclusive domain into which women are not supposed to venture.
	Negative	Articles that view women as incompetent or too fragile to compete with men in politics or articles in which women are presented as lacking in necessary political leadership attributes as a result of their gender.
Gender roles	Positive	Statements or media articles that highlight the traditional gender roles as an added advantage for female politicians.
	Negative	Statements or discussions that regard women’s involvement in politics as a departure from traditional gender norms, or as a disadvantage

Basic themes	Sub-themes	Description
		or impediment to a woman politician's career. For instance, "How do you combine career and family responsibilities without one affecting the other"; or "Despite her hectic schedule, she still finds time for family" as well as any such statement.
Gender equality	Emancipation	Articles that challenge male domination of the political sphere and regard women's participation in politics as a means of closing-up the existing gender gap.
	Male displacement	Articles or statements that regard women's involvement in politics as a means of usurping men's political position or rights.
Competence	Academic	Articles or statements that foreground a woman politician's educational background or that draws attention to a lack of adequate academic qualifications to attain or occupy a political position.
	Professional	Articles or statements that highlight a woman politician's career or work experience, philanthropic activities or other community development initiatives or that draws attention to her lack of professional experience with regards to a particular political position.
	Policy/Issue	Articles or statements relating to a female political candidate's manifesto or intended policy action as well as articles that engage or present a female politician in light of socio-economic or political matters.
Personality	Physical appearance	Articles or statements that draw attention to a women politician's fashion sense, for instance, hairstyle, clothing, shoes or jewellery, as well as articles that relate a woman politician's general looks to her age as a form of adulation.
	Attitude/Behaviour	This focuses on articles or statements that tilt towards the description of the temperamental dispositions of a woman. For instance, loving, warm, kindhearted, humble, assertive, proud or rude, among others.
Family relations	Positive	This deals with stories that focus on a woman politician's family relations either as a background to a story or mentions of family relations serve only introductory purposes.
	Negative	This refers to any reference to family relations which explicitly or implicitly links the

Basic themes	Sub-themes	Description
		advancement of a female politician's political career to the involvement of family members, which could be a father, uncle, brother, mother, or any such relations.
Godfatherism	Negative	Articles that perceive the achievement of a female politician as the function of a political kingmaker or that draws attention to the need for, or importance of, having political godfathers to the success of women in politics.
Language Misogyny/misogynistic language	Othering	This focuses on the use of sexist language or labels that are meant to draw attention to the gender of the occupant of a political position. For example, "woman leader", "spokeswoman", "female aspirant" and "female senator" and the likes.
	Blanketing	Articles or statements in which a single-gender marker, often denoting the male gender, is used to refer to both men and women within a group. For instance, "chairman".
Challenges	Socio-cultural gender norms	This consists of socio-cultural gender beliefs which constitute challenges to women within the political terrain and the Nigerian society as a whole.
	Gender-based violence	This focuses on any instance of physical, verbal or sexual assault against a female politician.
	Finance	This covers instances of financial challenges that have constituted impediments to Nigerian women in politics. For instance, the lack of funds to promote political campaigns.
Others	Namecalling, Reasons, and Suggestions	This consists of other themes which are considered relevant to this study but were not defined in the initial coding scheme.

5.5.2 In-Depth interviews

Interviewing is one of the methods of data collection in qualitative research, while other methods include observation and focus group discussions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018: 12). The interview method is considered the most appropriate for this study because of its suitability for exploring and learning about individuals' experiences, motives, and views, compared to focus group discussions which favour collective opinions. Also, compared to observation, the interview allows for the study of participants' thoughts and perceptions and is less prone to

researchers' bias (Bryman, 2012: 494; Rubin & Rubin, 2012: 3; McKechnie, 2008: 575; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005: 30).

Interviews can be described as guided conversations geared towards achieving a purpose (Legard *et al.*, 2003: 138–139). Interviews allow researchers to elicit responses from people who have broad knowledge or experience in an area of interest to a researcher (Bryman, 2012: 209). These sets of people are regarded as having expert knowledge or relevant information related to a phenomenon in which a researcher is interested (Mack *et al.*, 2005: 29). Interviews are useful in qualitative research because they allow researchers to explore the nuances of the real world from the multiple perspectives of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012: 4). Interview as a data collection method in qualitative research is central to the feminist research paradigm because of its unobtrusiveness compared to other methods, such as ethnography. Aside from this, qualitative interviews give women agency by allowing their perspectives to be heard (Bryman, 2012: 491–492). Also, compared to questionnaire surveys, interviews ease the issue of power imbalance in the research process and allow both researcher and participants the latitude of framing their thoughts in ways that is congruent to their lived experiences (Julien, 2008: 846; Van den Hoonaard, 2008: 492).

Interview as a methodology is broadly classified into three groups, namely the structured interview, the semi-structured or the In-Depth Interview, and the unstructured interview (Ayres, 2008: 810–811; Cook, 2008: 422–423; Firmin, 2008: 837–838; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 315–316). Of the first three interview formats, the In-Depth Interview (IDI) format, which is also called semi-structured (Bryman, 2012: 212–213), was adopted for this project because it is less rigid than the structured interview format and more coordinated than the unstructured format. The IDI format also gives room for probing the participants to seek clarification for ambiguous statements (Bryman, 2012: 470–472).

The participants for this segment of the study consisted of twelve female and ten male opinion leaders who are journalists, politicians and gender advocates in Nigeria. These respondents were chosen because they are informed about the media and gender situation in Nigeria. The participants for the interviews were selected according to the purposive and snowball sampling techniques (see section 5.6). These methods were considered appropriate for this study because of the nature of the project which requires that the participants have insights on gender-related issues. All of the interviews, except three, were conducted using the face-to-face interview method. The three interviews were conducted via telephone calls and email because the participants were unavailable for face-to-face interviews at the time of

the fieldwork. Technologically mediated interviews are acceptable means of data collection which are capable of yielding expansive responses like a face-to-face interview (Bryman, 2012: 488).

The Interview Guide contains fourteen open-ended questions which were divided into three sections (see Addendum B for the Interview Guide). The first section contained eleven questions which all the participants answered, while the second section contained three questions targeted specifically at journalists. The third part contained two questions which were used to elicit demographic information from all the participants. The researcher's choice of open-ended questions is premised on the belief that open-ended questions allow participants to frame and present their responses in their own terms, as opposed to closed-ended questions which tend to constrain respondents' answers (Bryman, 2012: 212–213). However, the major drawback of open-ended questions is that they are time-consuming to administer and code. Aside from that, there could be a tendency for the researcher to lose salient points in the process of notetaking (Bryman, 2012: 247). To mitigate this, the researcher made use of an audio recording device during the interviews after which the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to avoid omissions which could lead to a distortion of the participants' views. Also, the researcher utilised Atlas.ti 8 – a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software for ease of data coding and management (see details on data analysis in section 5.6). The responses from the In-Depth Interviews are presented in Chapter Seven as it presented in the Table 5.2.

Table 0.2 Table containing the categorization of responses from In-Depth Interviews as presented in Chapter Seven

S/N	Categories	Basic Themes	Sub-themes	Description
1.	Participants' perceptions of women in politics	Positive	Eclectic	Contains questions targeted at understanding participants' views about women taking up political leadership positions.
		Negative		
2.	Participants' perceptions of media construction and representation of women in politics	General opinion of media representation of women in politics	Quantity of coverage Adequate Inadequate	Contains participants' perceptions of the visibility of women political leaders in media.
			Quality of coverage Biased Unbiased	This section contains respondents' perceptions of the nature of media articles published about women political leaders.
		Respondents' perception of media representation of women in politics compared to their male counterparts	Media representations of women and men in politics are different	This section contains opinions about the assumption that there is a variance in media representation of women and men in politics.
			Media representations of women and men in politics are the same	
		Respondents' perceptions of media emphasis on gender and personality compared to competence	Media emphasise gender and personality	Contains responses on respondents' perceptions on the assumption that media emphasise the gender and personality of women than issues or manifestoes.
			Media do not emphasise gender and personality	

		Respondents' perceptions of media representation of the capability of women in politics	Media representations undermine the capability of women in politics	Respondents' perceptions about the notion that media representations may have a negative impact on people's perceptions of women's political leadership capability.
			Media representations do not undermine the capability of women in politics	
		Respondents' perceptions of the relationship between media representations and women's political participation	Media representation and the participation of women in politics mutually influence each other	This contains responses on the perceptions of how media representations impact women's political participation.
			Media representation influences the participation of women in politics	
			Media representation does not influence the participation of women in politics	
			Increased and positive representations and women's political participation	
3.	Respondents' suggestions for improved media representation	Change in media engagement/Strategic media engagement plan	Eclectic	Contains suggestions on how women can secure improved

		Active political participation		and increased media representation.
		Support for women		
		Reorientation		
		Other suggestions		
4.	Awareness of legal frameworks guiding gender reportage in media	Media organisations' handling of women's issues	Eclectic	This section contains responses from journalists showing their awareness of guidelines and regulations for gender parity in media as well as responses on how each media organisation manage women's issues in their respective publications.

Table 5.1 contains the categorisation of the responses from the In-Depth Interview sessions. The responses are grouped into categories, basic themes and sub-themes where applicable (see section 5.7 for details).

The next section contains discussions on the sample selection procedures employed for this study.

5.6 Sample selection procedures

Sampling is an important aspect of every research project because it involves critical decisions about what is to be observed by a researcher, as well as how this is to be selected. Sampling can simply be described as the process of selecting a subset of a large group as representative of the group used for observational purposes (Walliman, 2011: 93; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 87–88). Samples are usually drawn from a large group of observable phenomena, also known as the population of the study. The population of a study is an abstract conception of all the elements which a researcher seeks to examine (Litt, 2010: 1052–1053). There are two

broad categories of sampling strategies available to researchers in the Social Sciences, namely Probability sampling and Non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling is a statistical sampling technique which emphasises randomisation of a sample. The technique is considered to be a more reliable measure for generalisation of research findings, not only because of the rigour and systematicity involved in sample selection, but also because each unit of the research subject has an equal chance of being selected as part of the sample (Walliman, 2011: 95–96; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 90; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003: 78).

Non-probability sampling is a non-statistical means of selecting research subjects, especially in situations where the population of the study is difficult to define. Although sample selection with non-probability sampling does not utilise randomisation or statistical measures, the selection of research subjects is usually done in line with research objectives (Hussey, 2010: 922). Non-probability sampling technique includes convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and quota sampling (Babbie, 2013: 128–130; Bryman, 2012: 201–203). Convenience sampling involves the selection of samples based on the availability of participants. Purposive sampling, on its own, is a non-random strategic sampling technique based on some clear criteria which are relevant to a study. Snowball sampling involves the use of referrals to identify research participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 98). Quota sampling involves the selection of sample, based on some pre-specified criteria to ensure that every part of a study population is proportionally represented (Babbie, 2013: 126–130; Bryman, 2012: 203–204).

Two non-probability sampling techniques, namely purposive sampling and snowball sampling were utilised in this study. The purposive sampling technique was chosen for this study because it gives room for the deliberate selection of media organisations and media articles in line with research questions and objectives. However, the major weakness of purposive sampling is that it does not give room for the generalisation of research findings (Bryman, 2012: 417–418). The snowball sampling technique was utilised for the recruitment of interview participants because of its suitability for selecting samples from a population that is difficult to reach (Babbie, 2013: 129). Details of how these sampling techniques were utilised are given in the following sections.

5.6.1 Selection of media organisations

This section contains a brief description of the selected units of the case study, namely the newspapers *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day*.²⁰ Aside from having national circulation, a major similarity among the selected media organisations is that all four of them are privately owned media organisations established by male individuals and have mainly men in their key editorial positions, while women are the editors of their weekend editions.²¹ This is significant because Humprecht and Esser (2017: 440–441) argued that the domination of news by male journalists might have a significant influence on the nature of their reporting because male and female journalists differ in their style of reportage.

5.6.1.1 The Punch

The Punch is a “leading newspaper” in Nigeria (The Punch Newspapers, 2003).²² It was founded in 1970 by James Olubunmi Aboderin. *The Punch* newspaper, which claims to be apolitical in outlook, was one of the newspapers which were known for objective reportage during the military regime in Nigeria (The Punch Newspapers, 2003). The vision of the newspaper is to promote and defend the values of democracy and free speech as well as to foster equal opportunities for all (The Punch Newspapers, n.d.: 2). *The Punch* was rated as the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria for two consecutive years by an independent research firm, Research and Marketing Services (RMS). The newspaper lays claim to about 50% of the Nigerian newspaper market share as well as several awards, such as the Nigerian Media Merit Awards and the Diamond Awards for Media Excellence (The Punch Newspapers, n.d.: 2). In addition to the daily edition, the newspaper has two other titles, *Saturday Punch* and *Sunday Punch*. The newspaper can also be accessed digitally through <https://www.punchng.com/>. *The Punch*’s website was listed second on the newspaper websites ranking in Nigeria on www.alexa.com.

²⁰ As of the time of conducting the literature search for this study, neutral sources could not be found for background information and ideological positions of these newspapers. Therefore, the researcher had to rely on information from the media organisations’ websites and social media pages.

²¹ This information is accurate as at the time of data collection for this study, that is, December 2018 to April 2019 and it is only applicable to three out of the four newspapers, with the exception of *This Day* newspaper which the researcher could not ascertain.

²² This citation is the most recent one found by the researcher.

5.6.1.2 The Guardian

The Guardian newspaper is part of an independent media organisation owned by Felix Ibru (The Guardian Newspaper, n.d.). It began publication in 1983. It was also one of the non-partisan media organisations that were known for balanced and objective reporting during the military regime in Nigeria (The Guardian Newspaper, n.d.). *The Guardian* newspaper is circulated nationwide (The Guardian Newspaper, n.d.). The digital version of the newspaper is available on <https://guardian.ng>. *The Guardian*'s website ranked third on the list of newspaper websites ranking in Nigeria on www.alexa.com.

5.6.1.3 Vanguard

Vanguard, which was founded in 1983 by veteran journalist Sam Amuka, is also a “leading newspaper” in Nigeria (Vanguard Newspapers, n.d.). The media organisation is known for quality journalism. The newspaper also publishes six other titles, namely *Saturday Vanguard*, *Sunday Vanguard*, *Financial Vanguard*, *Allure*, *Hitech* and *Sports Vanguard* (Vanguard Newspapers, n.d.). The newspaper is also available in digital format on <https://www.vanguardngr.com>. *Vanguard* newspaper's website ranked first on www.alexa.com's list of newspaper websites in Nigeria.

5.6.1.4 This Day

This Day newspaper is another popular media organisation in Nigeria which claims to have carved a niche for itself in the area of business and political news reportage (This Day Newspapers, n.d.). It was established in 1995 and is owned by Nduka Obaigbena. The newspaper lays claim to quality reportage. Although it has a nationwide reach, the newspaper has a global outlook. The newspaper also has several scoops to its credit (This Day Newspapers, n.d.). The digital version of the newspaper can be accessed through its website <https://www.thisdaylive.com/>. *This Day*'s website ranked fourth on www.alexa.com's list of newspaper websites ranking in Nigeria.

5.6.2 Selection of media articles

The media articles analysed for this study comprise of news reports, features, interviews, editorials, opinion pieces, columns and specialised reports. The media articles were drawn from each of the four units of the case study, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day* newspapers over a period as described below. The media articles which

specifically refer to female politicians in Nigeria were purposively selected during an onsite library search conducted at two central repositories in Nigeria, namely the African Newspaper of Nigeria (ANN) PLC's Library and the Kenneth Dike Library of the University of Ibadan. The two libraries are among the foremost archives for accessing resources for academic research in Nigeria. The articles were selected, specifically, within the period falling between two months before elections and two weeks after elections in three consecutive election years, namely 2007, 2011, and 2015. In 2007 and 2011, elections were held on 21 April 2007 and 9 April 2011 respectively. Therefore, the newspaper editions were selected from 20 February to 5 May 2007, and 8 February to 23 April 2011. In 2015, the elections were held on 28 March; therefore, media articles were selected from 27 January to 11 April 2015.

The three election periods under review fall within the period after the commencement of democratic government in Nigeria in 1999. The newspapers were purposively selected from the results of two *Google* search strings, "national newspapers in Nigeria" and "top ten newspapers in Nigeria", which listed these newspapers among the top ten popular Nigerian newspapers. A similar search for "newspaper websites ranking in Nigeria" on a global internet aggregator, www.alexa.com, also listed the selected newspapers' websites as the first four among the top ten newspaper (websites) in Nigeria.

The selected media articles were first scanned, after which they were converted into searchable Portable Document Format (PDF) files, using online document converters²³. After this, the articles were uploaded into Atlas.ti 8 – a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software programme for coding and analysis. Atlas.ti is considered a well-suited analytical tool for a study such as this because it allows for the coding and analysis of a large quantity of qualitative data. Atlas.ti is suitable for analysing both textual, pictorial, audio-visual, and graphical data. The software, in this case, version 8, also provides a faster and more efficient means for data coding and retrieval (Friese, 2020: 10; Lewins & Silver cited by, Mpofu, 2017: 103; Bryman, 2012: 593; Smit, 2002: 65).

The data collected with this method was used to answer the central research question and research sub-question one and two (see section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2).

²³ The online document converters can be accessed through these links: <https://document.online-convert.com/convert-to-pdf> and <https://online2pdf.com/>. The researcher also used Adobe Acrobat for the conversion of the documents.

5.6.3 Selection of interview participants

The second aspect of sampling in this study was the selection of participants for the In-Depth Interview (IDI) sessions. For the section, the sample was drawn using the purposive sampling technique which involves the selection of research subjects based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research focus. This was used in conjunction with the snowball sampling technique which involves the use of referrals to contact or recruit participants for a study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018: 10; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 98). The major strength of the snowball sampling technique is that it allows for the recruitment of key participants with relevant characteristics and in-depth knowledge about a research focus. For this study, the participants were recruited through referrals from the participants' acquaintances, some of whom were key participants themselves. The researcher had initially compiled a list of ten participants using the *Google* search engine to locate some of the prominent persons in the field of gender advocacy, media and politics who might likely be interested in the study. These were contacted via email, *WhatsApp* and *Facebook*. Only three of the ten responded to the initial invitation to participate in the study. Two of the three participants later opted out of the study after they got the Interview Guide emailed to them. The high attrition rate recorded during this phase highlighted one of the challenges of conducting email interviews in developing countries like Nigeria. Consequent on the outcome of the pilot study (see section 5.8.3), the researcher opted for face-to-face interviews using snowball sampling to recruit the participants. This proved to be useful, as 22 participants eventually took part in the study.

The interview sample consisted of both female and male participants who were recruited for gender balance and inclusivity. Also, to give room for diverse opinions, the participants were drawn from three distinct sub-groups which are of relevance to this study, namely journalists, politicians and gender advocates. This was done in line with one of the major features of the qualitative research approach which emphasises multiple interpretations of a single event (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 9). In all, the 22 participants were interviewed through face-to-face interview sessions, telephone and email. Initial contact with the participants was established using emails, telephone calls, and social media, specifically, *WhatsApp* and *Facebook Messenger*. At the initial stage, the researcher introduced the research project to the prospective participants while inquiring if they would be willing to participate in the study (see section 5.9). The interview was conducted telephonically with two out of the 22 respondents, while an email interview was conducted with one person only. Like all the other participants, these three were invited to participate in the study by emails

and telephone calls. After all have agreed to participate in the study, the Informed consent form (see Addendum C) was sent along with the interview questions to the participants who opted to respond by email. For the two who were interviewed by telephone, only the Informed consent form was sent by email, while the interview questions were administered over the phone. The telephone interviews were recorded using an Android phone call recording software called SCR which allowed the researcher to record both ends of the conversation between her and the participants. The recorded interviews were then transferred to a laptop computer after which it was converted to a compatible audio format using VLC – a media player computer software. The telephone interviews were then manually transcribed, as were the face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted using the same Interview Guide which was used for the face-to-face interviews (see Addendum B for the Interview Guide). The interviews lasted about 30 minutes on average.

5.6.4 Data saturation

Qualitative research, by its nature, does not emphasise large sample sizes. Rather, the emphasis is laid on the diversity, depth and richness of data (Bryman, 2012: 416–417; Ritchie *et al.*, 2003: 80–82). Scholars have argued that sample selection in qualitative research should be guided by the suitability of a sample to the purposes or goals of a specific study (Morgan, 2008: 797–798). Therefore, what constitutes an adequate qualitative research sample remains largely debated. However, there is consensus on how to guide against redundancy in data collection by using the principle of data saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 101; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, 2013: 12; Ritchie *et al.*, 2003: 80). The principle of data saturation allows qualitative researchers to discontinue data collection when the data being collected no longer yield new results or add new value to the study (Harp & Bachmann, 2018: 194; Marshall *et al.*, 2013: 14). The principle of saturation which was originally developed for use in ethnographic fieldwork is particularly useful within this study as it enabled the researcher to determine when saturation had been reached in my data collection to prevent unnecessary repetition. Saturation can be attained on two levels, namely theoretical saturation and data saturation (Reilly & Parker, 2012: 192–193). Both levels of saturation were reached with the media article selection and analysis, as can be seen in the following section.

The media articles used for this study were subjected to a multi-level sample selection process. Firstly, a total of 3,452 media articles was collected from 888 editions of the sampled newspapers. The researcher first selected media articles which are overtly related to the broad

theme of the study, that is, women in political leadership positions. The next stage of selection involved streamlining the media articles based on their relevance to the predefined themes used for the coding as stated in Table 5.1. Also, additional media articles not related to the predefined themes were selected. The inclusion of more articles was done to give room for the identification of relevant themes which were not listed in the coding scheme. A total of 401 media articles were selected for analysis. It is worth pointing out that many of the articles contained more than a single theme/frames. Also, in some cases, a certain theme may occur more than once in a single media article. Hence, the high number of identified themes compared to the number of analysed articles. The selected media articles were further streamlined on account of theoretical saturation, as most of the articles were not yielding new themes other than the ones already identified during the pilot study (see section 5.8.3). Therefore, another 87 media articles were left out of the study because they were no longer yielding new codes. In all, 314 media articles were analysed from the four case units, namely from *The Punch Vanguard*, and *This Day* newspaper. The breakdown of the number of media articles analysed from each of the newspaper is as follows: *The Punch* – 91, *The Guardian* – 91, *Vanguard* – 67, and *This Day* – 60.

5.7 Data analysis and management

In social research, data analysis entails the coding and sorting of a body of data into an organised and more manageable and meaningful form for ease of interpretation. Data analysis can be done using a quantitative or qualitative approach (Bryman, 2012: 13–14). The quantitative approach involves the sorting and grouping of data using statistical measures to produce quantitative information, such as charts and graphs, while qualitative analysis involves thematic grouping of texts into interpretive themes. The qualitative approach involves the reduction of data into manageable and meaningful bits by identifying the themes, concepts or categories that occur within the data for theorising or interpreting such data (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor, 2003: 202–203). One of the major steps in qualitative data analysis is coding. This involves the categorisation or classification of data into various similar themes. Coding of qualitative data can be done either manually or with the aid of computer software programmes.

The coding of data collected from *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day* newspapers, as well as the interview transcripts, was done using Atlas.ti 8. The coding of the data for this study was carried out using a combination of the deductive and inductive coding

systems. The media data were deductively coded using pre-designed coding categories, while the interview data were coded based on the emergent themes. The pre-designed coding categories were developed into a so-called Codebook in an Excel spreadsheet, after which it was imported to Atlas.ti as codes which were matched to the relevant data in Atlas.ti. The coding was also done using both open and *in vivo* coding functions in Atlas.ti. Open coding involves the identification and labelling of relevant codes. *In vivo* coding, on the other hand, involves the selection of raw data as quotations to be used as exemplifications in the presentation of findings. This was also done to foreground the participants' voices in the research report. Data from the media articles yielded 1,292 codes which were fused into the predefined sub-themes and basic themes. Meanwhile, the interview data generated 748 codes which were conflated into 68 sub-themes which were further subsumed under 13 sub-headings, 13 basic themes and 4 broad categories for easy presentation and analysis.

The Atlas.ti software programme allows for the sorting and organisation of qualitative data. Aside from this, the programme allows for the grouping of the different data sets into distinct projects which could later be merged for comparative analysis. It also allows for easy navigation through different aspects of the documents and codes. Aside from this, codes can also be grouped into code families to create a logical connection in the data. The codes generated in Atlas.ti can be easily reviewed and modified. Other functions of the computer software, which the researcher found useful, are the comment and memo functions which enabled the researcher to make notes while coding. Lastly, the retrieval of the entire coding process can be generated either in full or in bits with only a few mouse clicks.

It is worth pointing out that I had received training in the usage of Atlas.ti before the actual analysis of data. Aside from this, I also familiarised myself with the usage of the software's user interface during the pilot study. These helped to boost my confidence, as well as minimise the possibility of encountering technical challenges in the usage of the computer software.

In the presentation of the study findings in Chapters Six and Seven, excerpts from the media articles and the IDI responses were identified using tags which I created for easy navigation of the data. The media articles were identified using alpha-numeric tags consisting of the abbreviation of publications' names, date and page numbers(s) of the media article. For instance, **PN_12032015_15** means that the excerpt was taken from *The Punch* newspaper published on 12 March 2015 and located on page 15 of the newspaper. The IDI respondents are identified by tags comprising of the first letters of their first names and surnames followed

by the first letter of their gender and an abbreviation of their profession. However, the names of respondents who had sought anonymity were replaced with random letters, while their gender and profession were retained. For example, **MP_M_JOURN** means that the excerpt was taken from the interview with Michael Peters,²⁴ a male journalist.

Lastly, in addition to the qualitative data, I utilised numerical data to proffer answer to research sub-question two and three in Chapters Six and Seven. This was done to aid the clarity and precision of some of the claims made in this study. Maxwell (2010: 480) posits that the use of numerical data in qualitative studies serves to complement textual data and help the researcher make precise claims where necessary. It is noteworthy that the usage of quantitative data in this study by no means moves this research into the domain of quantitative or mixed method research as this research utilised predominantly qualitative measures and methods congruent with the interpretivist/constructivist epistemology.

5.8 Quality assurance in qualitative research

The notion of quality is germane to every socio-scientific research endeavour. Quality assessment in social research deals with the authenticity, verifiability, replicability and generalisability of research work. Quality assessment follows different procedures in qualitative and quantitative research. While there are standardised criteria for assessing quality in quantitative research, the standardisation of quality appraisal criteria is still an issue of on-going debate among qualitative researchers. The nature of qualitative research, which allows for the use of non-standardised research methods to foster the generation of in-depth context-sensitive data, calls to question the issue of quality, thereby making it challenging to apply the notion of validity and reliability as it is used in quantitative research as indicators of quality in qualitative research. As Lincoln (1995: 275) rightly argued, the issue of quality in qualitative research is “a dialogue about *emerging criteria*” (emphasis in the original). Although some scholars have advocated for an adaptation of the quantitative quality assessment criteria to suit the demands of qualitative research, others advocated for distinct quality assessment criteria for qualitative research other than what is applied to quantitative research (Tracy, 2010; Flick, 2009; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003). To this end, many quality assessment typologies have been proposed by qualitative researchers (Guba & Lincoln cited by, Bryman, 2012; Flick, 2009; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, *et al.*, 2003). However,

²⁴Fictitious name used for illustrative for purposes.

Creswell and Miller (2000: 124–125) charted a pathway in this typological quagmire by proposing that every decision on adopting quality criteria in qualitative research should be hinged on two basic considerations, namely the researcher's lens, and the research paradigm. These two concepts simply refer to the beliefs and the philosophical assumptions guiding a study.

It is worth noting that Creswell and Miller's (2000: 125–126) proposition of trustworthiness and authenticity as quality assessment criteria for research grounded in the constructionist or interpretivist paradigm is an extension of Guba and Lincoln's (1995) propositions. Given this, the notion of quality, in this study, is presented under the broad categories of trustworthiness and authenticity.

The notion of trustworthiness is discussed first.

5.8.1 Trustworthiness

One of the guiding philosophical assumptions of qualitative research is that reality is multidimensional and dynamic, which has made it difficult, if not impossible, to establish congruence between data and the source from which it originated. Hence, the application of validity and reliability as criteria of quality is grounded in the belief of reality being a single objective truth, waiting to be discovered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 242). As an alternative to validity and reliability, qualitative researchers proposed the notion of trustworthiness as a criterion for quality assessment in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is made up of four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln cited by Bryman, 2012).

- **Credibility:** This deals with the congruence between research findings and reality (Thomas, 2010: 319). As stated earlier, qualitative research acknowledges the multidimensionality of reality. Hence credence is laid on a multi-perspectival approach to ensure the credibility of research findings. Triangulation has been proposed as one of the ways of establishing credibility in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 245). Although it is believed that the use of multiple data sources, theories and methods of analysis enhance credibility, scholars have cautioned that triangulation in itself may not necessarily improve the accuracy of research result because of the multi-dimensional and the changing nature of reality (Tracy, 2010: 843). In this study, credibility was achieved through the combination of two data

sources, namely media articles and In-Depth Interviews (IDI). Also, recruiting 22 participants, from diverse professions, for the interview allowed for the infusion of multiple perspectives to this study.

- **Transferability:** This refers to the generalisability or extension of research findings to contexts other than the one in which the study was conducted, or extending the findings to a group larger than that from which data was collected. The major issue with this is that qualitative research does not emphasise large sample sizes which are a prerequisite for generalisation. Therefore, the notion of generalisation as it applies to quantitative research might not be possible in qualitative research. However, scholars have suggested the use of “thick description” as a means of providing rich contextual information which could help readers make decisions about the applicability of the results to their contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 253; Bryman, 2012: 392).
- **Dependability:** This relates to the consistency of the data collected with the research findings. One of the ways for attaining dependability is by providing adequate and relevant methodological information. This can also be achieved by keeping a log of alterations, or through intercoder reliability. One of the ways for achieving dependability in research is through audit trail (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 128). To improve dependability in this study, a pilot study was conducted after which the coding scheme and the IDI guide (see Table 5.1 and Addendum B) were modified to allow for the capturing of more themes and to get rid of ambiguity. Aside from this, I received training to enhance my proficiency in the usage of the data management software programme which I used for data analysis. Lastly, as much as possible, I have given a detailed description of the entire conduct of this research project to aid the verifiability of the research process.
- **Confirmability:** This refers to the extent to which a qualitative researcher understands and represents a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. It seeks to ensure that researchers’ interpretation of data is matched with participants’ views and that the researcher did not infuse bias in the findings (Moser & Korstjens, 2018: 122). To ensure confirmability in this study, the researcher employed her knowledge of the context of the study in carefully analysing and interpreting the data. Direct quotations from the data were also presented, where necessary, as evidence of the participants’ opinions and to buttress the researcher’s claims.

5.8.2 Authenticity

Authenticity is another major category in Guba and Lincoln's typology. Authenticity as a criterion for quality assessment focuses on the socio-political impact of a study. Like trustworthiness, authenticity is evaluated using four criteria, namely fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (James, 2008: 44–45). The extent to which authenticity is achievable in qualitative research is still subject to debate (Bryman, 2012: 393). Therefore, I make no claim, within this study, of fulfilling all the criteria of authenticity. However, I have ensured fairness through the selection of key participants from the diverse aspects related to this study. Also, all of the participants' views were represented all through the research.

I discuss the pilot study in the next section.

5.8.3 Pilot study

A pilot study can be described as a small-scale preliminary study carried out to test a research protocol with the intent of ascertaining the feasibility of a study (Kim, 2011: 191–192). Aside from serving as a means for the early detection of design or methodological flaws, pilot studies are also useful in providing hands-on experience in the usage of methods of data collection and analysis (Dikko, 2016: 521; Kim, 2011: 193). For this study, a preliminary test was conducted before carrying out the actual study. This was done to test the research design and methods of data collection and data analysis to be used for this research. The pilot test for this study was conducted, specifically, to ascertain the feasibility of the research topic as well as the appropriateness of the data collection methods, namely CA and IDI. The pilot test also provided the opportunity to code the collected data using Atlas.ti to which I was newly introduced at the time.

The first aspect of the pilot study was conducted to test the use of the selected newspaper websites as sources for the collection of the media articles for CA, to be analysed for the main study. For this, twelve media articles were selected across the four media organisations' websites, three from each website. Some of the challenges encountered with this process are the lack of a central repository for storing back issues of all online editions of newspaper publications in Nigeria. Secondly, all the selected media organisations do not have a complete database of the back issues of their publications online. Aside from this, not all of the articles published in the newspapers are usually posted online. Therefore, to generate a

credible sample for the study, I opted to use the hard copies of the newspapers for the selection of the media articles used in the main study. This proved to be useful as it ensured that all the stories published within the selected study period were located and included in the sample.

The second aspect of the pilot study focused on the recruitment of participants for IDI, using email and social media. Fourteen prospective participants were contacted for the pilot study specifically. Only eight of them completed and returned the Interview Guide sent to them by email. One of the challenges encountered at this stage was that the participants were slow in responding to emails. Each mail sent by the researcher was followed up by reminders through email and WhatsApp before the participants would respond. In all, it took a total of three months, August to October 2018, to get responses from eight of the participants. Aside from this, some of the responses were terse, and sometimes unrelated to the question they were supposed to answer. Attempts to seek clarification proved difficult as some of the participants were slow in responding to their emails; others were not forthcoming in sending their responses. Lastly, some of the respondents pointed out possible similarities among three of the questions, namely, research questions two, three and five. To address these, I proposed the usage of face-to-face interviews for the main study, and only used email and telephone calls on occasions where the participant was not available for a face-to-face interview session. Three such instances occurred in the main study. The observation about the similarities in research questions was dealt with by rephrasing the said research questions for clarity. Also, the question order was changed to improve the logical flow of the questions to minimise the tendency for confusion among participants.

The last aspect of the pilot study involved the collation and coding of the two data sets, using the Atlas.ti software programme. Firstly, the media articles from the websites were converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) using an online document converter, namely <https://www.web2pdfconvert.com>. After this, the converted files were uploaded to Atlas.ti 8 for coding. The coding of the media articles was done using predesigned codes generated by the researcher from the extant literature. Through the coding of the media articles, the researcher was able to ascertain the presence of some of the predefined themes in the media articles. Additional themes and sub-themes which were not part of the initial coding scheme were also identified and added to the coding scheme (see Table 5.1). In addition to this, the description of some of the themes had to be rewritten to ensure clarity and make each category more inclusive. Examples of some of the elements to look out for in media articles were given where possible.

Lastly, it will be worth noting that the samples used in the pilot study are not included as part of the sample for the actual study. This was done to avoid bias in the actual data collection process (Bryman, 2012: 264; Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001: n.p).

5.8.4 Intercoder reliability

Intercoder reliability (IR) is an essential aspect of CA because it helps to ascertain the degree of clarity in the definition and operationalisation of the content categories in a study. Aside from this, IR helps to ascertain the reliability or reproducibility of a CA research project using a measure of the degree of agreement or disagreement among different coders using the same content and coding schedule (Mao, 2018: 2; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 170-172). To test for the reliability of the coding schedule and the reproducibility of my research project, I recruited two external coders who are also post-graduate students in Media and Communication studies. The two coders were recruited to analyse the content of media articles which I had analysed earlier on for the pilot studies (see section 5.8.3). This was done to test for inherent bias and clarity in my definition of the coding categories by comparing the extent of similarity between the external coders' coding decisions and mine. The coders were chosen because of their shared understanding and knowledge of the socio-cultural context of the study. Before they were allowed to code the media articles, the coders were taken through approximately two and a half hours of training on how to use the coding scheme. Their coding result showed a significant degree of similarity in their coding decisions and that of the researcher. However, the agreement index could not be calculated using one of the conventional methods, such as Holsti's method, Pearson's Correlate, or Krippendorff's *Alpha* because of the peculiarity of qualitative research (MacPhail *et al.*, 2015; Harris, Pryor & Adams, 1997).

The next section focuses on the concepts of ethical considerations in qualitative research.

5.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are a salient aspect of every Social Science research endeavour because it relates to every stage of the research process. Ethical considerations are important, not only to establish credibility and trustworthiness for the researchers and their research findings, but most importantly, in researchers' treatment of the research subjects or participants (Flick, 2010: 36–43). In qualitative research, researchers are expected to adhere to ethical standards

in the execution of their fieldwork as well as the analysis and dissemination of their research findings (Creswell, 2007: 141–142). Similarly, Flick (2010: 41–43) and Lewis (2003: 66–71) have identified four distinct aspects of an ethical research project, namely informed consent, avoiding harm to participants in collecting data, doing justice to participants in analysing data, and lastly, confidentiality and anonymity in writing the research report.

In conformity with the principles of ethical research, the researcher sought and got approval to conduct the study from Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) before the commencement of fieldwork (see Addendum D for the Ethics approval letter). The researcher also got a letter of introduction from the Journalism Department, Stellenbosch University (see Addendum E for the Letter of introduction). This was done to enhance my credibility as a researcher and earn me some measure of trust with the respondents. To contact the participants, in cases where I had the email address of a potential participant, I sent a personal message along with the letter of introduction as an attachment to the mail. The purpose of contacting the participants at this stage was to introduce myself and my study to the participants, as well as to seek their consent to participate in the study. After the respondents had given their consent to participate in the study, a copy of the informed consent form which had been approved by Stellenbosch University's REC was sent to the participants (see Addendum C for the Informed consent form). The consent form was handed out on-site to the respondents whose email addresses the researcher could not obtain before the commencement of the interviews.

Before the commencement of each interview session, the researcher made a point to reintroduce herself and explain her study to the participants. The researcher also allowed the participants to seek clarification about the study, as well as other issues that were of interest to them about the researcher and her work. This was done in line with one of the principles of interviewing in feminist research, which allows for a high degree of rapport and a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and respondents to enhance cordiality, as well as foster reciprocity (Oakley cited by Bryman, 2012: 492; Lewis, 2003: 64–65). Aside from this, the participants were also informed that the interviews were being audio recorded. All the participants were given the option of being treated with anonymity if they so desire, while all their responses were processed by the researcher alone to maintain confidentiality. The responses were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the participants' opinions were accurately captured and represented, as well as to avoid the intrusion of the researcher's bias upon the participants' opinion.

The researcher applied her knowledge of the social context in the analysis and interpretation of the participants' responses. Scholars have argued that having a shared cultural background and experience is useful in aiding researchers' understanding of participants' responses (Lewis, 2003: 65). Lastly, the researcher made use of direct quotes in the presentation of the research findings to emphasise the participants' views.

5.10 Challenges

Aside from the challenges identified and addressed during the pilot study, I would like to point out the challenges I encountered during the fieldwork and the coding stages of this work. Firstly, the timing of the data collection coincided with the general elections in Nigeria which is a peak period for both journalists, politicians and gender advocates. Aside from the increase in activities at the period, some of the participants were wary of playing into traps set up by their political opponents. To solve this challenge, I got some contacts to speak with the participants to reassure them that the interviews were apolitical. Therefore, the data collection which was scheduled to run sequentially was done concurrently to save lost time. The second major challenge was that the scanned newspapers were unreadable by Atlas.ti, despite having been converted to readable PDF's using online file converters. To solve this, the coded segments of each document was typed out and saved under the quotation function of Atlas.ti. This allowed me to have the coded texts in their correct forms when I generated the Atlas.ti report used for the analysis and discussion of findings. Although the coding and analysis process was slow and tedious, typing out the coded texts and taking notes meant I could engage and interact more with the data during the coding and analysis stage, as each portion of the re-typed text was read several times to avoid mistakes.

5.11 Chapter summary

This chapter contains a discussion of the key methodological steps taken in this study – from the research paradigm all through the research design and methodology, to sample selection, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations and lastly, challenges. In the next chapter, I present the analysis of the first data set collected from selected media articles using CA.

Chapter 6

Presentation of findings I

[N]ewspaper representations are rarely uniformly reductive; they provide gaps and ambiguities that allow feminist critique of dominant readings ...

– Baxter, 2018: 173

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter contains a discussion of the research design and methodologies which this study adopted. In this chapter, I present the CA findings of the study. In the next chapter, the findings of the IDI's are presented.

The data for this chapter were collected through CA of selected media articles from four national newspapers in Nigeria, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day*. The analysis of the selected media articles was done with the aid of Atlas.ti 8, using predefined codes or themes. Firstly, the data were categorised based on predefined themes which are relevant to the study. After that, similar themes were grouped into code families or categories which were used to answer the research questions for this study. The data collected from the selected media articles in the news publications (mentioned above) were used to answer the central research question as well as the first and second research sub-questions (see section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2). The third research sub-question is answered in Chapter Seven.

In the following section, the CA findings from the media articles are presented based on themes and categories informed by the research questions. Excerpts provided from the analysed media articles serve as grounds for the findings and the submissions made in this study. In the presentation of findings, the excerpts are referenced using tags consisting of the abbreviation of each publication's name, date and the page numbers(s) of the media articles. For example, **GN_20022011_68** means *The Guardian*, 20 February, 2011 Page 68; **PN_11032011_15** means *The Punch*, 11 March, 2011 Page 15, **VN_14042007_9** means *Vanguard*, 14 April, 2007 Page 9, while **TD_01032011_23** means *This Day*, 1 March, 2011 Page 23. Some of the excerpts are drawn from media interviews with women in politics. Such excerpts are presented in a question and answer format with the title's initials preceding the question, followed by the politician's response (the fourth excerpt under section 6.2.1.2.1, **TD_01032011_23**, is an example of such an excerpt).

6.2 Findings from media articles

As stated earlier, the media articles which were analysed were drawn from the four selected national newspapers in Nigeria. The findings are presented according to the four research questions posed at the beginning of this study (see Chapters One and Five). Where applicable, excerpts were drawn from each of the four newspapers examined. The excerpts are presented under relevant themes or categories to exemplify or, sometimes, justify, claims. The presentation of excerpts across the four newspapers was done to ensure balance and representativeness in the presentation.

The next section contains findings for the central research question.

6.2.1 Central research question: Construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions

The central research question formulated to guide this study sought to examine the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership roles in selected Nigerian newspapers. The researcher aimed to identify the various frames²⁵ used by the Nigerian newspapers in their portrayal of women in politics across different genres such as news, interviews, features, and columns, or commentary. The evaluation of selected newspaper articles revealed that women in political leadership positions are constructed and represented using diverse frames. Some of the identified frames include Empowerment, Subordination, Gender Identity, Gender Roles, Gender Equality, Competence, Personality, Familial Relations, and Misogynistic Language. These are now discussed as listed here, with the sub-frames of each of the mainframes – e.g., Empowerment is presented according to its three sub-frames, namely novelty, agents of change, and the insider, followed by the next frame, namely Subordination, followed by its sub-frames, etc.

6.2.1.1 Empowerment frames

The empowerment frame consists of three sub-frames, namely novelty, agents of change, and the insider. The category targeted articles which are meant to promote women's political participation, or more specifically, women in political leadership positions. The articles in this category highlighted the rarity of women in politics by presenting their breakthrough into

²⁵The frames in this study consist of predefined sub-themes which were grouped together under relevant basic themes. The basic themes are regarded as categories of basic frames of representation consisting of sub-frames (see Table 5.1).

political leadership positions as a novelty while highlighting their ability to bring about socio-economic reforms or make meaningful contributions to the development of the nation. Included in this category are frames which presented women as credible, formidable and equally competent candidates as their male counterparts without recourse to gender stereotypes and socio-cultural gender bias. The following excerpts are examples of such representations.

6.2.1.1.1 Novelty

The novelty sub-frame focuses on representations which highlight the involvement of women in politics as a ground-breaking, exceptional feat or a rarity in a field presumably belonging to men. Such references occurred 68 times in the analysed articles with women political leaders or aspirant politicians being framed as the first, or sometimes the only, woman in an appointive or elective political leadership position or first to aspire to those positions. The following excerpts are examples taken from the different news publications:

Call her the ‘last woman standing’ and you would be right. Ebiti Onoyom Ndok is the only female presidential candidate for the 2011 elections and she is vying on the platform of the United National Party for Development (UNPD) ... – **GN_200202011_68**²⁶

... If victory comes the way of either or both candidates, Nigerian politics would record the first democratically elected female governor(s) ... – **PN_11032011_15**

... with Mrs Uche Ohimai, the reality of being a Nigerian comes first. On her own, she is the first Nigerian woman to seek governorship election of a state she does not originate from or [is] married to ... Her right of claims to Lagos is that she has lived most of her life in the state ... – **VN_14042007_9**

Hajiya Balarabe Lawal Bello is the only female candidate running for an elective office in Bauchi ... – **TD_01032011_23**

Media representations based on the novelty frame reveal that media in Nigeria employ frames which highlight the participation of women in politics as a ground-breaking occurrence. The

²⁶Excerpts tags should be read as: name of newspaper (GN – *The Guardian*, PN – *The Punch*, VN – *Vanguard*, and TD – *This Day*), date of publication (day/month/year) and page number.

media do this by constantly presenting women as the first or only woman to attain certain political or public leadership positions. They also describe women aspiring for political leadership positions as “the last woman standing”, “lone female”, “jinx breaker” or “history maker” (GN_200202011_68; GN_05042007_5; TD_24042007_10; TD_28022007_17). Such representations show that women are largely considered newcomers in the Nigerian political terrain and their attainment of leadership is considered more so. The data also show that the media in Nigeria, sometimes, combine gender with ethnicity, religion, or political position to frame women as a novelty in politics (for example, VN_14042007_9; GN_05052007_55). This shows that gender, sometimes, intersects with other socio-demographic variables to marginalise Nigerian women politically.

It is important to note that using the novelty frame for women in politics can either promote or jeopardise their chances in politics (Campus, 2013: 52; Heldman, Carroll & Olson, 2005: 125). Hence, presenting women as new entrants to politics might cause them to be viewed as “a breath of fresh air” (Eshiet, 2015: 139), otherwise known as agents of change in a tainted political arena. However, persistent use of the novelty frame in the construction of women in politics has the potential of relegating women to minority status or even enhance the marginalisation of women in politics. The marginalisation of women in politics can also cause them to be perceived as political outsiders who lack adequate knowledge of the dynamics of the political terrain (Heldman *et al.*, 2005: 325).

In this regard, the constant framing of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria as a novelty, despite attaining the right to vote for over five decades now, can be assumed to contain both empowering and disempowering consequences for women (Oloyede, 2016; Eme *et al.*, 2014; Pogoson, 2011).

6.2.1.1.2 Agents of change

Another frame identified in the data is women as agent of change. In this frame, women were described as people who have contributed to national development within their capacity as a public office holder or having the intention or capability to do so. Such representations also include statements expressing the belief or hope that women in politics could bring about socio-economic change. There were 41 instances in which women were described as agents of change and development in the analysed articles. Some of the instances of such representations can be seen in the following excerpts:

The woman Senator Helen Esuene knows what development is all about and that is why we want her. She will not abandon us. [Do not] allow anyone to deceive you. In the Labour Party, we have promised to put a stop to it and ensure that Eket and other parts of the state are evenly developed instead of doing a sectional thing ...
– GN_03032015_16

Before independence, the likes of the late Margaret Ekpo [and] Janet Mokelu were active political activists who fought for various causes. With the advent of democracy emerged the likes of the former Minister of Finance Ngozi Okonjo Iweala; and the former minister of Solid Minerals and Education Obi Ezekwesili, both of who[m] contributed significantly to the reforms carried out by the Obasanjo administration ... –PN_29042011_6

Oteh would be remembered for her passion, purpose, articulation and implementation of reform measures driven by the vision to transform the Nigerian capital market into world-class ... – VN_04022015_34

Obiageli Ezekwesili has begun to establish herself as an austere reformist. One would do very well to remember that. Nigerians who followed her life of public service from the BMPIU, popularly known as the ‘Due Process’ office, can easily attest to her tenacious tendency to delivering transparent and accountable leadership at any level and whatever cost. Reform advocates, therefore, jubilated at the news of her appointment. Dejected students were ecstatic and helpful. Parents were thankful for the change she would bring into the sector ... – TD_03042007_16

As can be seen in the preceding excerpts, the agent of change frame was used to present women in politics as people who can bring change or transformation into the various sectors of the polity. In the analysed media articles, the frame was used for women who are already holding public leadership positions as well as political aspirants. Using this sub-theme, women who have already attained leadership positions were represented as having competently discharged their duties within the ambit of their official positions – some of which were previously occupied by men. Also, some of the women who aspired for certain political leadership positions were framed as having the capability to drive and implement useful development or reforms if they are elected. The frame was also used to emphasise the importance of recognising women as co-contributors to the political and socio-economic development of Nigeria. The frame was used in three distinct ways in the analysed

publications. The first as direct representation of a media practitioner or organisation's perception of a woman in politics (VN_04022015_34; GN_23032007_40-41); the second, women's direct representation of themselves (GN_21032015_7; VN_06032105_26; VN_08022015_22; TD_31032011_22) and thirdly, representations by political supporters or gender advocates (PN_02032007_57; TD_03042007_16).

The agent of change sub-frame is considered empowering because it de-emphasises gender differences and its perceived influence on roles and capabilities but focuses more on the strengths and capabilities of women in politics. In certain instances, women's ability to bring about change is premised on character traits such as honesty, integrity, and intelligence. In other cases, women's ability to bring about transformation was hinged on competence acquired through educational qualifications or professional experiences as well as track records from previously held leadership positions (GN_03032015_16; GN_01022011_6; VN_25032011_12; VN04032015_40). Lastly, the agent of change frame aligns with the yearnings of feminists and gender advocates on the salience of harnessing the potentials and capabilities of women through substantive inclusion in all levels of governance and decision making to enable the nation to realise its full potential for development (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 67–70).

6.2.1.1.3 Insider

Another identified theme under the empowerment frame is the insider theme. Using the insider frame, women in politics were given similar representations as to their male counterparts in politics. The insider frame also includes representations of women in politics as having adequate knowledge and capability to function effectively in political leadership positions without prejudice to their gender. There were 41 instances in which women in politics were represented equally competing with men within their rights as politicians. Such representations are devoid of unnecessary embellishments or descriptions which are meant to draw attention to the gender, relationships or personality of women in politics. The following excerpts exemplify this:

Of the many candidates vying for the Kano Central senatorial seat, Alhaji Muhammadu Bello of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Hajia Rabi Muktar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Alhaji Gwadabe Satiltima of the Action Congress (AC) have better prospects of clinching the seat ... – GN_03042007_9

The PDP had listed ... Otunba Alao-Akala as its governorship candidate and Ms Jumoke Akinjide as the senatorial candidate... Aspirants such as Brig-Gen Adetunji Olurin, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello and Folarin were among those whose names were conspicuously missing from the list ... – **PN_01022011_6**

.... For Mrs Remi Adiukwu-Bakare, it is a very familiar terrain. In the aborted republics, her name had always been heard in Lagos State and it is not a surprise that this ‘old’ war-horse is back on track, with [a] dream to govern Lagos State... – **VN_14042007_9**

The battle for Kano [C]entral is an interesting one. There are four leading candidates. They are Hajiya Najaatu Bala Mohammed of the ACN, Bashir Garba Lado of the PDP, Bello Isa Bayero of the CPC and Aminu Abba Ibrahim of the ANPP. It is too close to call ... – **TD_09042011_53**

As can be seen in the foregoing excerpts, the media in Nigeria, sometimes, construct women in politics as equal competitors or as viable as men for political leadership positions. The insider frame entails the usage of de-genderised representations in media portrayal of women political leaders. In this case, women are represented as being equally involved in politicking, at times with all its messiness, like their male counterparts (**GN_10042007_8**). Such presentations which de-emphasise gender stereotypes and differences can be advantageous to women in politics, especially those seeking leadership positions.

Although it is evident that the Nigerian political terrain does not present a level playing field for women, media representations portraying women as equally competent as men in politics could enhance the perception of women’s viability among voters. However, the insider frame can work against women in some cases. For example, media representations in which women are framed as equally involved in political violence or mudslinging, like their male counterparts, may cause them to be perceived in a negative light, especially in a highly conservative and patriarchal culture like Nigeria in which women are expected to be modest, unassuming and peaceable. As Gerrits, Trimble, Wagner, Raphael and Sampert (2017: 1090–1097) have noted that aggressive power display is usually viewed as unnatural and incongruent with societal expectations of femininity.

In the next section, I present my findings on the subordination frame.

6.2.1.2 Subordination frame

This category consists of three different sub-themes, namely outsider, sexualisation, and trivialisation. The outsider theme focuses on statements that regard women as political outsiders, intruders, gate-crashers or ignorant of political issues, while the sexualisation theme targets media representations of women in politics which unnecessarily describe any woman in a sensual or sexually appealing way. The trivialisation theme on its own is centred on statements or stories that suppress the identity of a female politician and refers to her with a gender or age marker, or statements that belittle the achievements of a female politician, or her ability to make sound judgements on issues of social significance.

6.2.1.2.1 Outsider

Studies have shown that, ordinarily, politics is dominated by men, for several reasons (Oyewole & Olisa, 2017; Hooghe *et al.*, 2015; Eme *et al.*, 2014; Verba, Burns & Schlozman, 1997), hence, the tendency for women who engage in politics to be viewed as veering into a strange and unknown terrain where they naturally do not belong. Consequent on this assumption, the outsider frame identifies instances of media construction of women in politics as interlopers in the political terrain. This also includes representations which create the impression that women in politics lack adequate knowledge of political issues. There are 26 instances of the outsider frame in the analysed data. Examples are provided in the following excerpts:

Widely considered a greenhorn²⁷ in the political terrain, she is believed to be a beneficiary of PDP's policy aimed at encouraging women's participation in politics. Much has been heard of her agenda through sponsored advertisements on the local Freedom Radio station. As the polls draw nearer, Hajia Mohammed is striving hard to outscore her leading rivals of the ANPP and AC. Though not much is known about her background, billboards bearing her portrait adorn strategic locations within the Kano metropolis, conveying the impression that she is in the race for good ... – GN_07042007_FP_19

On the other hand, Lagos State's deputy governor-elect, Joke Adefulure had a smooth sailing ride to victory. Her running mate, ACN's Babatunde Fashola had the incumbency power and huge

²⁷ A person who is regarded as inexperienced, lacking in expertise, or skills required for certain professions.

popularity working in his favour. The Diploma holder in Social Work is presently the Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, other than this, she has no political experience ... – **PN_29042011_6**

VN: You have never contested for office before. What is your experience?

Response: ... I have never contested before but that does not mean I am a novice ... I was [with] the Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN. I was the only female executive in any of the political parties at the time. I worked very closely with late Chief Obafemi Awolowo ... I was with the party for five years. By the time I left, I was acting Director of Publicity and Research ... I also was in charge of media coverage of late Chief Obafemi Awolowo campaign during the 1979 and 1983 elections ... – **VN_01042007_21-22**

TD: As the only woman in the race, how do you think you can defeat your male opponents?

Response: As the only woman in the race and first female candidate for a National Assembly seat, I am very confident that I will beat my male opponents because I solely depend on the Almighty God for my victory. I have a very large number of supporters who are ready and willing to come out *en masse* and cast their votes for [me] at the 2011 general election ... – **TD_01032011_23**

The first excerpt presented above was taken from the cover story of a Saturday edition of *The Guardian* newspaper. The story was published with the headline “Hooked by the bait of politics” and it featured eleven women vying for various political leadership positions with their mugshots²⁸ splashed across the page. While the placement of the story on the front page of the newspaper could be perceived as advantageous for women, however, a closer look at the content gives a different impression, as can be seen in the excerpts. The other excerpts also show that the media in Nigeria downplay the success or capability of women in politics on account of their newness to politics. The data reveals that women who are new to politics are considered to be lacking in experience for political leadership positions. Such framing entails the use of words such as newbie, neophyte or greenhorn (**GN_08022015_24-25; GN_07042007_FP_19**). Sometimes it is done through questions which seek to evaluate a woman politician’s competence or capability based on gender or political experience. The

²⁸ Head to shoulder photographs

media in Nigeria also construct women in politics using frames which describe their political participation or leadership attainment as chanced occurrences, while downplaying the women's competence or constitutional rights to the position (GN_08042007_67; VN_21042007_9). The use of such frames could have either adverse or positive effects on the success of women politicians during elections, depending on how it is deployed and utilised (Campus, 2013: 46–49).

The next sub-theme under the subordination frame is sexualisation.

6.2.1.2.2 Sexualisation

Sexualisation is one of the common tropes in media representation of women generally (Baxter, 2018; Darian-Smith, 2016; Hill, 2016; Buonanno, 2014; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Adcock, 2010; Chambers, Steiner & Fleming, 2004). In this study, sexualisation covers representations which describe women in politics in sexually appealing or sensual ways. This involves descriptions of the bodies of women as objects of sexual fantasy or making implicit sexual remarks about women in politics. The four instances of such representations in the analysed data are presented in the next excerpts.

Perhaps her greatest asset is her physique and glowing skin which makes whatever she wears sit well on her frame. Her lovely face also make[s] you melt when you are before her ... –
GN_04042015_10-11

Alluring ... senator hopeful Safinatu Mohammed ... –
VN_01042007_NP

Look, I am not happy. All sort[s] of stories have been flying around saying that this beautiful damsel is in distress.... She is too beautiful to be dragged through that kind of stress. Each time I see her, I become weak in the knees and would not really mind if it were true that billions were spent on private jets and complexion creams. [Show me a] woman with such commanding beauty [who] does not spend money to maintain their looks. from Kim Kardashian to Genevieve Nnaji, from Amber Rose to Omotola and yet they don't get probed, why must Diezani be singled out ... – **TD_25042015_20**

I'm so excited. Just heard that some NGO in Taraba has vowed to mobilise women to come out and demonstrate fully NAKED if the female candidate for the governorship is ever intimidated ... 'you

know what' ... All light and plump women with nice waists and firm bodies should join in this crusade. the older women can sit at home and support by watching TV and cooking ... I plead they should give me at least 24-hour notice so that I can prepare and travel to Taraba to be part of this joyful protest ... –
TD_25042015_20

The excerpts presented above are taken from different stories in the analysed publications. The first excerpt was a description of the beauty of the former Minister of Commerce and Industry in Nigeria. The second excerpt was the caption accompanying the picture of a woman senatorial aspirant. The woman who was described in the caption as “alluring” was modestly dressed in a caftan and photographed in a sitting position, which by no means was neither suggestive of allure nor seductive. The third and fourth excerpts which were published in a column of the weekend edition of *This Day* newspaper are satirical representations of the former Minister of Petroleum Resources and a group of women movements who threatened to embark on a naked protest against the intimidation of a woman governorship candidate in one of the states in the Northern part of Nigeria. In the third excerpt, the columnist, who happens to be male, employed a few sarcastic references to beauty and sexual innuendoes while he made a mockery of the former Minister of Petroleum Resources who was accused of misappropriation or mismanagement of public funds. The columnist found a way of making a needless linkage between his criticism and the woman’s looks and sexual appeal. In the fourth excerpt, just as in the third, the male writer made a mockery of a group of women’s threat to embark on a naked protest to prevent the intimidation of a female contestant. Aside from this, the writer trivialised a significant²⁹ traditional protest practice by describing the women’s nakedness as objects of his viewing pleasure. Though these were the only instances of the sexualisation frames found in the analysed data, it is still a pointer to the perceptions of some sections of the media about women in Nigeria. In previous studies, the media have been found to sexualise women in politics either by emphasising or by de-emphasising women’s femininity through visual representations (Lundell & Ekström, 2008). As can be seen in the preceding excerpt, the articles also emphasised women’s femininity

²⁹ Naked protests are extreme forms of protest used by women in certain Nigerian cultures to express grievances, seek redress, or protest unfair laws and legislations. Elderly women are highly revered in many Nigerian cultures. Therefore, it is considered an abomination for people to gaze on the nakedness of elderly women (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 52).

through textual representations. As Baxter (2018: 29) writes, sexualisation of women in politics in whatever form implicitly belittles women and strips them of the right of laying claim to any garb of competence.

The next sub-theme under this category is trivialisation.

6.2.1.2.3 Trivialisation

The trivialisation frame focused on representations of women in politics which suppress their identity through the use of gender or age markers. It also includes statements which undermine or belittle the capability of a female politician to make sound political judgements or other issues of socio-economic significance. There were eight instances of trivialising representations in the analysed data. They were:

GN: Would it not have served you better if you started gunning for a lower position and then build upon your experiences for your current ambition? And are you getting the support of fellow women?

Response: I have already explained why I did not feel I could seek election into a lower position. In any case, Nigeria has had military rulers who were in no way prepared for occupying those positions ... – GN_14022015_14-15

At the rally, Mariam sang, danced and praised God for surviving various intrigues in the aftermath of her emergence in the November 2006 intra-party election of her senatorial district. The politician, who also spoke in Igbo, rained curses on her detractors ... – PN_02032007_57

The sad thing in Anambra today is that we do not have a credible alternative to Uba; Dame Virgy Etiaba who was in the race is not capable of being a governor. I ask this because she has been tested. She is directly under the control of her children, without a mind of her own... – VN_16042007_39

The excerpts above are evidence of some of the ways by which the media in Nigeria trivialise women in politics. This includes asking questions that query their competence and capability to hold certain political leadership positions as can be seen in the first excerpt, to denying them agency by suppressing their identity through the use of gender markers as identificatory tags (PN_11042011_9; GN_10042007_8). As can be seen in the first and third excerpts, women in politics also tend to be represented as political pushovers, or people who do not

have anything to offer the masses politically. In other instances, women are also represented as pawns or objects that could be pushed around to fulfil men's agenda in the game of politics (VN_16042007_39; VN_21042007_9). Also, trivialisation was evident in articles in which women who are educationally and professionally competent were described as candidates whose backgrounds and political acumen are unknown (VN_31032011_25; PN_29042011_6; GN_03042007_9; GN_07042007_FP_19).

Next, I present my findings on gender identity frames.

6.2.1.3 Gender identity frames

The gender identity frame as used in the context of this study focuses on articles which evaluate a woman's strength or competence based on gender. This was examined using two opposing sub-themes, namely positive and negative. The positive gender identity frame or sub-theme manifests in articles or representations which acknowledge women's marginalisation in the political sphere without reinforcing the assumption that politics is the exclusive preserve of men. The negative frame, on the other hand, seeks to draw attention to a woman's perceived deficiency on account of her gender. It seeks to foreground the notion that women are lacking in physical or psychological capabilities to effectively handle the rigorous demands of politics. Excerpts exemplifying both sub-themes are presented in the following sections.

6.2.1.3.1 Gender identity: Positive

Positive gender identity representations, as stated earlier, acknowledge the domination of the political sphere by men, but do not promote or reinforce the perception that politics is a male-only sphere. There were nine instances of positive gender identity representations in two of the analysed newspapers. Some of the positive gender identity representations are presented in the following excerpts:

On the predominance of male politicians – the men have truly dominated the field and that in itself is more tragic, because, what is happening in politics today is that men have failed to believe that women have the potentials to contest for political office. Traditionally, this has been an area for the men and they have dominated politics because we have allowed them... We have what it takes, we have been doing it in our different fields of interest ...
– GN_25032007_16

PN:Remind lkeazor that it is a male-dominated society where it is sometimes difficult for a woman to really succeed in politics, and the Anambra indigene would not hear of such.

Response: Yes. It is male-dominated because of culture, but there is an age a woman gets to and she sits with the elders and the men. Then, she is respected ... – **PN_06032011_48**

As can be seen in the preceding excerpts, while media acknowledge politics as a male-dominated terrain, women push forward arguments to balance the bias and dispel the misconception that only men can succeed in politics. Even though media do not explicitly acknowledge or reinforce the notion that politics is an exclusively male club to which women have no right of admission, one can deduce an implicit bias of media practitioners towards women in politics. This is evident in their framing of questions with which they seek the opinion of members of the public on the rarity of women in politics. Such questions, oftentimes, highlight the prevalence of men and paucity of women in politics as a disadvantage for women in politics. Using this frame, media also question women about their perceptions of the readiness of members of the Nigerian society to vote for women aspiring for political leadership positions.

The next sub-theme is negative gender identity frames.

6.2.1.3.2 Gender identity: Negative

Negative gender identity as used within this study focuses on media representations which evaluate women's capability to withstand the rigours of politics on account of some physiological or psychological traits oftentimes attached to women's gender. Seven instances of negative gender identity were found in the analysed newspapers. Excerpts are presented as follows:

GN: Doesn't the wave of violence scare you?

Response: I am not scared because I know that my campaign is about issues... – **GN_18032007_54**

PN:With the killings and maiming, didn't you nurse the fear as a woman that politics was dangerous?

Response: Interestingly, it never crossed my mind. It never did. I go out believing that I have [a] service to deliver ... I never believe that anybody could hate me enough to say, 'Go and kill her' or something

like that because I don't go out looking for the misfortunes of people.

– PN_11032007_21

VN: Are you sure you can cope with the pressure of public life?

Response: Politics is a game and I like playing it... –

VN_23022007_22

While positive gender identity frames highlight men's dominance of politics and political issues, negative gender identity frame foregrounds the perceived weakness of the female gender as a deterrent to women's political participation. The foregoing representations promote the stereotype of women as the weaker gender which lacks stamina and strength to thrive in politics. This is usually done by framing politics as a dangerous and demanding profession for women. As can be seen above, the societal conception of femininity excludes any form of courage or bravery which is sometimes exhibited through aggression. Hence, women are not expected to show interest or take part in tasks or vocations which involve any form of violence. The perception that women are the weaker gender is responsible for media representation in which women in politics are inundated with subtle reminders of their perceived inability to thrive amidst aggression or rigorous tasks.

Next, I discuss the frame of gender roles.

6.2.1.4 Gender role frames

Gender roles deal with the societal conception of roles and responsibilities distinction on account of gender groupings or biological sex. Within this study, the gender role frame was examined in relation to its merits or demerits to women in political leadership positions. This was done using contrasting sub-themes, namely positive and negative gender role frames. On the one hand, positive gender role frame seeks to highlight the strengths rather than the disadvantages or challenges of women's traditional gender roles. Negative gender role frame, on the other hand, seeks to highlight the challenges of combining traditional gender roles with women's "unconventional" involvement in politics. The excerpts in the following section are examples of both positive and negative gender role frames in the Nigerian media.

6.2.1.4.1 Gender roles: Positive

As stated in the preceding paragraph, positive gender roles representations promote the advantages of gender roles to women instead of the challenges of combining traditional

gender roles with career. This frame was identified eighteen times in the analysed data.

Excerpts are:

As a mother, experience has taught me that hunger, thirst, ill-health, as well as other passions, including suffering and death, have no respect for gender and status. So, as a mother in high political office as chief executive of Benue State, there shall be no room for reckless conduct, squander and the mere pursuit of pleasure-seeking ventures ... **GN_07042007_FP_19**

We all know that women are better managers than men. A woman runs a home of six children, manages the extended family and her husband. We are also good mediators. Indeed, half of the problems in Nigeria would be solved if we have women as arbitrators and mediators ... – **PN_06032011_48**

As mothers we are better equipped to cater for society – women governorship candidate ... says of her governorship ambition: ‘I am for the welfare of the youths, women and the aged. PPA will tackle the energy problem in Lagos and power failure will be a thing of the past. PPA will give a new life to Lagosians and that is why I am urging Lagosians to trust me because I am a mother and a mother cannot deceive her children ...’ – **VN_14042007_9**

[W]omen are the sole breadwinners in many families. They juggle work or business with raising happy children and even find time to volunteer. They are the best friends to each other and their sisters and can be relied on to share their last dime. They can manage money and stretch a budget tighter than any Central Bank Governor has ever done and they navigate the world of in-laws with the finesse of the [savviest] political strategists ... yet when it comes to the public arena, things constantly fall apart for women ... – **TD_22022011_xivSpecial**

The excerpts above are media representations which were drawn out from the responses of some women in politics and gender advocates to media questions about their ability to effectively balance the demands of their private lives with their career in politics. Such representations show that women in politics in Nigeria have moved beyond the challenges associated with gender roles to highlighting the advantages of gender roles for women’s career development. Instead of highlighting the challenges, they capitalise on the experiences garnered through gender roles to push their campaigns and advance their political careers.

Particularly, women highlighted the strengths and experiences gained by women in the performance of gender roles as an added advantage to their qualifications for political leadership positions. These qualities include empathy, frugality, trustworthiness, impartiality and equanimity. Incidentally, all of the instances of positive gender roles framing identified in the data are based on statements made by women, either in response to interview questions or commentaries and opinion pieces. Even these views themselves are essentialising and could constitute a “role trap” for women in politics (Baxter, 2018: 26–33; Bierema, 2016: 126).

In the next section, I present negative gender roles representations.

6.2.1.4.2 Gender roles: Negative

Negative representations of gender roles do not only consider gender roles as a challenge to women’s career advancement, such representations also foreground the challenges of combining with active political participation gender roles such as housekeeping, parenting and wifely responsibilities. The following excerpts exemplify this:

GN: [How have you been able to manage] holding office and managing the home[?]

Response: ... I have never allowed my home to suffer at the expense of my office. I would like women to remember that they were created as helpmates. A woman must respect her husband even when she is the breadwinner. When you identify what your duties are as a wife and a mother and do them, there will be no problem... It is wrong when a woman tries to usurp the man’s position because she is the one bringing [in] money. Another man seeing that attitude may not want his own wife to aspire, believing that such is the attitude of women ... – GN_15022015_59

PN: So, how does she intend to balance home and her venture into politics?

Response: I don’t know how, but I’ll cope. My family is good and well and I don’t discuss my family that much. But I have grown-up kids pursuing their own lives... – PN_03032007_A7

Many women have gone [into politics], have seen and [have] been conquered. [Some] complain that women do not have the [capability] to participate fully in politics not only because [nature] requires them to bear children as well as care for them, but also

because of their cultural roles in society ... According to a woman who has dabbled into politics, [and has] been burnt, [and has] recoiled into her shell [explained that] ... a certain South-west state which favoured a lot of women in their cabinet also recorded an unprecedented number of broken homes [during a certain political dispensation. She pointed to] the fact that politics is not favourable to good housekeeping ... – VN_20032015_34

TD: As a successful woman politician, how have you been able to combine your role in public office and home? Can you comfortably say your husband is enjoying you?

Response: Of course, he is enjoying me. Let me [tell you] something ... as long as you are journalist and a woman, politics is a pass[ing] business because it is not easy balancing journalism with family. And if I was a journalist married for so long, politics is just my new thing ... So, my husband has been used to it.

TD: Are you saying that he is enjoying you sexually?

Response: I use to tell people that my husband is something else ... I recharge heavily anytime I am around. And, now that I am here full time, he is enjoying himself. TD_25022007_81-83

As can be seen in the preceding excerpts, women in politics were asked questions about how they are faring in the discharge of their gender roles while taking an active part in politics. Surprisingly, media interest goes beyond the common gender roles such as house cleaning, cooking and childcare, and extends to issues regarding sex and sexual gratification within marriage. Negative gender roles representations, as seen in the excerpts, contain implicit and, sometimes, outright reinforcement of gender roles stereotypes. Such representations also reinforce the misconception that women are not supposed to engage in professions which would take them away from the home as it would be detrimental to the wellbeing of the whole family. As can be seen in the last excerpt above (TD_25022007_81-830), some reporters are so brazen that their mode of questioning women political leaders seems voyeuristic and vulgar to say the least. Aside from the absurdity of such questions, what is more interesting is that the woman so questioned seemed comfortable in her response to the blatantly disrespectful and tactless questions asked by the reporter. Also, the publication of such questions in one of the reputable newspapers in Nigeria calls to question what is deemed acceptable in Nigerian media, also whether such a question would have been posed to a man.

Among the challenges of negative gender roles frames is that they saddle women with the responsibility of home and relational care. Aside from this, negative gender stereotypes

frames put women in a difficult position of constantly proving that they are not negligent of their responsibilities as wives and mothers while developing their career. One of the ways through which women defend themselves is by assuming the “superwoman” persona which makes them claim they juggle both housekeeping and political leadership effectively, or, alternatively, claiming that all their children are grown and mature enough to fend for themselves (Wood, 2009: 182). Aside from further entrenching gender roles stereotypes, such representations create certain gender roles expectations which could be detrimental to the career progression or health of women political leaders. Besides, it could also discourage women with young families from seeking to participate in politics.

Having presented the finds on gender roles, in the next section I present my findings on gender equality frames.

6.2.1.5 Gender equality frames

One can say without a doubt that gender equality is at the centre of all feminists’ and gender advocates’ struggle. The call for gender equality focuses on the dismantling of all patriarchal foundations and hegemonic structures which have kept women subjugated over the years. In this study, the gender equality frame was examined through two opposing frames, namely the emancipation and the male displacement frames. These are presented in the following sections.

6.2.1.5.1 Emancipation

The emancipation sub-theme is targeted at media representations which challenge the marginalisation of women in politics. This also includes representations which call for the inclusion of more women in active politics and public governance. There were 29 occurrences of this in the analysed data. Excerpts are:

A situation whereby women, with their number and potential, play only an imperceptible role in the country’s politics is not ideal. It signifies gross under-utilisation of human resources to the entire country’s disadvantage. There is [a] need to empower and encourage women who are interested in public life and provide a level playing field for all persons regardless of sex or gender ... –
GN_02032007_14

Nigerian women[’s] political participation should transcend involvement in campaigns or caucus meetings, but [should be

targeted at] vying for serious elective positions, holding key party positions and occupying in government. This is a vehicle of empowerment which may drive long-lasting changes for development in the country... – **PN_07032015_15**

VN: How involved are women in politics in the North?

Response: They are there at the grassroots and women are really being reminded to be actively involved ...

VN: How do you hope to improve the level of women participation in politics in the North?

Response: ... if people like us are eventually given the seat, it will be another way to encourage more women to come into politics. –

VN_23022007_22

[T]o an unbiased observer, the emergence of a woman as [the] governorship candidate of a leading political party would signal a clear departure from the hitherto ‘Men’s job’ and more importantly a major attempt to demonstrate that the country has gone far beyond paying lip service to removals of all forms of discrimination against women. Others in a show of disdain would simply dismiss her ambition thus: ‘Is she not a woman? She would only try but would not win. Government house is not a kitchen.’ ...

– **TD_25042015_13**

The excerpts above are few examples of the representations of women in political leadership positions as people who have been suppressed and marginalised in political participation, hence, the calls for inclusion and emancipation by women in politics, gender advocates and journalists who are desirous of closing the gender gap in political participation in Nigeria. Gender emancipation in the aspect of political participation is one of the agenda of women, especially gender advocates in Nigeria. The advancement of gender balance and emancipation narratives in the media is a pointer to the gender chasm that exists in political participation in the country despite the existence of a National Gender Policy which stipulates 35% participation of women in political leadership positions. The existence of gender emancipation frames, on the one hand, show the involvement of the media in the call for gender equality. The rarity of this frame across the analysed media, on the other hand, indicates that gender emancipation is an occasional occurrence in the Nigerian media. This could indicate that the media lack deep commitment to women’s cause just as the society at large appears to.

The next sub-theme under the gender equality frame is male displacement.

6.2.1.5.2 Male displacement

The male displacement theme focuses on views that women's political participation is a means of displacing or subjugating men in politics. There were only two instances of this in the data, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

Etiaba... sees herself as a woman who has a date with destiny. She cautioned those she described as 'uninformed' to avoid seeing her as a usurper of Obi's position because she had no such ambition ...
 – GN_10042007_5

TD: As one of the governorship aspirants in Kwara State, why do you now want to subsume your ambition under Senator Gbemisola Saraki?

Response: As we all know, democracy is the government of the people by the people and for the people ... It was during my tour to consult with people about my aspirations that I found out that I should not continue with my aspirations. I have to re-align with the reality on [the] ground. That is what prompted me to join the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN) ... – TD_24022011_23

The first representation highlights a woman in a political leadership position trying to dispel the perceptions of a sub-set of the Nigerian society about her succession to an impeached state governor. Although her rise to the position is within the precinct of the constitution, her legitimacy was still questioned by the society. Just as her rise to power was considered an usurpation of power, her ability was considered inadequate for effective functioning in the position of the governor, despite that she had been a deputy in the same state for eight months before the impeachment of the governor. In the second representation, a reporter considered the political alliance between two political candidates as subsumption of the ambition of the male under that of the woman. Although coalitions are common occurrences in the Nigerian political terrain to enhance the chances of certain political candidates, alliances in which men make concessions for women candidates are not only rare, as can be seen in the representation, they are frowned upon in some parts of the Nigerian society. The framing of the coalition in terms of subsumption or subjugation of male power or authority is not just an indication of an overriding societal believe of the superiority of the male gender, but also a prevalent preference for male candidates for political leadership positions.

Having presented my findings on the gender equality frames, next I present findings on the competence frames.

6.2.1.6 Competence frames

The competence frame consists of constructions of women in political leadership positions in light of skills, knowledge, abilities or expertise acquired through formal training or hands-on experience. The competence frame is sub-divided into three themes, namely academic, policy/issue, and professional (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.1.2 for a description of the themes). The competence theme shows that women politicians are constructed and represented in light of their academic qualifications, professional accomplishment as well as active participation in diverse socio-political and economic issues or intended plan of action (manifestoes). The three sub-themes, as they appear in each of the four newspapers analysed, are presented in the following sections.

6.2.1.6.1 Academic competence

Academic competence frames highlight the degrees and training acquired by women from different institutions of learning. There were 43 references to the academic qualifications of women political leaders in the analysed data. The following excerpts are examples of instances in which journalists highlight the academic qualifications of women holding political leadership positions, or those aspiring for leadership positions:

A seasoned politician, she holds a diploma in Journalism, a degree in Political Science, a postgraduate degree in Public Relations and Marketing. She also holds a certificate in IT with emphasis on Web Development from the Michigan State University, United States ... – **GN_04042015_10-11**

A graduate of [the] University of Sussex, she had her high school education at Cheltenham Ladies' College in England ... – **PN_20032011_16**

Patricia Otuedon-Arawore is from the Itsekiri extraction, and she epitomises the strength of the typical Itsekiri woman. A journalist by training, Patricia read journalism at the London School of Journalism and Mass Communication between 1975 and 1978 ... – **VN_01042007_21-22**

This popular Lagos lawmaker attended the famous Queens College, Yaba, Lagos and later Saint Francis High School, USA... she attended the West Virginia University... She later went to the University of Buckingham ... and later attended Nigerian Law School ... she did her master's degree at the University of Lagos. She is currently writing her doctoral degree [at] the same university... – **TD_01032015_39**

The data collected show that women in political leadership positions in Nigeria are sometimes represented as capable of holding political leadership positions on account of experience acquired through various trainings for certificated degrees from formal institutions of learning. Representations such as the foregoing highlight the academic portfolio of some of the women seeking or holding political leadership positions in Nigeria. Such framings are expected to enhance the perception of women's viability and increase their chances of succeeding during elections. Nevertheless, the opposite is what is obtained. Women were still implicitly considered unviable or incompetent to hold political leadership positions.

Next, I present the professional competence sub-theme.

6.2.1.6.2 Professional competence

The professional competence sub-theme highlights the career trajectory and the work experiences of women in politics. This frame appeared 74 times in the analysis. The theme encompasses instances in which women political leaders' career experiences are presented either as a background to a media report or in any part of a media report. The professional competence and academic competence frames are sometimes used together in media representations of women in politics. The following excerpts are examples of such representations:

She was National Treasurer of the party and member of its Board of Trustees. She was at one time a member of the Abia State Economic Development Committee ... – **GN_07042007_FP_19**

She is not the stereotype woman leader who superintends women that are decked in expensive headgear and made to dance at political rallies. Rather, Sharon Olive Ikeazor, a barrister at law, is an activist, a crusader for justice and an advocate of women's causes ... – **PN_06032011_48**

She ... work[ed] with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Benin. She moved on to the Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN, where she worked closely with the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo... she set up Mahogany Limited, an advertising and consulting firm. In 2003, she went into TV production and founded the Hallmarks of Labour Foundation role model awards... She is the author of six biographies ... – VN_01042007_21-22

In her university days, she participated actively in student unionism and held various positions. Her track records in both the public and private sectors are worthy of emulation. She is an Associate of [the] Chartered Institute of Shipping (ACIS), an associate of [the] Institute of Personnel Management (AIPM) and a member of [the] National Council of Women Society (NCWS). Her voice can be heard loud and clear, even in male-dominated endeavours...- TD_01022015_39

Representations such as the foregoing show that women in politics do not just move from the home front to the public terrain. Rather, they are people who have acquired competence through various professions and vocations. The acquired skills may be in politics-related or other career paths. The professional competence frame also shows that media construction and representation sometimes highlight the career progression of women already holding or aspiring to political leadership positions. Just like the academic competence frame, the professional competence frame should be expected to enhance public perceptions of the viability and credibility of women in politics.

The next sub-theme under this category is the policy/issue competence frame.

6.2.1.6.3 Policy/Issue competence

The policy/issue frame had the highest number of occurrences in the data with 104 occurrences across the four news publications. This sub-theme covers representations of women in politics making comments on issues of socio-economic or political significance within their capacity as an elective or appointive political leader, or even as an aspirant for an elective position. Some of such representations are exemplified by the following excerpts:

Describing the scorecard of the government as second to none in the history of Nigeria, the minister said, ‘the nation’s economy is the fastest-growing in the world, at seven per cent GDP growth, with the affirmation that the United Nations (UN) conference named Nigeria as the number 1 destination for investment in

Africa, attracting over \$8 billion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) ...’ – GN_03022015_14

The professor of French and Applied Linguistics ... says it is necessary to carry all stakeholders – including observers from the Francophone countries – along ... she said rebranding the public sector with a view to improving customer service delivery of ministries, agencies and departments was an essential part of her transformation blueprint. If elected, she promised, she would focus on infrastructures, such as roads and power ... – PN_04022015_14

VN: What will be your major legislative agenda?

Response: I will contribute to a cohesive, and responsive Senate and ensure that we do not disappoint those who have reposed confidence in us by electing us ... I do know that there are so many things that are yearning for attention in the senate, boundary adjustments, constitution review with a view to amending it this time around and ensuring that we give Nigerians quality legislation in the upper chamber... – VN_05052007_14-15_17

She sponsored the Domestic Violence Bill into Law ... she also supported and contributed to the passage of other bills into law, spanning education, health, infrastructure, youth empowerment & development information, security appropriation and children’s rights law ...TD_01032015_39

In the preceding excerpts, various women in political leadership positions were represented making presentations on the state of the nation’s economy, intended line of action, as well as bills sponsored in parliament. This shows that the media represent women in terms of the official job description or manifestoes. Aside from this, such representations show that Nigerian women in politics could well discharge the duties assigned to them in whatever leadership position they occupy or seek to occupy. Some of the issues highlighted under the policy/issue frame include education, economy, internal revenue, health, environmental protection, agricultural development, job creation, gender emancipation, youth empowerment, children’s rights, and security. Most of these issues, except for security, according to research, can be regarded as women issues (Campus, 2013: 41). Even though security is stereotypically considered a non-feminine issue, women’s presentation of security as part of their manifesto show their level of awareness of the pressing needs of the Nigerian society and the desire to proffer solutions if allowed to lead.

The issue/policy sub-frame which is also a de-genderised representation can contribute to enhancing society's perception of women in governance and public leadership positions as people get to see women based on their competence and capabilities. However, it is noteworthy that, sometimes, when women express their desire to bring about social change for development, some media practitioners may follow up questions which could better be described as condescending, as in example **TD_22042011_22**, that showed a male journalist asking a woman political contestant how she would bring about the change she talked about. This is especially so if the woman is considered to be new to politics.

The next category is the personality frame.

6.2.1.7 Personality frames

This category examined articles that represent women in politics in terms of their behaviour, their appearance, or dressing. It has been argued that media tend to focus on the personality of women in politics rather than the issues advanced by women politicians or their competence (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Heldman *et al.*, 2005). In this study, the personality frame is subdivided into two, namely attitude or behaviour, and the physical appearance. Both sub-themes are presented in the following sections.

6.2.1.7.1 Attitude/Behaviour

This sub-theme include articles in which women in politics are constructed in terms of their attitudinal disposition. Such representations are often stereotypical feminine description meant as forms of endearments for women in political leadership positions. Some of such representations identified in this study include descriptions such as soft-spoken, kind-hearted, resourceful, generous, hardworking, compassionate, humble, dogged, beautiful, demure, passionate, dazzling and charming. There were 43 instances of the attitude/behaviour sub-theme in the data. Examples are:

She is a rare combination of brain, beauty and humility, which often makes her husband ... beam with satisfaction ... Lady Eme Ekaette, fondly called Mma and former president of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN), spoke of her days at Queen's College, Lagos, service to humanity, lifestyle, the society, her family and the need for knowledge shortly before her election as a senator at the just-concluded general elections... –

GN_05052007_19

Demure in her ways, she was a member of the House of Representatives, she was one of those whose brilliant contributions to matters of national interest were never in short supply. Unassuming, she refused to belong to the party circles ... she is back on the grind ... Having retained her quiet mien ... – **PN_01022015_31**

Daisy Danjuma is a woman whose presence can never be thought alongside anything that has a ring of gloom to it because her aura of charm and beauty keep shining at social gatherings in the country to the extent that she was tagged ‘a social light bearer’. With her [there] is never a dull moment because if her sense of humour doesn’t get to you, her captivating social grace is bound to nail you one way or another. That the wife of General Theophilus Danjuma, former Defence Minister, ranks among the A-list of Nigeria’s most admired women is no coincidence, she has earned it ... – **VN_15042011_NP**

With her motherly candour, Chief Mrs Oluremi Tinubu’s eight years as the state’s first lady between 1999 and 2007 was strewn with style, hardwork, vision and philanthropy ... She no doubt has zeal and energy that can sustain and see her through the new assignment... – **TD_08042011_21**

The above excerpts establish the fact that the media in Nigeria employ representations of women in politics in Nigeria which centres on their attitudes or behaviour. While some of these representations can be perceived as being harmless to the reputations of women, sometimes such representations may contain some implicit societal bias or stereotypes. An example of such is the first excerpt in which the woman was described as “a rare combination of beauty, brain and humility”. Even though the statement was meant as an endearment, the journalist probably drew on the misconception about beauty and brain being mutually exclusive. Aside from this, the piece from which the excerpt was taken contains other interesting details about the woman’s life which were relegated to the latter end of the story. In other representations in this category, women in politics employed some of these character traits to describe themselves (**GN_08042007_67; GN_15022015_57; PN_06032011_48**).

This frame highlights some of the social expectations of gender behaviour in Nigerian society. It is also worthy to note that the blend of character traits in media framing of women shows that while women in the Nigerian society are expected to exude full femininity, character traits such as strength, focus, doggedness, and honesty are equally important in their

display of gender-appropriate behaviour. However, the societal definition of strength in relation to each gender seems to differ. For instance, the definition of strength in women for Nigerian society seems to be more in terms of the ability to effectively exude their femininity in relation to societal gender expectations (PN_06032011_48). Invariably, strength in women excludes the ability to withstand electoral violence or political intimidation. Hence, women in political leadership positions in Nigeria have to learn to know when to strike a balance in the display of femininity and strength in the political terrain. Similarly, honesty is a character trait which is highly regarded in the Nigerian society. This is more so for the female gender who are predominantly perceived as guileless. So, when a woman in a political leadership position is accused of any sort of corruption, it tends to be judged by the media and society at large on account of her gender.

6.2.1.7.2 Physical appearance

This sub-theme focuses on representations in which women in politics are described in terms of their appearance, clothing, physique, jewellery, accessories, or adornments, as well as their overall fashion sense. Media fixation on the fashion sense of women in politics as well as the degree and nature of its influence of women candidates' viability has been a continuing source of academic debate (Funk & Coker, 2016). There were 59 identifiable instances of the physical appearance sub-theme in the data. Examples are:

Talk of one Lagos society woman forever glamorous in her looks, Nike's name will crop up. This is because this beautiful woman, who is the former Minister of Commerce and Industry, is very stylish by all standards. Any time you run into this matriarch... either at a social function or a corporate setting, you will appreciate her for her gorgeous looks, be it in corporate wear or traditional attire, she looks good. What further makes her look all the more smashing are the accessories she puts on to compliment her dressing. She not only wears good shoes, but she also puts on the latest jewellery which brightens her looks. Perhaps her greatest asset is her physique and glowing skin which makes whatever she wears sit well on her frame. Her lovely face also makes you melt when you are before her. She likes it, she enjoys it. No wonder she doesn't find it difficult standing out in any gathering she attends, especially parties, even when she is practically forced to attend a lot of them by her hosts/hostess whom she has built relationships with over the years. In fact, the parties provide the opportunity for

those seeking to look like her to copy her style ... –
GN_04042015_10-11

Bola Dare, a journalist, works for president Olusegun Obasanjo at the Obasanjo Solidarity Forum. Her main job is the mobilisation of women for political campaigns. What stands her out [sic] is her dress sense. As Kemi Dayo-Aiyetan found out, the businesswoman is a head-turner anytime, anywhere ... – **PN_01042007_25**

As electioneering comes to a head, particularly in the cyberspace, Nigeria's first female Petroleum minister Diezani Madueke has been in the eye of the storm yet again. But the pretty lady has emerged to defend herself, saying NNPC was not indicted in the missing oil revenue saga... – **VN_01042015_34**

At first glance, you would take her for a 50-year-old. But you would be dead wrong. The truth is the high-flying politician clocked 69 penultimate weeks. The light-complexioned lady is blessed with a glowing skin that always catches the attention of many whenever she makes a public appearance ... –
TD_01032015_38

It is evident from the foregoing excerpts that the media in Nigeria focus on the appearance and fashion sense of women in politics, leading to representations which principally centre on the women's looks at the expense of other qualities. In some representations, women's career success is tied to their good looks, with their looks being considered as their greatest strength, while competence and other achievements take secondary place (**PN_03032007_A7; PN_01042007_25**). In other representations, media sometimes combine beauty with the character or competence trope in their description of women in politics (**GN_11042015_11; GN_05022011_32; 05052007_19; TD_24042011_80-82**). Some of these representations sometimes place women in politics side by side with celebrities in the music or movie industry (**GN_TD_25042015_20; PN_17042011_37**). In other representations, entire interviews or most of it were focused on the politician's beauty or fashion sense (**PN_21042007_A7_A9; PN_01042007_25**).

While representing women in political leadership positions in terms of their dressing might not be entirely bad, placing undue attention on their fashion sense may shift the focus away from other serious issues which they stand for in the minds of people. Needless to say, it could undermine people's perceptions of women's capabilities, because competence is, sometimes, not emphasised in such media representations. Also, unnecessary focus on women

in politics' appearance has been described as a form of objectification which could erode the credibility of women in politics. Aside from this, such representations also tend to promote the stereotype of women's "natural obsession" to fashion and glamour (Funk & Coker, 2016; Hayes *et al.*, 2014; Klenke, 2011).

6.2.1.8 Familial relations frames

Another category identified in the representation of women in politics is the family relations frame in which women in politics are constructed in terms of their family relations and connections. This was examined using two different sub-themes, namely positive and negative family relations frames. This was determined by identifying mentions of family relations in media articles as well as the perceived implications of such representations on the perception of women in politics credibility and competence. Like the other frames, the usage of family relations frame cuts across the four media outlets sampled.

First, I present findings under positive familial relations.

6.2.1.8.1 Positive familial relations

Positive usage of the relations frame focuses on media articles in which the relatives or family members of women in politics are mentioned for introductory purposes or as a background to a story. Such representations are used by media to get the public acquainted with a politician through knowledge of the person's familial antecedent. Thirty instances were identified in which family relations was used as part of representations of the biographical details of women in politics. Some of these are presented in the following section:

Born in Akili-Ozizor, Ogbaru Local Government of Anambra State on January 5, 1962, to the royal family of Igwe D.O Oduah ... – **GN_04042015_10-11**

Anifowose, who is the daughter of the late Second Republic Governor of the old Ondo State. Chief Adekunle Ajasin, raised the alarm at a press conference at the state party secretariat on Oyemekun ... – **PN_06042011_10**

Iyabo is the sitting Senator representing the district. A veterinary doctor and daughter of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, she was Commissioner for Health in the Governor Olugbenga Daniel's administration between 2003 and 2006 ... – **VN_23032011_1-2**

Mbanefo, an art enthusiast and painter who turned 50 recently, was born to a[n] European mother and a Nigerian father ... –
TD_29032015_57

As can be seen from the above excerpts, media may refer to familial ties of women in politics for several reasons, one of which would be to get members of the public acquainted with the woman so represented. Another would be to enhance the credibility of a candidate by associating them with family members who in most cases are well known in the society or held in high esteem. This could be because of African culture. Specifically Nigerian culture takes pride in kinship and communalism. Therefore, politicians, like the general society, may seek to enhance their viability among voters by flaunting family relations. Since Nigeria is a patrilineal society, the relations often emphasised are usually the male. The representation of women political leaders using the family relations frame is a result of this culture. Although representations highlighting the family relations of politicians cannot be said to be bad, media tend to use it unnecessarily in their framing of women in politics. This can be seen in my presentation of the next sub-theme – the negative family relations frame.

6.2.1.8.2 Negative familial relations

As stated earlier, the use of familial relations in the representation of women in politics may be necessary for some reasons. Nevertheless, the media may overextend the application of the familial relations frame to the extent that it contains traces of subtle bias which could disempower, rather than empower women in politics. Negative familial relations, as used in this study, borders on media representations which overtly or implicitly attribute the success or career growth of women in politics to relatives which in most cases are men. It also includes representations which contain unnecessary mention of the familial relations of women in politics. Some of such representations are presented in the following excerpts:

Hajia Rabi, wife of Air Vice Marshall Muktar is considered a greenhorn of the trio. Though relatively unknown until [she emerged] as PDP candidate late last year... the newfound relationship between her husband and the former Defence Minister, Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso could count in her favour ... –
GN_03042007_9

Her father, Chief Hope Harriman, was an influential Nigerian. A successful businessman, his children thrived on his good name. One of them is Temi Harriman ... – **PN_01022015_31**

[T]he latest information is that the national secretariat of PDP has finally settled for Mrs Okadigbo. Her strength is that she is the widow of the late Okadigbo who was loved by the people of the state and if she is fielded by the party, could garner votes because of her late husband ... – **VN_09032011_41-42**

[T]he strongman of Kwara politics Dr Olusola Saraki has publicly endorsed his daughter and senator representing Kwara Central, Gbemisola for the replacement of his son, Governor Olusola Saraki ... Gbemisola is, however, relying on the political antecedent of her father, Saraki senior who has remained a political godfather to past governors and other political office holders in the last three decades ... Her recent endorsement by her father for the plum position of the state [governor] in 2011 also added another credit to her chance ... – **TD_22032011_22**

Representations such as the foregoing were identified 95 times in the analysed data. Across the four newspapers analysed, it could be seen that beyond the usage of familial relations for biographical or introductory purposes, media in Nigeria use family relations indiscriminately in their construction and representations of women in politics. Such representations often border on the framing of women in politics as “Wife of ...” or “Daughter of ...”, among others, in media reportage of women’s political activities. In situations where such representations are not necessary, it could subsume the identity, actions or achievement of the said woman under that of a male relative. Another implication of such representations is that the popularity or unpopularity of women in politics is tied to the political sagacity or notoriety of their male relatives. These implicit attributions do not only deny women agency of their achievements or contributions in the political circle, but it may also diminish people’s perceptions of such women’s competence or viability for whatever political positions for which they aspire. More so, such representation seems to confirm the assumption that the only women who attain political leadership positions in Nigeria are those with powerful and influential male relatives as observed by Olufemi *et al* (2012: 1082).

The next category is the godfatherism frame.

6.2.1.9 Godfatherism

Godfatherism is a common concept in Nigerian politics. It is used to describe powerbrokers who have within their control the hearts of the masses and the ears of policymakers. Godfatherism in this study is examined in the context of representations which highlight the achievements of women political office holders or aspirants in relation to a political kingmaker. Also, some other representations highlight the perceived implications of lack of political godfathers for the chances of women in politics. The godfatherism frame draws attention to the centrality of godfathers in Nigerian politics. Such representations occurred thirteen times in three of the analysed newspapers. The following excerpts exemplify the frame:

Gbemisola Saraki has been anointed by the godfather of Kwara politics, Dr Olusola Saraki, to succeed her brother at the Government House this year on the ticket of Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), a relatively unknown newly registered political party ... – **GN_12022011_52-53**

In Rivers State, for example, of all 20 contestants, Mrs Stella Eno is the only female. Although she emerged the deputy governorship candidate for Africa Democratic Congress in 2007, very little is known about her political acumen. Eno, who lost the governorship election, was alleged to have been handpicked for the elections ... – **PN_29042011_6**

Ibori has a task ahead. He is expected to deliver Mrs Ali just as he delivered the party's governorship candidate, Uduaghan, as the governor-elect. It is, however, yet to be deciphered how he would achieve this since he comes from a different senatorial district ... – **TD_20042007_19**

As can be seen in the data presented above, godfatherism sometimes intersects with familial ties in media representations of women in politics. The data also reveal the usage of the godfatherism frame both by the media and women in politics themselves. The media, oftentimes, associate the achievement of women in politics to political godfathers (**PN_28042011_1**; **PN_29042011_6**). They are also wont to represent women's failure to the inefficiency or lack of a political godfather (**TD_17042011_109-110**). Women on their own tend to dissociate themselves or their achievements from the support of political godfathers (**PN_03032007_A7**; **PN_04032007_21**).

As stated, godfatherism is regarded as an integral part of Nigerian politics. While it applies to both men and women in the Nigerian political domain, it constitutes a double bind for women in politics. On the one hand, the lack of a political godfather could be detrimental to the success of any politician, and more so for women who are already side-lined on account of their gender. Having a political godfather, on the other hand, could lead to accusations of marital infidelity or promiscuity against women in politics (VN_20032015_34). There are identified instances in the analysed data in which women have had to deny connections to a political godfather, either as a way of conforming to societal standards of chastity to protect their dignity and safeguarding their marriages. Another challenge which could emanate from media representations which foreground godfatherism is that it could demotivate women who might want to get involved in politics. This is especially so for women who do not have influential male relatives in politics. Also, it may prove difficult for women to win the support of a patron or godfather because of the assumption that women are less viable than men in politics and would not be a good “investment choice” for Nigerian political godfathers who often give their support in exchange for financial or other material gratification.

Next, I present findings in the misogynistic language category.

6.2.1.10 Misogynistic language frames

Misogyny borders on bias and prejudice against women expressed in various ways such as patriarchy, sexism and androcentrism. In this study, this was examined in relation to language usage in media representations using two sub-themes, namely blanketing and othering. Blanketing themes targeted media articles in which the male gender title or pronoun was used in reference to a woman while the othering sub-theme focuses on gender-specific labels which are used to draw attention to the gender of the occupant of a political leadership position. In total, 55 instances of such frames were identified in the analysed data.

6.2.1.10.1 Blanketing

Blanketing as used in the context of this study refers to the use of terms denoting the male gender as a broad descriptive category for both women and men. Such representations contain descriptions of positional titles held by women using terms which are deeply rooted in patriarchy. This is a result of patriarchal assumptions that politics or public governance is a male exclusive-right. There are eighteen instances of representations which used male

gender descriptions for official titles held by women in politics. The excerpts below exemplify this:

Binta Masi Garba was ... was the Adamawa State Chairman of the APC and the first female state chairman of a registered major political party in Nigeria ... – **GN_18042015_52**

The Chairman of the Ondo State Chapter of the Action Congress of Nigeria, Nigeria Mrs Jumoke Anifowose ... – **PN_06042011_10**

All the four women in the present Senate served as committee chairmen and in many cases showed their worth ... – **VN_05052007_14-15_17**

Hon Nkeiruka C. Onyejeocha, the Chairman of House Committee on Aviation, House of Representatives, has been in the vanguard of the struggle for women empowerment in Nigerian ... – **TD_01022015_39**

One common form of blanketing found in the analysed data is the constant use of the title “chairman” for women who have been chairpersons at various levels of political leadership. The use of blanketing representation in media tends to obscure the gender while giving ascendancy to the notion of male sole ownership of political leadership positions. By implicit reinforcement of the assumption that politics is a male-exclusive preserve, such representations may make the attainment of political leadership positions seem like an anomaly for women. Also, in situations whereby the person being referred to in a media report does not bear names which could make her gender distinguishable, young women could be denied the opportunity of having identifiable role models in the political terrain.

The next sub-theme under this category is othering.

6.2.1.10.2 Othering

In a way, othering can be described as a direct opposite of the blanketing sub-theme. It involves the use of gender-specific adjectives or descriptors in addition to the official title of a politician. Such framing serves to distinguish the gender identity of the occupant of a certain political position especially when the position is occupied by a woman. In other words, othering can be described as a differential framing based on gender identity. Excerpts are given in the following section.

It is in the light of this that a groundswell of opinion is building up in favour of the emergence of Senator Helen Esuene, a female governorship candidate of the Labour Party (LP) who hails from Eket Senatorial District especially from people of the zone who see her candidacy as a way to assuage their feelings of marginalisation ... – GN_03032015_16

PN: A woman senator, what does that entail?

Response: To be honest it entails a lot. You have to work 10 times more than your male colleagues in order to be taken seriously ... – PN_04032007_21

Squeaky clean Nigerian female minister, Omobola Johnson, trends, if ever, always for the right reasons ... – VN_11032015_34

Chief Ifeanyichukwu Godswill Nnaji ... is contesting this year's election along with his female running mate, Kadijat B. Abubakar, a holder of National Certificate in Education ... – TD_16042011_56-57

Instances of othering frame were identified 37 times in the analysed data. This sub-theme reveals that Nigerian media frame women in politics by adding gender markers to women officeholders' titles or the position for which they are contesting. Such terms include but are not limited to "female minister", "female" or "woman politician", "woman senator", "woman leader", "female contender" or "female running mate", as can be seen in some of the excerpts above. One of the perceived challenges of the othering frame is that it consistently pushes women in politics to the side-lines, albeit subliminally. This is considered prejudicial because it is considered to be a way of alienating or marginalising women in political leadership positions by calling attention to their gender or addressing them by gender-specific official titles.

In the next section, I present the frame challenges as encountered by women in politics in Nigerian society.

6.2.1.11 Challenges frames

The challenges frame consists of media representations which highlight some of the challenges which constitute an impediment to women in politics in Nigeria. This was examined using three distinct sub-themes, namely finance, violence and socio-cultural gender norms. Finance covers instances of financial challenges that have constituted impediments to

Nigerian women in politics. For instance, lack of funds to promote political campaigns, while gender-based violence focuses on any instance of physical, verbal or sexual assault against a female politician. Socio-cultural gender norms consist of cultural practices and beliefs which constitute challenges to women within the political terrain and the Nigerian society as a whole. The first challenge to be presented is that of finance.

6.2.1.11.1 Finance

Financial challenge has been persistently identified as one of the causes of the paucity of women in politics (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013: 52; Samuel & Segun, 2012: 11). In the analysed articles, the media represented this challenge in various ways, such as drawing attention to the challenge itself, or by highlighting the disbursement of financial aids to women in politics. Women's financial dilemma was referenced 22 times. The following excerpts exemplify this:

The low participation of women in politics is further compounded by the predominance of money as a factor in the game, along with the relative absence of financial empowerment of women ... – **GN_02032007_14**

Moreover, no woman should come into politics if she is not financially prepared because the men have the money. It is alright if your husband or family support you financially. Get the financial strength and it becomes easier ... – **PN_06032011_48**

You are new in politics, the same applies to your party which is also a new platform. The combination of these does not seem to give you an advantage. Can we know if you have the financial muscle for the elections? ... – **VN_21042011_24**

No fewer than 230 female politicians who are candidates for different offices in next month's general election were beneficiaries of the ₦50 million grant disbursed by the Nigerian Women Trust Fund ... – **TD_25032011_11**

Politics to a large extent is a capital-intensive venture, especially for aspirants, irrespective of gender. However, women's traditionally disadvantaged socio-economic position makes the prospects of securing political leadership positions more challenging. With the financial challenge frame, women in politics are portrayed as people whose success in politics is constrained by financial incapability (**VN_31032011_25**). Aside from this, women in politics are framed as beneficiaries of financial aid from the government in support of their political

career. The disbursement of funds to assist women in politics can also be viewed as a palliative measure which might have been used by the government at the time to score cheap political points. Interestingly, while political parties and government make claims of providing support to women in politics, it is evident from my data that such help is barely enough. A case in point is the example of **TD_25032011_11**, in which each of the said 230 recipients of the total ₦50 million would receive ₦217,391 if the funds were disbursed equally.

Aside from this, women's financial capability is also sometimes questioned by media (**VN_21042011_24**). Since such questions are rarely or never put to men in politics, one can consider this as showing implicit stereotyping of women's financial incapability to fund their political campaigns. Such representation, rather than mobilising support, could threaten the perceived viability of women as it portrays candidates who are already disadvantaged from the outset and are most likely to fail, regardless of their competence and capability.

6.2.1.11.2 Violence against women in politics

In this study, the violence frame covers all forms of violence targeted at women in politics. This includes all acts of physical, verbal or sexual harassment against women. While violence is a common occurrence in politics, women in politics are affected more by violence because not only do they have to contend with the acts of electoral violence, many of them are victims of attempted assassination, verbal assault, or sexual harassment for attempting to dabble into politics. There were eight instances of violence against women identified in the data. The following excerpts are some of the examples:

The recent outburst by a female Senator on why she decamped from the PDP to the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) seems to showcase the dilemma. According to her, she left the PDP because the party leaders were pestering her for sexual favours ... – **GN_02032007_14**

The Ogun Central Senatorial candidate of the People's Democratic Party, Dr Bisola Sodipo-Clark, narrowly escaped death on Tuesday evening when suspected thugs attacked her campaign train in Abeokuta... – **PN_12032015_13**

Three months ago, my car was snatched at gunpoint. I had a lot of threatening phone calls from people threatening to assassinate me. The two candidates I defeated at the polls were ... senators and that

goes to tell you that it is not what you are doing now, it is the day of reckoning that matters... – **VN_05052007_14**

Of course, one cannot have forgotten so quickly that Doris, an engineer and member of the House of Representatives representing Ika Federal Constituency, Delta State, was also at the receiving end of comprehensive pummelling by male members of the Reps... Doris was caught in the maelstrom of blows... – **TD_13022011_67**

From the foregoing, it is evident that women in political leadership positions are constructed and represented as victims of various forms of violence or aggression within the political sphere. The sheer amount of turbulence in the Nigerian political terrain puts the lives of women in politics at risk, thereby constituting a major impediment to their advancement in politics. From the analysed data, it is evident that violence against women in politics is one of the systematic ways of sustaining women's underrepresentation in politics. The fear of violence constitutes an impediment to women's political participation in many respects. It could cause women themselves to shun politics. It can also cause their relatives to discourage or outrightly prevent them from getting involved in politics. A case in point is **PN_08042011_9**, which contains an account of one of the foremost women in politics in Nigeria who was compelled by her husband to leave a major political party because of the wave of violence in the party at the time.

The general perception of women being weaker also makes the issue of violence a concern for women's participation in politics, as society expects women to stay away from tumult or acts of aggression. Media framing of political violence oftentimes involves women being constantly questioned about their staying power in the face of political violence in Nigeria. This was exemplified by some excerpts under the negative gender identity frame. Aside from constructing women as frail and unable to withstand violence in the political terrain, media sometimes euphemise violence against women in politics (**TD_13022011_67**). Furthermore, the scant reoccurrence of violence against women in the analysed data may be taken to mean that there is a low frequency of violence against women in the Nigerian political arena. But considering the underrepresentation of women issues in media, one can conclude that some incidents of violence against women in politics in Nigeria may not get published in media, especially if the concerned women are lacking in social clout and political relevance.

Also, within this frame, there are representations which did not only express concerns about the prevalent violence in the Nigerian political terrain (**GN_09032015_22**;

TD_27042007_7) but also presented women leadership as a viable solution to the violence in the Nigerian political terrain (TD_24022007_20; GN_20032011_5). This narrative mostly advanced by women, conforms to the stereotype of women as peace-loving and non-belligerent beings. This assumption can be buttressed by the representations in which some of the women in politics seek to promote bills that would prohibit gender-based violence in whatever form (PN_27022011_48; TD_27042007_7; TD_31032011_22; TD_01032015_39).

The next sub-theme under this section is the socio-cultural gender norm theme.

6.2.1.11.3 Socio-cultural gender norms

Socio-cultural gender norms are processes or practices which develop in societies and guide gender relations. Due to sustained usage and adherence, many of these processes or practices have come to attain the place of sacredness among members of society. In this study, the socio-cultural gender norms frame examines traditional beliefs about gender which have, or could constitute, impediments to the increased participation of women in politics within the Nigerian context. There were 34 occurrences of issues bordering on gender beliefs in the analysed data. Excerpts are:

GS: Now that you are running for the highest position in the country, how do you hope to handle the fact that you are not married and the perception of Nigerians towards this?–
GN_2002011_68-69

On the other hand, it is also easier for a woman who is no longer of childbearing age to participate in Nigerian politics. Where would you leave your kids if you are to attend meetings at night? Will you leave your family at home and attend meetings? A mature woman is in a better position to handle politics because she does not have encumbrances like children, husband, etc. But if you have a good support group – mothers-in-law or relatives - to help take care of your kids, nothing should stop you. I started politics when my last child graduated from university, but our stories cannot be the same ... – PN_06032011_48

PN: [It is believed that] most women of your kind of resume and position [do] not have successful homes.

Response: I don't agree with that. There are women in high places, and they have stable and happy marriages. I believe some women are lucky to get the right partners, some are unlucky, get married

to men who don't share the same ideas with them and they divorce. Whether you are in politics, big or small, it doesn't matter. I was not a politician when I got married ... it didn't work and I wouldn't blame any of us. Maybe if I was still married, he wouldn't have allowed me to be a politician, who knows? ... – **PN_08042007_31**

Another problem militating against ACPN is the gubernatorial candidate, Gbemi. The core of her main constituency, Ilorin, is not in support of a female governor. Ilorin is deeply rooted in Islamic religion which disallows females to play a dominant role in politics ... – **VN_06032011_35**

Although scholars have argued that the underlying cause of marginalisation of women in the Nigerian society is patriarchy (Makama, 2013: 116–117), media representations show that gender intersects with patriarchy and, sometimes, religious beliefs to set up barriers which subjugate Nigerian women. Knowing the implications of silence, “enlightened”³⁰ women in politics sometimes use the media to decry the consequences of patriarchy on Nigerian women (**GN_01032015_58; PN_17022011_12**). Some of the identified representations of women in relations to socio-cultural gender norms in Nigeria are rooted in stereotypical gender performative expectations as well as gender roles distinction rooted in culture. The belief that women are homemakers is one of the foremost socio-cultural factors working against women's participation in politics. Related to these are issues bothering on relational maintenance within marriage which is ascribed to women. Hence, it is assumed that women's involvement in politics most often leads to negligence of traditionally assigned gender roles and invariably collapsed marriages (**PN_08042007_31**). Aside from this, societal expectations about marriage and respectability is also a burden for unmarried women aspiring for political leadership positions (**GN_20022011_68**). It is also worthy to note that, sometimes, women are held to a double standard of gender norm expectations, namely socio-cultural gender and religious beliefs (**PN_20302011_16; GN_03042007_9**). In this case, culture and religion intersect to perpetuate the marginalisation of women in politics and public leadership. Some of the identified representations of political women in media construct women in contention with gender power dynamics steeped in religious beliefs and cultural practices (**GN_03042007_9**).

³⁰ I used the term “enlightened” because some women in politics are still unaware of the dimensions and implications of patriarchy, or are simply afraid of speaking out against it.

Culturally, women are expected to take peripheral roles in terms of governance and public leadership while men take the lead (GN_09042015_52). Women who seem to be going against the established gender power order are perceived as deviants and are, sometimes, subtly reminded of their “natural” status, or outrightly opposed. Interestingly, women themselves sometimes collude with men to challenge other women trying to break free from gender domination (GN_21022015_7; GN_25032007_16). In other cases, women themselves reinforce some taken for granted socio-cultural gender norms which relegate women in society. This is especially so in terms of gender roles and power relations within marriage. In some instances, women have to constantly show a preference for family above career, while at the same time, constantly yielding to the control of the husband, which in some instances can be described as patriarchy masked in “chivalry” (PN_06032011_48; PN_07042007_A7_A9; PN_08042011_9). Not only do women themselves reaffirm gender roles distinction, but they also promote and perpetuate gender stereotypes and male hegemony.

As a consequence of socio-cultural gender practices, women in political leadership positions are placed under constant scrutiny by the media to ascertain whether they are living up to societal gender expectations. Media also present socio-cultural gender norms as a challenge to the viability of women in politics. While these socio-cultural gender expectations persist, there is also a wave of awareness among Nigerian women, some of whom are calling for the disestablishment of gender norms emanating from patriarchal practices which have kept women perpetually relegated in political leadership and the Nigerian society generally (GN_13022011_17; GN_001032015_58; GN_09042015_7; PN_08042007_31).

Lastly, I present findings under the other frames which are relevant to this study.

6.2.1.12 Other frames

In this section, I present other frames which were not captured in the initial coding schedule, but which I consider relevant to this study. These are presented under three broad categories, namely labelling, reasons and suggested solutions. The latter two categories are two broad categories divided into sub-categories consisting of identified factors leading to the low participation of women in politics, as well as suggested solutions to increase women’s political participation. These are presented in the following sections:

6.2.1.12.1 Name-calling

One of the identified stereotypes employed in the representations of women in the analysed news publications is the representation of women who exude strength and confidence in political leadership using terms such as “Iron Lady”, “Amazon”, “old warhorse” and “experienced warhorse”. Name-calling frames were identified seventeen times in the analysed data. The term “amazon” occurred thirteen times as the most frequently used, with the following excerpts as an example:

She has an intimidating stature as well as scintillating achievements and she is an example of the popular saying that ‘what a man can do, a woman can do better.’ She has proved beyond doubts [sic] that she is an Amazon and an icon. As a woman, she is successful at what some men failed at and she has victoriously treaded paths some men feared to tread. Although challenges come her way, ... as a woman with a strong conviction to achieve the extraordinary, break new grounds and achieve remarkable feats, she has tactfully and intelligently surmounted them, thus positioning herself as a role model and beacon of hope to the Nigerian women ... – GN_05022011_32

Many people see her as the ‘iron lady’ of Ogun State politics, but for Folake Marcus-Bello, the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, that should be expected. ‘Women can’t afford not to be high handed because you see, it is only now that people are beginning to recognise the potentials of women.’ ... she says [sic] ... – PN_25022007_23

For Mrs Remi Adiukwu-Bakare[,] it is a very familiar terrain. In the aborted republics[,] her name had always been heard in Lagos State and it is not a surprise that this “old war-horse” is back on track, with dreams to govern Lagos State ... – VN_14042007_9

By every understanding of the word, Akon Eyakenyi deserves to be called an Amazon. She is tall and built like a strong man, no wonder she belongs to the exclusive public service club known as the Federal Executive Council, where she tinkers with policies in the lands, housing and urban development sector ... chronicles the rising profile of this unassuming teacher whose ambition could not be stifled by early marriage ... – TD_08022015_34-36

The name-calling frames identified in the analysed data were used by the media in Nigeria to compliment and celebrate the strengths, courage, and achievements of Nigerian women in political leadership positions. By using terms such as “Amazon”, “Iron lady”, and “Old war horse” in the representation of some successful women political leaders in Nigeria, the media reaffirm the claim that the Nigerian political domain is a male-dominated terrain and that women have to possess exceptional skills and strengths to be able to survive and secure space for themselves. Describing women political leaders as “Amazons” was not so much for the women’s look or physical stature, but for their display of strength by participating and excelling in a male-dominated field. Also, the term “Iron lady” was used in admiration or acknowledgement of women’s firmness in the place of leadership while “old warhorse” was used in acknowledgement of women’s experience in the political terrain. The horse is a symbol of strength and conquest. The use of this label underscores the struggles and experiences of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria.

The combination of labels used by the media shows that even though society subjects women and mento different standards of acceptable gender traits or behaviour, strength is an admirable character trait in women political leaders in Nigeria. However, the extent of women’s display of strength may still be subject to debate. A major disadvantage of such frames is that the usage of such terms could cause the women so described to be perceived as mean and high-handed. More so, Kanter cited by Baxter (2018: 24–26) describes such representations as “role traps” for women.

6.2.1.12.2 Reasons frame

Under this category, I present reasons advanced by media as some of the reasons for the low participation of women in politics. These include apathy, systematic marginalisation within political parties, divisiveness or acrimony, social conditioning, perceived alignment to male agendas, perceptions of candidates’ viability, party affiliations and media. It is worth noting that most of the identified reasons for the underrepresentation of women in politics align with claims made in previous studies (Lawless & Fox, 2010; Dolan & Sanbonmatsu, 2009; Caul, 1999).

6.2.1.12.2.1 Systematic marginalisation

Central to women’s attainment of political leadership positions are processes of candidate nomination or selection which leads up to election into leadership positions (Kunovich &

Paxton, 2005: 508–512). Sadly, these processes are still largely mediated by men who continue to play a major role in who gets nominated and eventually fielded as candidates for elective or appointive positions. Hence, many of the women who are actively involved in politics still do find it difficult to attain the leadership positions to which they aspire. In this study, systematic marginalisation of Nigerian women in politics was identified through representations which foreground or decry subtle discrimination against women political advancement within political parties. This includes incidents of systematic marginalisation through substitution of women's names in favour of male aspirants, as well as outright denial of their mandates.

Less well known is that the political parties themselves, which are the only vehicles we have recognised in the 1999 Constitution for contesting, do not also want women. They do little to promote women within the party, restrict them to 'woman leader' positions and thwart all their best efforts to take other positions. A look at how the national conventions of these parties are conducted is proof and the candidate lists of the two major parties for the NASS also provide more evidence. For instance, out of over 1,600 candidates, PDP has only 19 women with tickets to the House, while APC has 26. For the Senate, out of over 700 candidates, both parties have only seven female candidates each. So, the parties, through their constitution and their manifestoes, are sending a clear message that women are not welcome. – **GN_01032015_58**

Ambassador Ogbon-Day is the ANPP senatorial candidate in the district. Like others, she left PDP after the primaries to pick the ANPP ticket. It is clear that ANPP is not her preferred party, but she had to make do with the ANPP since she was edged out by superior powers. She lamented in a recent interview that she had paid Amori homage to inform him of her senatorial ambition only for him to join the race later.... – **VN_17032011_45**

The writers of the foregoing excerpt highlighted some of the ways through which Nigerian women seeking political leadership positions are sometimes systematically subjugated within political parties. One of the women who have contested elections in Nigeria disclosed that political parties in Nigeria sometimes use the excuse of fee waiver to side-line women aspirants by confining them to certain tokenistic positions or outrightly substituting them with male candidates regardless of viability or competence (Osori, 2017: 28–29). This was also the case in other examples (**PN_01042011_18**; **PN_25022011_15**; **VN_25032011_29**). Even

though political parties in Nigeria claim that they are actively involved in increasing women's political representation, acts of subtle discrimination meted out to women who contest for leadership positions keep women perpetually relegated in politics. One of the reasons for the subjugation of women within political parties is the assumption that women do not belong in politics and are therefore considered less viable than their male counterparts. Pogoson (2011: 112) rightly noted that the male-oriented outlook of political parties in Nigeria denies women the privilege they need in securing the required support to attain political leadership positions.

6.2.1.12.2.2 Party affiliations

Politics is “a game of numbers and influence”(Quadri & Thomas, 2018: 5). In this regard, the success of political candidates is oftentimes determined by the popularity and influence they wield. Hence, politicians tend to seek out parties whose ideologies do not only align with theirs but also in which they can get the required support. The importance of the political party a candidate chooses as a platform for their campaign cannot be overemphasised. In relation to this study, one of the factors that work against the maximal representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions is their choice of political parties. Although Nigeria has a multiparty political party system, over the years, there has always been two of these parties holding sway among the people from the local to the national level. Meanwhile, getting nominated for elections on the platforms of these political parties has been quite challenging for women because of the predominance of men in the top leadership structures of these parties. Although there are no written rules to prevent women from contesting, there seem to be invisible systemic structures of marginalisation which sometimes frustrate women's effort at securing the nominations to contest on the platforms of such political parties.

Little or nothing is known about Ezennaya, save the fact that she is a candidate for the party. One other factor that may work against her is that APGA does not have a strong support base in Lagos State, while funding will also affect her chances ... –

VN_31032011_25

Women who are contesting on the platforms of the lesser-known political parties in Nigeria are considered to be more disadvantaged than their counterparts in the popular parties. This

is more so because politics in Nigeria is not so much about a candidate's credibility and manifesto, rather, a factor of political affiliation and social networks among other things (Osori, 2017; Quadri, 2015). Therefore, the viability of women contesting political leadership positions in Nigeria is sometimes queried by media using several overlapping factors other than gender.

6.2.1.12.2.3 Divisiveness/Acrimony

Divisiveness or acrimony border on claims and indications of women's lack of support for their counterparts in politics. There were eight instances of representations highlighting animosity, in-fighting, and lack of support among women. A remarkable one is the case of a former presidential aspirant, Mrs Sarah Jibril, who recorded a single vote against the two men who were her opponents in 2011. Mrs Jibril's landmark loss has been a reference point both for media and gender advocates about the divisiveness and lack of support for women contesting for political leadership positions in Nigeria (GN_15022015_57; GN_06022011_62; GN_10022011_52; PN_23022011_15). As much as some women may want to deny the chasm that exists among women in politics, media representations of such occurrences in various contexts can be taken as evidence of this claim, as in these examples:

Although many more women are becoming very active in politics as a result of a reawakening, they, however, suffer discrimination and lack of confidence sometimes even from their fellow women...

– GN_09042015_7

PN: The general impression is that women don't vote for women. Why is this so?

Response: That is absolutely not correct. Women vote for women and men just as men also vote for women and men. People look for quality. If you bring out a woman to contest for an election and I see that the woman does not have the required quality to win the position she is contesting for and her male counterpart is a better person, people are bound to make up their minds to assess the candidates. That was why we said women should be able to present the best candidates that can win elections so that people can go there and assess them. Women are bound to vote for the best candidates and if they get a woman who is better than a man, women would vote for them ... – PN_23022011_15

Our women are being allowed to grow by the men in this country, but the problem is that they would rather support a man for a position than their fellow woman. They shout about being marginalised and all that, but secretly, they dislike promoting one another. We shall get somewhere in this scheme of things when we unite... – VN_20022011_22

[A] group of women members of the Congress of Progressive Change staged a peaceful protest against the nomination of a female member of the party for Bauchi North senatorial district [as] Balaraba is not credible enough and cannot represent us well ... – TD_16022011_10

Some of the media representations of women fighting against women call attention to one of the underlying causes of underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions. While media report instances of such occurrences within the Nigerian society, women in politics do not seem aware that infighting further serves the interest of men by sabotaging women's efforts at securing equality in political participation. The excerpts from the analysed publications showed that those who problematise the issue of "infighting" among women are oftentimes gender advocates and some of the affected women who are concerned about the persistently low representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria. Some of the representations under this sub-theme revealed that women themselves sometimes doubt the ability of other women to function effectively in leadership positions and would rather align with men by voting for them. Surprisingly, even women who are supposed to be at the vanguard of the call for gender emancipation and increased participation sometimes do not throw their full weight behind the cause they claim to stand for. For example, the second excerpt under this sub-theme was taken from a press interview with a former Minister of Women Affairs, Hajia Inna Ciroma, who was also the National Women Leader of one of the two prominent parties in Nigeria. She was also a member of the party's National Working Committee at the time a woman presidential aspirant, Mrs Sarah Jibril, recorded a single vote against two male opponents during their party's presidential election primaries in 2011. Despite holding several important positions in her party, especially that of the National Women Leader of the party – a position that is meant for mobilising women to vote for a choice candidate, Ciroma failed to provide the needed support for Jibril who was the first woman to seek the highest political position in the country. Ciroma's response in the excerpt revealed that women are mostly considered as inferior to their male counterparts. This implicitly means that women candidates lose elections to their male counterparts because of

their incompetence. Like Jibril, another woman, Ayisha Osori, who lost her bid for a senatorial position in the 2015 general elections, documented her struggles in getting the support of some of the foremost women politicians in Nigeria (Osori, 2017). Such occurrences lay credence to the assumption that women's political participation is, mostly, tokenistic while positions given to women, such as that of the Women Leader, are used for the benefit of male politicians rather than women (TD_10032007_111). Most importantly, women's lack of support for women aspirants and candidates shows the depth of women's indoctrination into patriarchal ideology as well as the complexity of the challenge facing women politicians in Nigeria.

Another reason advanced for the underrepresentation of women in a leadership position in Nigeria is alignment to male agendas, as explained in the next section.

6.2.1.12.2.4 Alignment to male agendas

While it has been noted that women do not support other women who aspire for political leadership positions, another reason identified in media for the underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions is the assumption that women politicians, especially those who get to power through some sort of male support, are not usually committed to championing women's causes. This is evident in some women politician's alignment to the very structure which is keeping all women relegated. The excerpt below exemplify this.

There are several reasons why in Nigeria women are finding it hard to press forward in politics ... One, the majority of the small number of women who make it into political nirvana and get the positions of their choice, get there because they are 'somebody's' wife, daughter, not-so-secret mistress or sister. As such they are already aligned with power and do not owe their position to any women's group... for those who are not affiliated by blood to power but who make it into the men's club, they soon realise that the way to survive is to be quiet about 'women's issues' and play by the exclusionary rules of the club ... –
TD_22022011_xivSpecial

The assumption is that women who get into power through the help of men usually join forces with men to side-line other women from ascending into positions of authority. It is also assumed that such women who attain political leadership positions avoid women's issues as a survival strategy in the Nigerian political terrain. This is congruent with the arguments of

Liu (2019: 13) that even when women attain political leadership positions they are still lacking in the agentic power to promote the interest of the people they represent. Another reason why women distance themselves from women's issues is to show people that they represent every member of society and not just women alone (Rhode, 2017: 49). This invariably means that the appointment of women into leadership positions may sometimes help to further perpetuate male hegemony rather than gender parity in political representation. Usually, women candidates make gender empowerment part of their manifesto, but it is not clear if they follow their claims through after they have been elected.

It is also worth noting that the excerpts are targeted at women in politics who get into power through familial antecedents. From this, one can deduce one of the possible implications of media representations which unnecessarily foregrounds the family relations of women aspirants or candidates rather than their issue standpoints.

6.2.1.12.2.5 Viability

Viability has to do with perceptions of candidates' suitability for certain leadership positions as well as their ability to function effectively within such positions. Considerations of a candidates' viability emanate both from within their political parties as well as the wider society. For women, gender tends to intersect with considerations of their viability on all grounds. In this study, media representations of women in politics reveal a prejudiced perception of the viability of women aspirants issuing directly from the media in Nigeria and the society at large. Extant literature has shown that media and society at large hold preconceptions about women candidates' competence and ability to win elections based on consideration of certain policy issues which are deemed to be beyond the ability of women to handle or legislate (Campus, 2013: 50–55; Lawless, 2004: 479). Because of the misconception of women's capacity or compatibility with public leadership, women seeking elective positions in Nigeria are most times viewed as unsuitable to lead their political parties to victory at the polls. This also involves beliefs about the ability of women political aspirants to deliver on their electoral promises compared to men. The following excerpts exemplify this.

GS: Congratulations, you are a woman candidate, but it's just you alone. Do you think Nigeria is ready for woman leadership? –
GN_2002011_68

Mr Fidelis Tapgun has attributed the woeful performance of the Labour party in the Saturday's National Assembly election to the wrong choice of the Deputy Governor of the State, Mrs Pauline Tallen, as it's governorship candidate for the 2011 election. ... He said that the result of the election was not unexpected because there was no difference between Tallen and her boss since both of them were elected under the same platform ... – **PN_14042011_15**

As the Deputy Governor of Anambra State, Dame Virgy Etiaba flags off her campaign to run for the Governorship of Anambra State on the platform of her political party, APGA, cracks have developed in the leadership of the party as opposition is mounting from within the party over her ambition.... a chieftain of the party ... [said] the ambition is deceitful, counterproductive and a calculated attempt to drag APGA into the mud through misuse of funds ... 'I wish to clarify that ... following Dame Virgy Etiaba's letter to APGA voluntarily withdrawing her candidacy ... INEC refused to accept Peter Obi's name, citing spurious court judgement' ... What is clear from the foregoing is that Governor Peter Obi is a primary target, because he is seen as a formidable candidate against the anointed one... – **VN_06042007_11**

The leader of the group ... said though Bello was a woman, they were not in support of her because she could not represent them well at the National Assembly, adding that 'she did not win and will not win. She will not represent us well, Aliyu Gebi was the one that won the primary election...'. – **TD_16022011_10**

Previous studies have revealed that women are more likely to be perceived by the media in light of their political viability than by their standpoint on salient political issues (Ette, 2017; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009). As can be seen in the preceding excerpts, the media in Nigeria, just like their counterparts in some other parts of the world, sometimes do not only foreground the rarity of women in politics through the use of the “novelty” frame, they question the viability of women aspirants on account of their newness to politics. In a way, this can constitute an impediment to the success of women in politics. Nigerian women seeking elective political leadership positions are, sometimes, denied the needed support because of the misconception that they do not have the required skills or competence to succeed in politics. Such perceptions, which are further promoted through media representations, contribute to jeopardising women's chances at getting nominated for elective

or appointive positions. The promotion of such thinking by other women shows evidence of the influence of hegemonic ideology within the Nigerian society. The first excerpt, which was extracted from an interview with the only female presidential candidate in Nigeria in 2011, Mrs Ebiti Onoyok Ndok, shows a reporter questioning the candidate on the readiness of Nigerians to have a woman president. Such representation cannot only be regarded as pessimistic but also disempowering. Meanwhile, in the second excerpt, another woman who had lost a gubernatorial election was described as a “wrong choice”, albeit, the description was also applied to the male governor with whom she had previously served. Comparing Tallen to her boss may seem to neutralise any assumption of underlying gender bias in the evaluation of women’s suitability for certain political leadership positions, however, one might want to reconsider one’s stand because women’s longstanding political disadvantages make them more susceptible to such criticism.

Furthermore, Lühiste and Banducci (2016: 239–244) affirm that women in politics are more likely to be placed by their political parties in less viable political leadership positions than their male counterparts. However, Lühiste and Banducci further observed that political party’s assessment of candidates’ viability does not influence the nature or quantity of coverage given to women in politics. As can be seen in the last excerpt above, some Nigerians would not support or vote for women candidates vying for political leadership positions because of the misconception that women cannot function effectively in political leadership positions. This possibly explains why political leadership positions are sparsely populated by women because not many people would support a female contestant. It may also not be unrelated to the constant casting of women as deputy governors in Nigeria (Suleiman, 2017: 37–39). See also, [VN_20032015_34](#).

6.2.1.12.2.6 Social conditioning

Social conditioning in this study is seen as a consequence of the processes of traditional gender socialisation. This is premised on the argument that an individual’s understanding of gender identity and gender roles is determined by a series of social processes through which people learn to think or act in ways that are thought to be consistent with their gender classification in society. The process of gender socialisation consists of a series of direct and subliminal influences which contribute to an individual’s overall perception of self (Duerst-Lahti, 2008: 161; Lorber, 1987: 54–55). Gender socialisation in most African societies, until recent times, emphasises gender role division which constrains girl children to gain skills and

competence mostly in preparation for their roles as wives, mothers, and supporters of men (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009: 55). Aside from this, traditional gender role socialisation has constrained women in the roles they play within society (O'Neill & Stewart, 2009: 739–740). Also, it influences how society, as well as women, perceive themselves in relation to roles and occupation. It has been argued that as a result of traditional gender socialisation women are less likely to seek public service as a career option or perceive themselves as qualified for political leadership positions (Liu, 2019: 15; Rhode, 2017: 7; Lawless & Fox, 1999: 67). The social conditioning sub-theme explains some of the consequences of sustained socialisation processes on Nigerian women's attitude and their career choices as it relates to politics or public governance, as per these examples:

Some might see women as being weak and unambitious, but this is not necessarily the case. It might well be that women's social conditioning has helped them to develop qualit[ies] quite different and complementary to men's, making them more suitable for certain roles in the division of political labour. Such qualities might include but are not limited to flair, sense of style, diplomacy, multitasking and a variety of others.... – **VN_20032015_34**

Women have been socialised for centuries to be contemptuous of themselves ... the oppressed never like each other and would rather be far away from it ... when you bring this into the structure of politics, women are unable to see each other as 'leaders' or authority figures and so they willingly and some would say logically choose men over women ... – **TD_22022011_xivSpecial**

Even though the foregoing sub-theme did not reoccur many times in the analysed data, it gives valuable insights to women's perceived acrimony to women seeking leadership positions. The writer of the piece **VN_20032015_34**, in her representation of the persistent casting of women as deputy governors in Nigeria, argued that women have acquired a different skillset through socialisation which makes them suitable for certain positions. The writer of this piece is a woman and her conjecture seem to foreground the argument that women are different from men, however, not to the intent of equality, but subordination. Such representations reveal the influence of patriarchal conditioning on the psyche of Nigerian women who continue to perceive themselves and other women as subordinate to men.

6.2.1.12.2.7 Apathy

Despite the call for political inclusion and the increasing competence, women's perceived lack of motivation for political leadership positions continues to be a source of concern to scholars and gender advocates (Rhode, 2017: 38; Eshiet, 2016: 113–127; United Nations, 2015b: 122–125; Krook, 2010: 157–158; Lawless & Fox, 2010: 171–172). Central to this debate is the assumption that more than anything else, traditional gender socialisation and its attendant gender roles dichotomy have affected women's perception of themselves and their career choices (Fox & Lawless, 2011; Lawless & Fox, 2010). Nigerian women, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, despite advocating for increased inclusion of women in political leadership positions, are still accused of lacking interest in politics and public governance. The following excerpt exemplifies this:

The association also calls on every Nigerian woman who has interests in politics not to hesitate but to join any political party of their choice and be actively involved. The best way a woman can be recognised in a political party and politics is when she gets involved in politics and participates actively; politics is not the exclusive preservation of men.... GN_09042015_7

The foregoing representation was taken from a media article authored by one of the gender advocacy associations in Nigeria underscores the importance of women's active engagement to the success of women's political career. In some other representations, Nigerian women's continued marginalisation in politics was attributed to their docility or complacency to women aspirants (GN_08032015_61; TD_14022011_23). The excerpt highlights an implicit understanding that Nigerian women either consciously or unconsciously are sabotaging their own efforts at securing increased representation in political leadership positions. This might not be far from the truth, especially if one considers the fact that women are not socialised to seek leadership in the public sphere (Osori, 2017: 12). The patriarchal orientation of the Nigerian society makes it such that irrespective of competence or academic qualification, women are expected to prioritise their traditional gender roles over any other career or professional obligation. Invariably, even career-oriented women tend to avoid tasks which might hinder the effective discharge of their traditional gender roles. Aside from this, Adeleye-Fayemi (2019: 64) identified indifference and hostility of party machinery, costs of running for a political position, violence and the need for a political godfather as some of the factors which discourage Nigerian women from seeking political leadership positions.

6.2.1.12.2.8 Harsh media criticism

There is no doubt that the media play a central role in the disempowerment and emancipation of women in society. In terms of political representation, there are claims that women in politics are often subjected to harsher media scrutiny or criticism than their male counterparts. Although there is no direct occurrence of this in the analysed data, a commentary on the factors working against women's representation in politics highlighted biased media criticism as one of the causes for the underrepresentation of women in politics. The following excerpt supports this claim:

Women have less practice than men at bungling things up and wielding power and as such when some of us that are not used to power get a taste of power, we often, like men, misuse it ... but we get greater publicity for our gaffs than men do ... because men control media and want to reinforce the message to the public that 'women cannot be trusted' ... – **TD_22022011_xivSpecial**

This excerpt recalls the experiences of some women in politics who have been placed under public scrutiny, followed by a media storm as a result of some errors they committed as public figures. These misdeeds are, oftentimes, mild in comparison to those committed by their male counterparts. Even though male political leaders also get criticised, it is believed that criticism of their actions is not usually related to their gender. Also, such criticisms seem to be mild compared to what women are subjected to when they err (Eshiet, 2015: 140–141). Aside from this, men seem to sail through media criticism unscathed or without much damage to their self-esteem. This may be because women have not been socialised to withstand rigorous criticism (Rhode, 2017: 40; Lawless & Fox, 2010: 129–131).

Saying that women get the most criticism in media for their misdeeds is not to promote bad behaviour among women in leadership positions, but to draw attention to the biased disposition of society in general and specifically, the media in the reportage of women-centred issues. There are some classical examples, among which are Patricia Etteh, the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives, and more recently, Kemi Adeosun, a former Minister of Finance, both of whom had to relinquish political leadership positions because of the allegations of misconduct levelled against them while in office and the subsequent media

publicity that followed the allegations(OA_M_POL; YA_F_JOURN).Such harsh media criticism discourages competent women from seeking to take up political leadership positions.

6.2.1.12.3 Solutions frame

Aside from highlighting the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions, media also utilised the solutions frame which highlighted various measures and suggestions which could engender increased representation of women in politics and, specifically, political leadership positions. The solutions frame highlighted the implementation of gender quotas, the active participation, the appointment of competent women who could serve as role models, the building of networks of support among women, the re-socialisation of women, as well as the strategic political involvement as possible means of increasing women's participation in politics. Each of these sub-frames is presented under their respective sub-headings with a single excerpt in the following section.

6.2.1.12.3.1 Implementation of gender quota

Despite having a national gender policy of its own and being a signatory to some of the international stipulations for gender equality – in this case, the inclusion of women in politics and public governance – Nigeria is still among the nations with the lowest representation of women in political leadership positions in the world (World Economic Forum, 2019: 25). This is partly because there has been no stringent implementation of a gender quota, especially in the political sector of the country. Hence the call for the strict implementation of gender quotas in elections and the appointment of women into political leadership positions, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

We must institutionalize gender quota[s] in the recruitment and appointment to political offices. It has been effectively used to increase parliamentary representation in several African countries ... In canvassing for gender quota[s], placement mandates such as specifically placing women amongst the top candidates and sanctions for non-compliance if party leaders fail to comply with quota regulation is imperative to make it workable... –
PN_07032015_15

Aside from the rarity of such representations, it is instructive to note that many of the calls for increased participation of women are promoted by gender advocates rather than by media themselves. According to the current state of women in politics and public leadership positions in the country, it can be said that the call for gender equality in Nigeria has not been taken as seriously as it should, as there is a need to move beyond perfunctory representation to a more committed drive for women emancipation and gender equality in the Nigerian society source. As stated in the excerpt above, putting in place sanctions for non-compliance to gender quotas might go a long way in disbanding some of the hidden structural biases against women's political participation. The Inter-Parliamentary Union Report (2020a) shows that 16 out the 20 countries with the largest number of women in parliament applied some sort of gender quota.

Aside from the call for the implementation of gender quotas, active participation is another plausible solution to the underrepresentation of women in politics, as will be discussed next.

6.2.1.12.3.2 Active Participation

The aim of the call for the implementation of gender quotas is to ensure the increased representation of women in political leadership positions. Nevertheless, for this to achieve the desired result, more women must get involved in politics. Such participation must transcend the current tokenistic participation in which women are mostly seen but rarely heard, contributing to decision-making processes within the parties and at the various levels of governance in Nigeria (Pogoso, 2011: 105). The use of women in politics mainly as “praise singers” and “vote canvassers” within political parties has been an issue of continuous concern among scholars and gender advocates in Nigeria (Eshiet, 2016: 122; Quadri, 2015: 12–14; Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013: 42). The following excerpt is an example of the arguments for active participation:

The association also calls on every Nigerian woman who has interests in politics not to hesitate but to join any political party of their [sic] choice and be actively involved. The best way a woman can be recognised in a political party and politics is when she gets involved in politics and participates actively; politics is not the exclusive preservation [sic] of men ... – **GN_09042015_7**

In the foregoing excerpt, the writer overtly utilised the motivation and encouragement strategy to call women to become active members within political parties. According to the writer of the piece, active participation by women would lead to a recognition of women's potentials as candidates for political leadership positions, thereby increasing their viability, and possibly the overall representation of women in political leadership positions. This suggestion is connected to the claim that Nigerian women's political participation at this stage is mainly passive and tokenistic – a situation whereby the majority of women in political parties are, for the most part, voters, praise singers and vote canvassers for their male counterparts (Quadri, 2015: 12).

Following active participation of women in politics, is the need for re-socialisation.

6.2.1.12.3.3 Re-socialisation

This frame highlights the influence of years of gendered socialisation on women's perceptions of themselves in terms of certain gender roles. The assumption among feminist scholars is that while sex is a given, gender is a social construct foisted on individuals through process and practices which are taken for granted. The socialisation of girl children within the Nigerian society is such that proficiency in domestic chores is lauded over any other qualification. Besides this, girl children and young women were never socialised or encouraged to take part in politics or public policy-making (Osori, 2017: 12; Ezedikachi, 2016: 100–101). Aside from producing binaries of gender identity, the media also promote the demarcation of gender roles on account of sex through the use of gender roles frames. All of these have a build-up effect on the psyche of Nigerian women regarding political participation. To effectively solve the issue of women's underrepresentation in politics, the author of the following excerpt argued about the need for Nigerian women to be subjected to a process of cultural re-orientation to mitigate the effects of years of traditional gender roles socialisation.

Noble as it is for money, time and resources to be expended to promote women in politics and to attain the goal of 35% political representation, maybe we need to try some 're-socialisation' of the public, especially focused at women and young people ... –
TD_22022011_xiv Special

Based on the foregoing, it can be seen that for women to be able to take an active part in politics, there is a need for a social re-engineering – a situation whereby not just women, but the whole society would be re-socialised to think better of women and their potential. It is worth noting that the Nigerian National Gender Policy identified the salience of cultural re-orientation to the success of any policy or legislation targeted at gender equality in Nigeria (The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2007: 48). This call was made based on the wrong conception of gender among the majority of the Nigerian populace. Seeing that socialisation in the first place involves certain processes and agents, the same agents of socialisation through which existing hegemonic structures were perpetuated – family, religious institutions, educational institutions, and most importantly, media– will be essential in the drive for re-socialisation. This is necessary even though cultural change also comes with its own challenges.

The next sub-frame under the solutions frame is the role model frame.

6.2.1.12.3.4 Role models

Another solution highlighted in media representations of women in politics is the salience of role modelling. This involves the pitching of credible and competent women to take up or contest political leadership positions. The function of role modelling is essential to serve not just as pacesetters but also mentors who will alter the negative perceptions and narratives of women holding political leadership positions as well as promote legislation that will enhance the chances of women in politics (Eme *et al.*, 2014: 13). Also, having women who can be emulated in politics will help to pique the interest of young women or girls in politics. This is exemplified by the following excerpt:

It shouldn't be just any woman that's called upon to serve. They should be honest and serious-minded women who will not use their positions to enrich themselves and their families or engage in frivolous spending ... young women badly need role models in the society they can emulate to uplift the image of the Nigerian woman in service... – VN_20022011_22

The role model frame highlights the fact that the call for equality and political inclusion should not be based on gender identity alone. Rather, emphasis should be placed on values such as competence, integrity and commitment (VN_20022011_22). Although this is not to

say that the current number of women politicians in Nigeria cannot be regarded as role models, however, there is a need for more women of credible character to step into mentoring roles not just to pave the way, but to serve as examples of competent leadership for women in the upcoming generations in diverse leadership positions which has never been filled by women in the country's history (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 75–76; Suleiman, 2017: 13; Ezedikachi, 2016: 103–104).

The next item under the solutions frame is a network of support.

6.2.1.12.3.5 Network of support

Another sub-frame under the solutions frame is the network of support, or social capital frame. This frame suggests the need for a solidarity base for and by women in politics to increase women's chances in politics. In other words, securing women's place on the table of political leadership would require concerted efforts by women to consolidate one another's efforts by building a network of support for women in politics. A formidable network of support would be one which transcends issues of political affiliations or ideological differences as well as other forms of narrow-mindedness to forge a formidable bond that would destroy patriarchal structures which have kept women subordinated (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 63). The excerpt below exemplifies this argument:

First, the need for women to 'build solidarity' to overcome the impediments in politics. In other jurisdictions, inter-party groups of women who are members of parliament form networks to actualise this objective ... – **PN_07032015_15**

The frame calls attention to the assumption that women do not support one another in the political sphere. Although there are various women's advocacy groups in the country, the author of this excerpt thought it would be useful for women to explore building other forms of solidarity networks as parts of efforts at increasing women's political participation. Similarly, the experiences of women like Ayisha Osori (2017: 37–71), who lost her bid for a senatorial seat in the 2015 elections, underscore the salience of a formidable network of support for every woman political aspirant.

The next sub-theme is the strategic political involvement frame.

6.2.1.12.3.6 Strategic political involvement

Another dimension of representation highlighted as one of the suggestions for women's increased participation in politics is the need for strategic political engagement on the part of women. It has been argued that for women in politics to avoid being continually side-lined by their male counterparts in politics they need to reconsider their political engagement strategies (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 74–75). Some of the aspects in which women need to re-strategise include identification of viable women candidates and adequate preparation for election through early involvement in political party processes before the expression of interest to contest for political leadership positions (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 74–75). Women also need to get acquainted with the leadership structures within their political parties and have campaign structures (Osori, 2017). They also need to have a manifesto which resonates with the needs of the electorate (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 72). Aside from these, Adeleye-Fayemi emphasised the need for early involvement in political parties to forge strong bonds with the gatekeepers within the parties as well as the electorate. The candidate in the following excerpt attested to the importance of early and strategic engagement in politics.

GN: What is behind your victory in the primary defeating the incumbent senator?

Response: It was sheer hard work and the goodwill of the people of Eket senatorial district. I have a lot of goodwill and that was displayed during the primary. Many ingredients make up a successful story for a female aspirant, but in my case, I think that what really helped me was that I started my campaign very early. I started consultations around May 2009, because I didn't have any structure and I have never contested an election before. So, my early start paid off. By the time other people came, people had already taken their positions with me. It was a well-structured effort ... and it yielded positive results... – **GN_03022011_8**

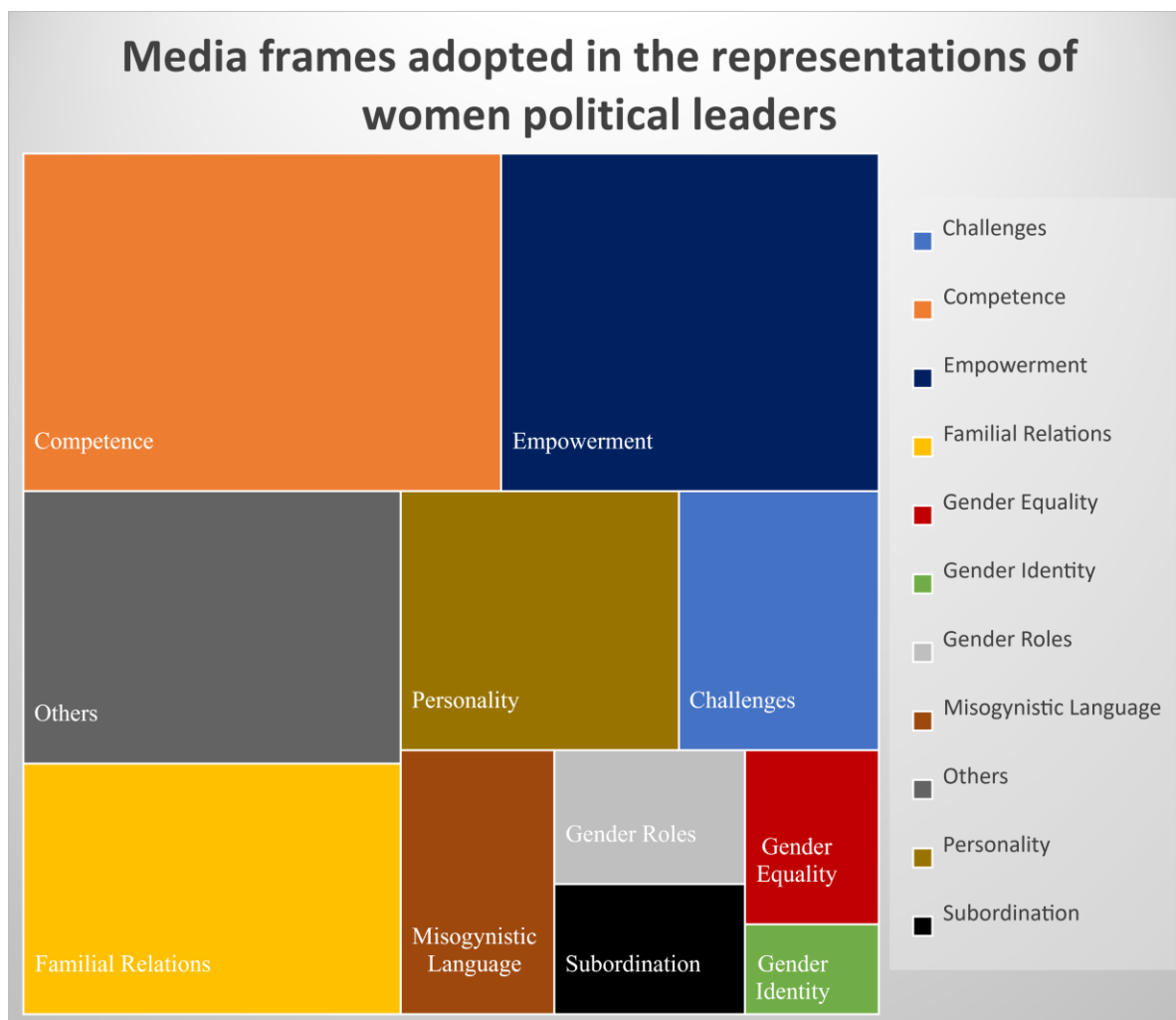
The experience of the contestant in the excerpt is illustrative of the benefit of strategic political engagement for women in politics. Also, Osori (2017) highlighted the importance of strategic political engagement in her book *Love does not win elections*. Among other things, strategic politicking can enhance women's chances at attaining political leadership by increasing women's access to key players and insider information within political parties. Aside from this, having a structure and a well thought out campaign long before an election campaign would help women aspirants to assess and identify pressing issues in the community

they intend to represent, as well as to identify their areas of interest and prioritise the issues in their manifesto. More so, having a well thought out campaign plan could help women clearly articulate their plans when the time comes, and this would, invariably, enhance the perception of their competence and viability.

6.2.1.13 Summary of findings on the central research question

A summary of the findings for the central research question reveals that the media in Nigeria utilise various frames in their construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. A total of 927 frames were identified. These consist of 27 sub-themes which were further categorised into the 12 mainframes or categories, presented in the preceding sections. The identified frame categories include empowerment, subordination, gender identity, gender roles, gender equality, competence, personality, familial relations, godfatherism, and misogynistic language. Each of these frames occurs with varying degree of prevalence. Figure 6.1 below is a pictorial representation of the identified themes.

Figure 6.1: Pictorial representation of identified frames utilised by the Nigerian media in the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions, represented here in terms of size of occurrence in the studied Nigerian media



The most prevalent of the identified frames of representation is the competence frame which occurred n=215 times in the analysed data. The competence frame consists of three sub-themes, namely academic, professional and policy/issue. Among these, the policy/issue sub-theme has the highest reoccurrence of n=104; professional reoccurred n=74 times, while academic n=43 times. The next frame with a high frequency is the empowerment frame with n=170 occurrences. The empowerment frame also consisted of three sub-themes or frames, namely novelty, agent of change, and insider. Each of these sub-themes recurred 68, 41 and 64 times respectively. After this, familial relations, which was sub-divided into positive and negative frames, occurred n=126 times. The positive familial relations frame occurred n=35 times, while the negative frame occurred n=95 times. Personality frame is the next with n=96, while misogynistic language was identified n=54, gender roles n=34, subordination n=33,

gender equality n=31 and lastly, gender identity n=16 times. Aside from the predefined frames, media also utilised frames which highlighted the reasons for the underrepresentation in political leadership positions, as well as suggested solutions to the low participation of women in politics.

Next, I present findings under the first sub-research question.

6.2.2 Research sub-question 1: Do the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions?

One of the central foci of studies on media portrayal and representation of women in political leadership positions is to identify and highlight areas of blatant or subtle gender stereotypes in media coverage along with various spectra of influence on the chances of women in society (Baxter, 2018; Renner & Masch, 2018; Lee, 2015; Curnalia & Mermer, 2014; Hayes *et al.*, 2014; Bligh *et al.*, 2012; Miller, Peake & Boulton, 2010; Heldman *et al.*, 2005; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003). This research question was crafted to ascertain the existence of gender stereotypes in the Nigerian media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions, as have been ascertained in studies from other parts of the world. Just like stereotypes in the broader sense, gender stereotypes refer to overly simplified preconceived assumptions about the abilities, personality traits, or behaviour of a group of people, in this case, women (Silverman, 2012; Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). According to Klenke (201:59), stereotypes contribute to the underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions. Based on this assumption, stereotypical frames were identified using findings from previous studies which have revealed that media representations of women in politics tend to focus more on certain stereotypical issues such as feminine traits and issues rather than women's competence or political agenda (Baxter, 2018; Campus, 2013; Bystrom *et al.*, 2001; Braden, 1996). To ascertain this claim in the Nigerian context, the researcher put together some predefined themes using identified constituents of gender stereotypes from previous studies (Ette, 2017; Lee, 2015; Walsh, 2015; Van Dembroucke, 2014; Campus, 2013; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Lundell & Ekström, 2008; Bystrom *et al.*, 2001; Braden, 1996). The pre-identified stereotypical frames are novelty, gender identity, gender roles, familial relations, personality

traits, subordination, misogynistic language and the socio-cultural gender norms frames. Some of the identified stereotypical frames are discussed in the following section.

6.2.2.1 Novelty

The novelty frame, as stated earlier, involves representations of women as pioneers or the first woman to hold or contest for certain political leadership positions. The media in the use of the novelty frame highlight the newness of women to politics through the use of the “first female” or “only woman” descriptor. Even though Nigerian women have been involved in political activities before independence, not counting the fact that they also got the right to vote over five decades ago (Oloyede, 2016; Eme & Onuigbo, 2015; Pogonson, 2011), society still considers them as novelties in politics. This assumption might be correct to some extent because, since Nigeria’s return to democratic rule in 1999, women’s participation in political leadership is still far from the average 35% representation stipulated in the country’s National Gender Policy. The novelty frame usually focuses on the positionality of women in politics and, sometimes, it intersects with religion or ethnicity to highlight the rarity of women in the Nigerian political scene. As can be seen in the following excerpt, women are predominantly considered by the media in Nigeria as novelties irrespective of their number or the fact that they are not the first women vying for a certain political leadership position, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

You and Mrs Uche Ibukun Ohimai of the Fresh Democratic Party (FDP) are the only women in the Lagos governorship race. What are your chances against the men? ... **GN_18032007_54**

The novelty frame could be considered biased against women in politics, in a sense, because it is rarely applicable to men in the political arena. Such representations subtly normalise politics as men’s exclusive domain while it further perpetuates the notion that women’s involvement in politics is a rare occurrence or something bordering on abnormality (Campus, 2013: 54). Overuse of the novelty frame does not only highlight the rarity of women in politics, but it also has the tendency of perpetuating the notion that women are anomalies in politics, thus reducing their viability rather than celebrating their achievements.

6.2.2.2 Gender Identity

The gender identity frame, as stated earlier, consists of considerations of women's capability to participate in politics on account of their gender. This was examined in two ways, namely positive and negative frames. The positive gender identity frames centre on the call for the inclusion of more women in politics considering the persistent marginalisation of women from political leadership positions in Nigeria. The negative gender identity focus on representations which undermine women's capability to withstand the rigours and demands of politics. In Nigeria, just like in other countries, women are usually perceived as weaker than men not only in terms of physical strength but in their ability to make emotionally tasking decisions while in leadership positions.

In the analysed data, women in political leadership positions are repeatedly tasked about their ability to withstand the prevalent violence in the Nigerian political terrain (GN_18032007_54; PN_03032007_A7; PN_11032007_21). Representations playing up the susceptibility of women to attacks within the political terrain portray women as vulnerable and undermines their ability to fend for themselves. In a largely patriarchal society such as Nigeria, such representations could further the subordination of women under the control and command of men in the name of protection, as was seen in the analysed data.

Former Minister of Information and Communications, Prof Dora Akunyili, on Thursday, said her husband, Dr Chike Akunyili, forced her to quit the Peoples Democratic Party. Akunyili ... said her husband could no longer accept the violent nature of the PDP in Anambra State. – PN_08042011_9

As can be seen in the foregoing excerpt, sometimes, women are compelled by their relatives (in this case, the husband) to abandon viable political parties just to protect them from violence. Aside from this, media frames playing up the fragility of women against men in political leadership positions could lead to self-doubt in women seeking out political leadership positions. This can also discourage women from participating in politics.

6.2.2.3 Gender roles

As have been discussed earlier, gender roles consist of predefined social roles, attitudes or tasks considered appropriate by society for each of the normative genders (Hawkesworth, 1997: 656). This has led to a gendered division of labour, especially in conservative societies

like Nigeria (Eme *et al.*, 2014). In terms of gender roles framing, women in political leadership positions get asked questions on how they effectively combine their roles as wives and mothers with their political career (see excerpts under negative gender roles frame in section 6.2.1.4). With such framing, media persons seek to draw attention to the challenges of gender roles to women's political career, or even to showcase the woman in question as a role model to other women. However, one of the apparent biases with such representation is that it is only women who participate actively in politics that get questioned about the implications of their career commitments on their homes and marriages. Their male counterparts, on the other hand, are rarely ever questioned about the discharge of their traditional gender roles by the media.

The framing of gender roles as an obstruction to women's career growth, undoubtedly, stems from the social-cultural beliefs of socio-cultural gender roles division. However, by foregrounding such dichotomous views of gender roles, the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender roles stereotypes. By so doing, media also promote the notion that women are not supposed to participate in politics or public governance. And, if they do, such participation should be limited to the extent that it would not hinder their private roles. Thus, women in politics are constantly put in a position whereby they need to constantly defend themselves against a possible accusation of neglect of their family because of their political career, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

The home front – I am very much on top of my domestic situation. I have a very good arrangement that makes it possible for me to carry out my job and also have a successful family life. I have a good delegation and training system that ensures that while I am in the office, my home affairs are going on well. I believe a woman can work in the office and manage the home ... **GN_13022011_17**

Such representations do not only reinforce traditional gender role stereotypes, it perpetuates the subordination of women in the political sphere on account of gender roles. More so, such representations have the tendency of perpetuating the “super mum” stereotypes (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009: 333), in which career women are expected to possess superhuman abilities to multitask and efficiently combine career demands with house chores without assistance. Another argument against the gender frame is that it has the tendency of inducing political apathy in women, thus, sustaining the underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions (Campus, 2010: 250–251).

6.2.2.4 Familial Relations

Another area of media representation of women in politics which feminist scholars have found problematic is the excessive focus on the private lives or family relations of such women (Raicheva-Stover & Ibroscheva, 2014; Campus, 2013; Braden, 1996). The family relations frame is considered problematic as they namely reinforce existing patriarchal stereotypes which subordinates women under the care of their male relatives. Secondly, it subjects women to a double bind. The use of the family relations frame in the representation of women in politics is viewed both from the objective and stereotypical perspectives. The objective use of family relations frames, as stated earlier, focus on media representations which present women in politics in terms of their family background as a way of introduction or to provide context to a story. The family relations frame is considered to be stereotypical when it involves the unnecessary invocation of familial ties in representations of women in politics. This involves the use of qualifiers such as “Ali’s wife...” or “Obasanjo’s daughter...” in media representations of women in political leadership positions. In some of such representations, the media in Nigeria give precedence to women’s marital status over their professional or academic qualification, which would have been more empowering for women in politics (GN_07042007_FP_19; VN_04032011_NP; TD_17042011_109-110).

Also, the difference in the representation of the male political actors within the media articles brings to bear the bias in media representation of women in politics, as evident in media articles that contain representations of women and men side-by-side (GN_03022015_14; GN_04052007_8; PN_05052007_10-12). While family ties and social connections are an essential part of the African culture, the prevalent use of such frames for women in politics seem to indicate an inherent bias in a number of ways. Firstly, it may further perpetuate the notion of women being appendages of men (Inoma-Anyanwu, 2014: 30). Secondly, it may deny women in politics the autonomy or agency for their actions and its associated consequences. Thirdly, it undermines the competence and capability of women to function independently without help from men. While this does not mean that women cannot get assistance from men, casting women under the shadow of male relatives overshadows women’s contribution to their ascendancy in the political terrain. This could also diminish their viability in the estimation of the electorates who might be tempted to view them as “puppets” subject to the control of their “puppeteers” (Van Dembroucke, 2014: 1059; Campus, 2013: 49), as can be seen in the following excerpt:

The sad thing in Anambra today is that we do not have a credible alternative to Uba; Dame Virgy Etiaba who was in the race is not capable of being a governor. I ask this because she has been tested. She is directly under the control of her children, without a mind of her own ... VN_16042007_39

Sometimes, the unnecessary application of familial relations in the Nigerian media borders on trivialisation. This shows the extent to which the Nigerian society considers women dependent and subject to the control of male for guidance on certain issues. Such representations of women in a political leadership position could have a negative influence on voters' perception of women political leaders' ability to make sound judgments. Another demerit of familial relations representations is that it could jeopardise the political career of women. For instance, in situations whereby the male relative has been involved in a political scandal, such frames can cause members of the public to hold women accountable for the misdeeds of their male relatives. Familial relations constitute a challenge for women in politics, as women who attain political leadership positions through the support of their male relatives are often suspected of furthering male agendas (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 65–66).

6.2.2.5 Personality Traits

Another contested area in media representations of women in politics is the extensive focus on the personalities of women in politics at the expense of more serious or critical issues. In the case of the analysed media articles, the media foreground aspects of women political leaders' femininity by employing descriptions of their personality in consonance with stereotypical gender expectations. Gender identity is constituent of a series of performances or displays which are guided by existing socio-cultural expectations considered to be congruent with each gender (Hawkesworth, 1997). For instance, traits such as “beauty, warmth, amiability, humility, kindness, charm and peacefulness” are highlighted in media descriptions of women political leaders in Nigeria (GN_05022011_27; PN_26022011_47; VN_12032011_19; GN_03032015_16; PN_01022015_31; VN_20032015_34; TD_29032015_57). Such traits are considered appropriate for women in Nigeria, as in other parts of the world (Thu, 2012: 91–92). While these traits are not bad in themselves, the assumption that feminine personality traits are not compatible with governance and public leadership can make such representations an impediment to the success of women's political

careers. Hence, an excessive and unnecessary focus on these personality traits of women in political leadership positions or those aspiring for leadership positions could cause them to be perceived as too soft for certain positions. Conversely, the media also framed women in politics using descriptors such as “Amazon”, “Iron lady” or “last woman standing”, which connote strength, assertiveness or resilience in women. The major challenge with such representation is that firmness or assertiveness in women could be easily misconstrued for pride or arrogance, especially, in a largely patriarchal society like Nigeria.

Another dimension to the personality frame is the representation of women in relation to their dress sense. As have been established by previous research (Rhode, 2017: 45–46; Raicheva-Stover & Ibroscheva, 2014; Campus, 2013: 73–79; Mavin *et al.*, 2010: 559–560; Braden, 1996: 64), the clothes, shoes, hairstyles, handbags, and other fashion accessories worn by women in politics are constant sources of fascination for the media in Nigeria. This is especially so for articles published in weekend titles. The media’s focus on the physical appearance of women in politics is so common that almost all of the articles published in weekend editions of the analysed newspapers contain certain references to women politicians’ appearance, beauty regimen, or fashion sense. In some of the articles published in the weekend editions, representations of women in politics is oftentimes a combination of the personality traits frame with other frames within the same story. Sometimes, the combination of the frames are usually done in such a way that the personality frame overrides the other frames, as can be seen in the following questions from a half-page interview with a woman political leader:

PN:Tell me, when is a woman described as fashionable?

PN:So, you never committed any fashion blunder?

PN:Talking about fashion, what influences you when dressing up?

PN:But you are mostly in native attires?

PN:What are those things in your wardrobe?

PN:Are you a designer’s (sic) freak?

PN:But your kind of vocation in politics, it could be presumed that you sleep with those men you campaign for? –

PN_01042007_25

It is surprising that all the questions the reporter asked the politician focused on the woman’s fashion sense, besides the last, without a single strategic or policy engaging question. The only question related to the interviewee’s political career (the last question) still followed the

line of stereotypical representation seeking clarification about the politician's ability to ascend to power without sleeping with men. It is also worth noting that some women political leaders themselves seem to enjoy being in the spotlight for their beauty or fashion sense. A case in point is Florence Ita-Giwa, a former Special Adviser to the President, who had a full two-page interview, talking about her beauty routine and cosmetic surgery (PN_21042007_A7_A9). Sometimes, media also foreground frames which could be misleading or misinterpreted about a woman in politics, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

I have a weakness for gold ...
 I prefer having male friends because they are always there for me...
 – PN_01042007_25

The foregoing is the headline of a one and half page interview with a woman who was an aide to the President at the time the article was published. Aside from the main headline, which is stereotypical, the rider to the headline is also misleading, as it was quoted out of context. One wonders how foregrounding the preceding headline and its rider contributes to enhancing the career of a woman in politics. In another article, a former minister who was accused of corruption was ridiculed in a satirised column, using the woman's beauty as the basis of the misappropriation of which she was accused. The excerpt reads:

She is too beautiful to be dragged through that kind of stress. Each time I see her, I...would not really mind if it were true that billions were spent on private jets and complexion creams.... -
 TD_25042015_20

The columnist went on to compare the woman in question to both local and international world-class actresses and models while stating that all fashionable women require a lot of money to maintain their beauty. Hence the reason for the misappropriation of funds, of which the woman was accused in this specific case. While many of the personality traits representations may not contain any apparent indication of harm as the one presented above, in the long run, constant foregrounding of women's personality traits at the expense of more serious frames, such as the competence or empowerment frames, have the tendency of trivialising the participation or candidacy of women in politics. One of the arguments of scholars against the usage of personality frame is that if media overemphasise the personality

of women in politics it could divert attention away from the issues for which such women are advocating (Campus, 2013: 43).

6.2.2.6 Subordination

Another aspect of media representation which has been problematised is that of subordination. The subordination frame consists of representations which could subordinate women in politics through exclusion, objectification or outright trivialisation. This was considered using the outsider, sexualisation and trivialisation sub-themes. Representations utilising the outsider frame portray women in politics not only as being new to politics but sometimes as possessing limited knowledge of political processes or the requirement of politics. Also, women are considered as political outsiders not just because of their newness to politics, but also when they are contesting on the platform of a new party. Such representations could constitute a double jeopardy for women aspirants whose viability could be affected based on their presumed lack of experience as well as their party's lack of followership and popular support. An example of such representation is given in the following excerpt:

You are new in politics, [the] same applies to your party which is also a new platform. The combination of these does not seem to give you [an] advantage. Can we know if you have the financial muscle for the elections? – **VN_21042011_24**

Aside from representations of women as outsiders, sexual objectification is also a factor. In this case, women in politics are represented by media as objects of men's sexual fantasy. Although instances of sexualisation are few in the analysed data, its mere existence is an indication of a deep-seated gender bias issuing from cultural norms and practices. Also, such representations showcase the role of the media in the perpetuation of male hegemony through an implicit promotion of patriarchy and chauvinism through the objectification of women's bodies. The following excerpt exemplifies this:

She is too beautiful to be dragged through that kind of stress. Each time I see her, I become weak in the knees... **TD_25042015_20**

Furthermore, women in politics are subordinated through representations which subtly or sometimes outrightly belittle the achievements or efforts of women in politics. In this regard, media representations portray women political leaders as non-entities through the suppression

of their identities either by referring to them by gender or age marker or, sometimes, a combination of both. Another instance of trivialisation identified in the analysed articles are representations in which journalists subordinate women through representations which could cause women to be perceived as inexperienced and lacking in political knowledge or expertise. For instance:

At the rally, Mariam sang, danced and praised God for surviving various intrigues in the aftermath of her emergence in the November 2006 intra-party election of her senatorial district. The politician, who also spoke in Igbo, rained curses on her detractors, adding that her mandate was intact [despite] their antics ... –
PN_02032007_57

Although, singing is part of the fanfare and politicking process used by politicians in Nigeria during political rallies, hardly have the media in Nigeria made that the focus of their reportage on male political aspirants. Needless to say that singing during political rallies has been assumed to be women in politics' exclusive preserve. The excerpt above was taken from a news report on a woman senatorial candidate who is the wife of the former national chairperson of one of the two prominent political parties in Nigeria. The story from which the foregoing excerpt was extracted has the following headline: *'My wife's election will attract development'*. The media gave ascendancy to the candidate's husband in the headline, and the major part of the article contained the husband's speech. Meanwhile, the wife, who was the aspirant, was relegated to the latter part of the story. The article stated that the woman only sang and cursed during her campaign. Such representation did not portray her as a serious contender. Also, the representation barely portrayed the woman as a learned person, despite being a medical doctor. The systematic confinement of women to the position of women leaders and "praise singers" within political parties has been one of the many areas of concern for gender advocates in Nigeria (Eshiet, 2016: 122; Quadri, 2015: 12; Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013: 42). This is because it does not only make a mockery of the nation's gender equality drive as contained in its National Gender Policy, it prevents women from making meaningful contributions to the growth and development of the country by seeking out political leadership positions. Hence, media representations such as this do not only perpetuate the stereotype of women in politics as "praise singers", it trivialises the participation of women in politics.

6.2.2.7 Misogynistic language

The misogynistic language frame played out in two ways in this study vis-à-vis blanketing and othering. As stated earlier, the blanketing frame focus on representations using male gender descriptors for political positions occupied by women. One of the most recurring examples of blanketing in the analysed data is the use of the title “chairman” for women in headship positions. The excerpt below exemplifies this.

She’s an administrator, human rights activist, and currently a politician. Yemisi Ransome-Kuti, who is also an executive director, Nigeria Network of NGOs; and Chairman, Lagos Chapter, Coalition for Issue-based Politics and Good Governance ... – **PN_27022011_48**

The use of male titles for women in certain political leadership positions does not only subsume the gender identity of the officeholder, it foregrounds the assumption that women are in a terrain which is not theirs. Aside from this, the constant usage of this in media is indicative of the overriding mindset of society about political leadership positions being a male-exclusive preserve. Another instance of misogynistic language identified in the analysed articles is “othering”. This involves the use of gender tags for the differentiation of women in politics. The following excerpt exemplifies this:

[O]pinion is building up in favour of the emergence of Senator Helen Esuene, a female governorship candidate of the Labour Party (LP) who hails from Eket Senatorial District[,] especially from people of the zone who see her candidacy as a way to assuage their feelings of marginalisation. – **GN_03032015_16**

As can be seen in the foregoing excerpt, the media in Nigeria also utilise gender markers in their representations of women in political leadership positions, unlike the representations of their male counterparts. In all of the data analysed for this study, there was no instance in which men in politics were constructed or represented using their gender as additional identity markers. For instance, there were no representations such as “male senatorial candidate”, “male governor” or “male minister”, as the case may be. Invariably, by using gender markers to distinguish the identity of women political leaders, the media in Nigeria mark women in politics as “others” by subtly drawing attention to the strangeness of their involvement in

politics or attainment of certain political leadership positions. And, like the blanketing sub-frame, the othering sub-frame further perpetuates the notion that politics and political leadership positions are male-exclusive terrains. Furthermore, Braden (1996: 6) argued that the use of gender-specific terms in the description of women in politics has trivialising effects on women in politics.

6.2.2.8 Socio-cultural gender norms

Gender norms emanate from socio-cultural practices which people hold about gender. These norms are based on rules and assumptions which oftentimes lead to gender stereotypes. In Nigeria, various socio-cultural assumptions about women contribute to their relegation in politics. Some of the prevalent gender norms in the Nigerian society is the assumption that the role of women is to manage the home, hence the prevalent belief that women's participation in politics is detrimental to their family success. The following excerpt exemplifies this:

PN: Didn't your husband feel somehow intimidated by your elevated status?

Response: Initially, I am sure, deep down inside of him, he might not have been very comfortable. The focus would be just on the wife. I think a wise husband should prepare his mind for such ...

PN: Would you insist he sat on the high table with you each time he followed you to an event?

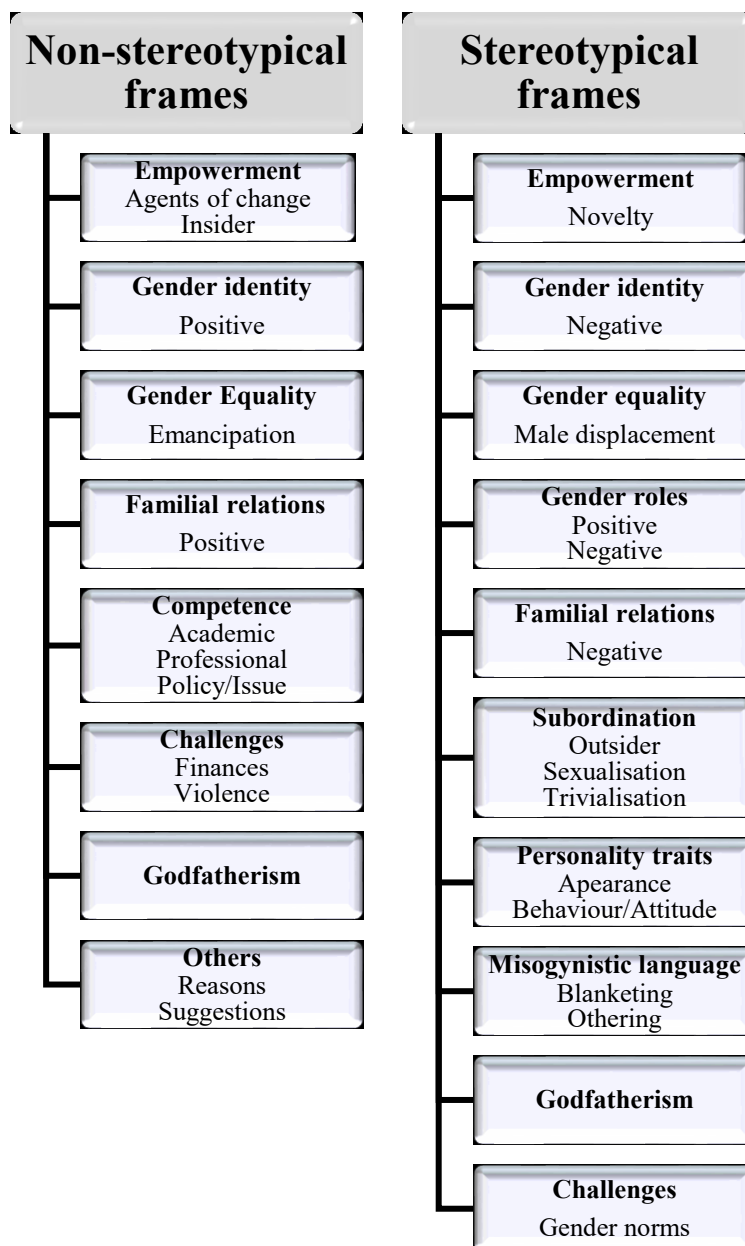
Response: If I am called to a high table, courtesy demands I go with him. I would always tell the moderator that I came with my spouse. ... – **PN_21022015_48**

In the foregoing representation, the reporter's line of questioning about the assumption that men are intimidated by the success of their wives highlights some underlying societal concerns about women assuming leadership positions. The question apparently stems from the country's longstanding patriarchal culture in which men are given dominance while women are subordinated. The representation shows that the media considers women's attainment of political leadership positions a disruption of the status quo, or, put more succinctly, a reversal of roles in the hegemonic gender-power dynamics. Such representations are undoubtedly stereotypical because rarely would one find the media asking male politicians such questions. Aside from this, it implicitly promotes and perpetuates the notion that women should naturally be beneath men.

6.2.2.9 Summary of findings on research sub-question 1

As stated earlier, the media in Nigeria adopt various frames in their construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. The findings under this research question show that the media utilise both stereotypical and non-stereotypical frames in their construction and representation of women political leaders in Nigeria. The stereotypical frames identified in the data consist of various representations which are rarely used in media representations of male politicians. While some of the identified stereotypes are not explicitly bad or negative, persistent use of stereotypical frames could impinge on the perception of an individual. Aside from this, some of these stereotypical frames undermine the viability of women in political leadership positions. It is also worth noting that the usage of stereotypical frames does not preclude an objective or balanced representation of women in politics. In other words, women political leaders have the tendency to be given both biased and fair coverage, like Florence Ita-Giwa in certain articles (**PN_01032015_5; TD_01032015_38; GN_28022015_17; PN_21042007_A7_A9**). In summary, the media in Nigeria reinforce existing gender stereotypes about women in political leadership positions. The frame grouping is presented in the following diagram:

Figure 6.2: Categorisation of identified frames in media representations according to this study’s research sub-question 1



The preceding diagram shows the division of the identified frames into two categories, namely non-stereotypical and stereotypical frames. It is worth noting that even though journalists might not have set out to stereotype women in politics using some of the identified stereotypical frames, their use reflects the overriding hegemonic views of the Nigerian society concerning the movement of women from the private space to the public space of politics and decision making. While propagation of stereotypes is known to reinforce existing prejudices

or bias, it is worth noting that gender stereotypes are not always blatantly negative; so also are their implications on the stereotyped.

6.2.3 Research sub-question 2: Have the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions changed between 2007, 2011, and 2015?

This research question was targeted at understanding the possible changes in media construction and the representation of women in politics within the period under study, that is, 2007, 2011, and 2015. There have been contrasting claims in literature from different parts of the world about the extent to which media representations of women in politics have changed (Ette, 2017; Vu *et al.*, 2017; O'Neill *et al.*, 2016; O'Brien, 2014; Campus, 2013; Skalli, 2011). To ascertain this claim within the context of this study, all the articles which were collected were assessed numerically in addition to the thematic evaluation of their content. Although this study is mainly qualitative, I utilised numerical data in this section to make my claim clear and evident. Maxwell (2010: 480) argues that the use of numerical data in qualitative studies serves to complement textual data and help the researcher make precise claims where necessary.

To answer research sub-question 2, the findings are presented under two broad categories, namely quantity of representations and nature or quality of representations given to women in politics in Nigeria. These two aspects of representation have been at the centre of feminists' and gender scholars' evaluation of the visibility of women in media. As Campus (2013: 39) noted, the visibility of women in media is "inextricably linked to the frames under which she is made visible". Therefore, an attempt at examining a change in the representation of women in media using only one of these parameters will be an incomplete effort.

6.2.3.1 Quantity of coverage

Quantity of coverage relates to the number of mentions or amount of coverage an individual gets in media. In terms of newspapers, this can be evaluated by the number of media articles published about an individual or topic of interest. In this study, the evaluation of difference in the quantity of coverage was aimed at understanding the progression, if any, of media representations of women in political leadership positions. To achieve this, the articles collected from each of the four publications analysed were counted according to the number of articles published during each of the periods under review to show a simple measure of the

total articles published each year. After this, the quantity for each year was compared across the three election periods, that is, 2007, 2011, and 2015 for each of the publications. The total number of editions published during the period under study was also taken into consideration to get an accurate calculation of the difference in the number of publications. This was used to calculate the average daily publication for each of the four news publications as well as the average publications across the four newspapers. This was done to get a clearer insight into the probable quantity of publication about women in politics because looking at the overall number seems to blur the stark reality of the persistent invisibility of women political leaders in media. Most importantly, these calculations aid the accuracy and precision of the claims made in this section.

As stated earlier, the data for this study were collected from four national news publications in Nigeria, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day* newspapers across three election periods, namely 2007, 2011, and 2015. The articles were selected from the period falling within two months before and two weeks after each elections period in the three years (see Chapter Five, section 5.6). Each election period has a total of 74 days which was multiplied by the four news publications and the three elections period under consideration to get the total number of editions used in the calculation of the averages. This brings the total number of editions to 888. Meanwhile, a total of $N=3,452$ media articles was collected from the 888 editions of the sampled newspapers out of which $n=314$ media articles were analysed. I also took into consideration the number of articles about women political leaders published in each news publication yearly. This was done to calculate the change in the quantity of publication across the period under review. The difference across time for each of the publications was calculated by deducting the total number of articles published in the first year from the number of articles published in the third year. The resulting number was then divided by the total number of publication in the first year multiplied by one hundred, to get the percentage change over time for each of the years under review. Figure 6.3 shows the total quantity of representation for each of the various news publications across the three election periods.

Figure 6.3: Graph showing the total quantity of coverage in each publication across the three election periods in 2007, 2011, and 2015.

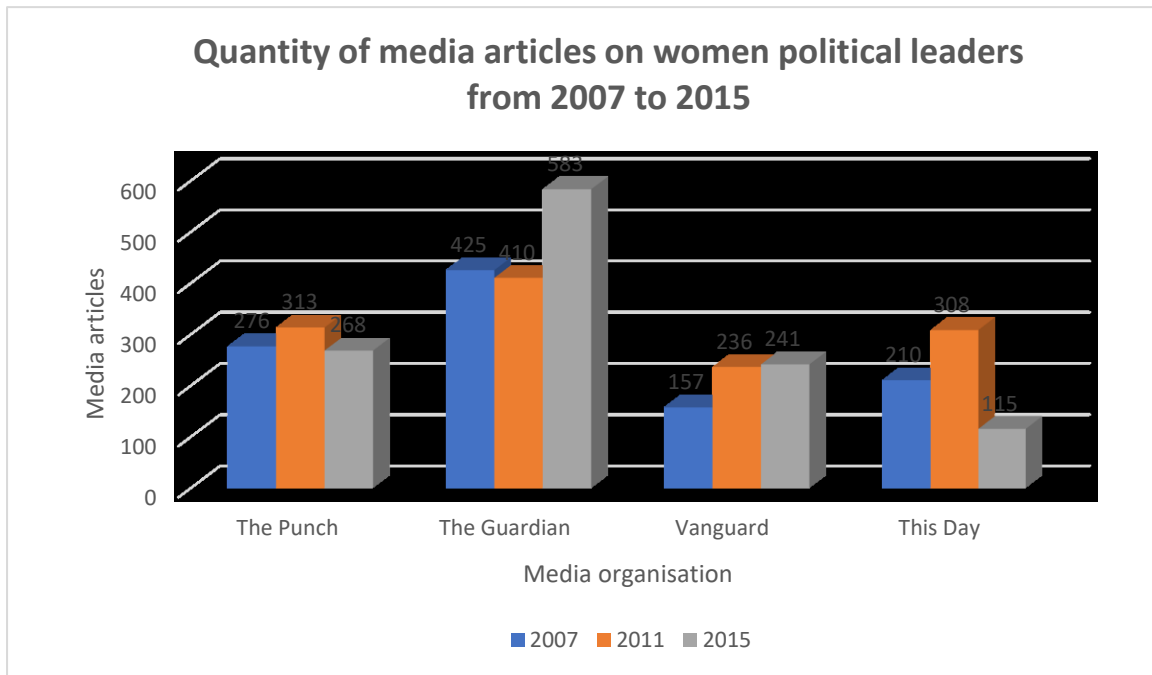


Figure 6.3 shows the yearly total of each of the analysed newspapers, namely *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *Vanguard*, and *This Day* newspaper. An analysis of the yearly total of the four newspapers shows a 13% increase in the total number of publications between 2007 and 2015. A breakdown of the total of each publication across three years shows that *The Guardian* newspaper with $n=1418$ has the highest number of publications across the three years, followed by *The Punch* with $n=857$, while *Vanguard* and *This Day* have $n=634$ and $n=633$ respectively. In terms of the difference in the number of publications across the three years, *The Guardian* achieved a numerical increase of 37.17% in the number of articles on women in politics over the three elections periods, while *Vanguard* newspaper recorded 53.50% increase in the number of articles published within the same period. *The Punch* and *This Day* newspapers recorded a decline in the number of articles on women in politics across the three years with 2.89% and 45.23% respectively. In terms of daily averages, the number of articles on women political leaders published by *The Guardian* newspaper increased from six articles daily in 2007 to eight articles in 2015. *The Punch* newspaper maintained an average of four articles per day across the three years while *Vanguard's* daily average increased from two articles daily in 2007 to three articles in 2015. *This Day's* average articles per day, decreased

from three articles per day in 2007 to two per day in 2015. Lastly, the four media organisations have an overall daily average of four articles on women political leaders per day.

The findings show that two out of the four media organisations, namely *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* recorded an increase in the number of articles published about women in political leadership positions within the period under review, while the other two, that is, *The Punch* and *This Day*, recorded a decrease in the number of articles. Based on the foregoing, it is evident that there is no significant change in the quantity of representation given to women in political leadership positions across the three election periods studied. In other words, women did not enjoy a significant increase in media visibility during the period under review, that is, 2007, 2011, and 2015.

While so many factors might be responsible for the continuing underrepresentation of women in media, it is worth noting that, within this period there was no significant increase in the representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria as well. It is not clear if this was one of the contributory factors to the underrepresentation of women in media.

In terms of prominence, three key areas were considered in terms of placement of media articles, namely front page, back page and centre spread. Out of the N=3542 media articles collected, n=52, making 5.8% of the total articles, were published on the front page, n=12, or 1.4%, was published on the centre spread, while n=18 (2%) were published on the back page. A further breakdown shows that n=40 out of the n=52 articles published on the front page were pictorial representations, without a correlating story. Out of the representations on the centre spread, four were pictorial, while the remaining eight were textual representations, sometimes combined with pictures. Lastly, the total n=18 representations on the back page consist of nine pictorial and nine textual representations. The foregoing indicates that women political leaders did not receive adequate visibility in the Nigerian media within the period under review.

6.2.3.2 Quality of coverage

As stated earlier, the quality of representation holds equal importance, if not more, as the quantity of representation given to women in media. Basically, the quality of coverage deals with the nature of coverage or frame under which women in politics were represented. Previous studies have argued that media representations of women in politics tend to emphasise aspects of their femininity at the expense of pertinent issues or policies (Campus, 2013: 41). Therefore, having examined the difference in the quantity of coverage given to

women in Nigeria, it is necessary to ascertain the difference in the quality of coverage given to them. To this end, I examined the nature of representation given to women in politics within the stated period by comparing the occurrence of the non-stereotypical representations to the stereotypical ones across the years under review (see section 6.2.2.9). This was done to ascertain if there is a shift in media practitioners' perception of women in political leadership positions. This is consequent on the assumption that media as mirror of society reflects ideas or ideologies from society.

Table 6.1 contains a categorisation of the frames into two main groups, namely non-stereotypical and stereotypical frames. The non-stereotypical frames consist of the following: Agents of change, Insider, Gender Identity (Positive), Gender equality (Emancipation), Competence academic, Competence professional, Competence policy/issue, Familial relations (Positive), Challenges (Finance), Challenges (Violence), Others (Reasons and Suggestions). These are frames in which women in politics are presented objectively without implicit bias or stereotypes. The stereotypical frames, on the other hand, are those frames in which women are represented using assumptions about women which could cause them to be viewed differently from men. The frames include Novelty, Outsider, Sexuality, Trivialisation, Gender Identity Negative, Gender roles (Positive and Negative), Gender Identity (Male Displacement), Familial relations, Personality (appearance and behaviour), Othering, Labelling, and Cultural gender norms. A calculation of the recurrence of all the identified frames across the media articles shows that non-stereotypical frames occurred $n=529$ times, while stereotypical frames occurred $n=398$ times within the period under review. A further breakdown of this figure shows there is approximately 25% difference between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical frames published across the four newspapers from 2007 to 2015. This means that three-quarters of the published articles within this period were stereotypical. In other words, three out of every four media articles published by the Nigerian media between 2007 and 2015 contain a form of gender bias. This implies that media audiences in Nigeria were exposed to contents which were infused with 75% gender stereotypes. The following table shows the breakdown of the frames:

Table 6.1: Frames recurrence across the three years

Non- stereotypical				Total	Stereotypical				
Frames	Year				Frames	Year			Total
	2007	2011	2015			2007	2011	2015	
Agents of change	10	17	18	45	Novelty	16	23	29	68
Insider	12	34	18	64	Outsider	14	9	3	26
Gender Identity (Positive)	4	4	1	9	Sexuality	1	-	3	4
Gender equality (Emancipation)	7	9	13	29	Trivialisation	4	1	2	7
Competence Academic	14	8	21	43	Gender Identity Negative	7	-	-	7
Competence professional	26	23	25	74	Gender roles (Positive and Negative)	14	10	10	34
Competence policy/issue	36	45	23	104	Gender Identity (Male Displacement)	1	1	-	2
Familial relations Positive	10	11	9	30	Familial relations	35	48	9	92
Challenges (Finance)	4	13	5	22	Personality	18	17	17	52
Challenges (Violence)	5	2	1	8	Blanketing	1	12	5	18
Others (Reasons and Suggestions)	30	18	53	101	Othering	11	17	8	36
					Labelling	10	-	7	17
					Cultural gender norms	11	16	7	34
Total	158	184	187	529	Total	144	154	100	398

Also, a calculation of the percentage difference across the three years reveals there is an approximately 18% increase in non-stereotypical representations, while stereotypical representations decreased by approximately 31%. This means that media publications in 2015 contained less stereotypical frames and more objective frames. By extension, this implies that there was a shift in the quality of coverage given to women political leaders by the media in Nigeria. Although this result is not taken as an absolute measure of the characteristics of the media content on women in political leadership positions in Nigeria, it gives a good insight into the nature of coverage which has been given to women in politics over the years by the media in Nigeria. Furthermore, even though there are lots of factors which could have contributed to the difference in frame recurrence, one can safely assume that there is a gradual shift towards gender sensitivity among media practitioners in Nigeria. It can also be assumed that there is an awareness or gradual acceptance of the roles and participation of women in politics and public governance in Nigeria.

6.2.3.3 Summary of findings on research sub-question 2

Although this study did not set out to evaluate the difference between the quantity of coverage given to women politicians compared to their male counterparts, with the average of four media articles published daily by the four media publications analysed for this study in the specific periods demarcated for this study, it is evident that women are largely underrepresented in media during the period under review. Also, the findings for this research question show that the representation of women political leaders in Nigerian media has improved slightly in terms of quantity – with only two of the analysed newspapers recording a slight increase in the quantity of coverage given to women in politics. This means that more articles about women politicians are getting into the media. The findings reveal that women were given less prominence in terms of placement of news stories, as only n=52 of the analysed media articles were published on the front pages of the analysed publications. Out of the n=52 articles published on the front page, n=40 were pictorial representations, with the accompanying text placed on the inside pages. Meanwhile, in terms of quality, the findings reveal that even though women have been given highly stereotypical representations, between 2007 and 2015, the representation of women by the media in Nigeria became less stereotypical. In summary, the findings for this research question revealed that there was a slight increase in quantity and a decrease in gender bias towards women in political leadership positions in the Nigerian media within the period under review.

6.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented the findings from the data gathered through a CA of the articles collected from the selected four national newspapers in Nigeria to answer my main research question, as well as research sub-questions one and two. The findings were presented based on the individual research question to which they proffer answers. In the next chapter, I will present the findings from the IDI's with journalists, politicians and gender advocates that will provide answers to research sub-question three.

Chapter 7

Presentation of findings II

*People draw their opinions from the set of available beliefs
stored in memory ...*

– Chong & Druckman, 2007: 111

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented findings from the analysed media articles for this study to proffer answers to the main research question as well as research sub-questions one and two. In this chapter, I will present findings from the In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with 22 participants consisting of Nigerian journalists, politicians and gender advocates. The data presented here will proffer answers to research sub-question three (see section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2).

To answer research sub-question three, some relevant stakeholders, namely journalists, politicians and gender advocates were interviewed to examine their perceptions of the construction and representation of women in political leadership roles by the Nigerian media. This was done to answer research sub-question three, as well as to ascertain the stance of these stakeholders to the assumption that media perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. The data from the transcribed interviews were analysed thematically using Atlas.ti 8. Unlike the analysed media articles, the interview data were analysed using the inductive analysis approach. Recurrent themes were identified and grouped under sub-themes, which were later fused into categories relevant to this study.

It is worth noting that the respondents interviewed for this study are professionals in three fields, namely journalism, politics and gender advocacy. None of them has less than five years of professional experience in the stated fields. Aside from this, all the respondents are Nigerian nationals with in-depth knowledge and an understanding of the dynamics of the study's context. Both women and men were included in the study sample for inclusivity and diversity purposes, the pivot of feminism itself. As was expected, the respondents' opinions were rich, textured and diverse.

I present the findings in the following section according to the following schemata:

7.2 Findings from the IDIs

In this section, I present data collected through in-depth recorded interview with journalists, politicians, and gender advocates.³¹ The following data were collected using a sixteen-item IDI guide (see Addendum B). Fourteen of the questions on the Interview Guide were targeted at eliciting responses to answer the third research sub-question. The questions' structure was such that they touch on various aspects of the subject matter which could be glossed over, or overlooked, if it was addressed with a single question. The last two items on the Interview Guide were for identificatory and record purposes. In the following section, I present the third sub-research question, followed by the findings based on responses to the interview questions. The findings are presented under four main headings with sub-headings, all of which were drawn from the questions on the IDI schedule. Research sub-question three thus follows, under which I subsumed the four sub-headings above.

7.2.1 Research sub-question 3: What are the opinions of journalists, politicians, and gender advocates about the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria?

This research question was crafted to understand how stakeholders view the construction and representation of women by the media in Nigeria. To answer this research question, 16 questions were posted on the Interview Guide. The questions were divided into three sections (see Chapter Five, section 5.5.2). While previous studies have analysed the portrayal of women in politics in the media, few of these have examined societal perceptions of women's political participation in relation to media coverage in the Nigerian context (Oladapo, 2019; Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Ette, 2017; Ojebode, 2013). Thus, combining data from media articles and IDIs does not only make up for perceived methodological flaws, but it also provides a more nuanced and encompassing insight into the discourse on media construction and representation of women politicians in the Nigerian context.

³¹ For my own purposes, all the respondents are identified by a tag comprising of the first letters of their first names and surnames followed by the first letter of their gender and an abbreviation of their profession. However, the names of respondents who had sought anonymity were replaced with random letters while their gender and profession were retained.

The questions posed to the participants in this study was aimed at gaining insight into the participants' views on the inclusion of women in politics on a broad level, and then their perceptions of media representations vis-a-vis the assumption that media promote and reinforce gender stereotypes in society. In addition, the researcher also posed questions aimed at getting suggestions to increase women's representation in media with a view to generating more positive representations, which could help to increase women's political participation in Nigeria and, possibly, other parts of Africa.

In the next section, I present the findings under the following categories:

- Participants' perceptions of women in politics,
- Participants' perception of media representation of women political leaders,
- Participants' suggestions for improved media representation, and
- Participants' awareness of legal frameworks guiding gender reportage in media.

Each of these categories has further sub-headings which will form part of my exposition below.

7.2.1.1 Participants' perceptions of women in politics

The first question on the Interview Guide was targeted at examining the participants' disposition to women's participation in politics. The question reads as follows:

- What do you think about women holding political leadership positions?

To answer the question, all of the respondents supported the inclusion and participation of women in politics, albeit for various reasons. The responses of three of the participants (**AA_M_POL**; **AI_F_GA**; **AO_M_JOURN**) were based on assumptions that women possess character traits which make them suitable alternatives to men in political leadership positions. These respondents believe that the capability of women to hold political leadership positions is inherent in the strength of women's characters. The participants variously described women as reliable, honest, focused, and God-fearing, as one of them explained in the following excerpt:

Perfect idea! Women should be encouraged to go into public service ... to hold political positions. Somehow ... I don't know, it has not been scientifically proven, but somehow, they have the temperament to engage issues better than men ... they are more coordinated, and they don't just allow their ambition for personal gain or personal wealth to overrule or override their sense of judgement... their sense of propriety. So, they should be encouraged to be public officeholders ... – **AO_M_JOURN**

Some of the character traits which, according to these respondents, make women suitable for political leadership positions, are consistent with some of the traits identified in the analysed media articles (see section 6.2.1.7). This highlights some of the underlying societal beliefs about women in the Nigerian society which informs media representation of women. Although the identified qualities make women an appealing alternative to the longstanding male leadership in the country, making a generalised assumption of the applicability of such traits to all women would be tantamount to promoting stereotypes about women's behaviour. Despite expressing the view that women's character put them in better stead than men to handle political leadership duties, one of the participants pointed out that the opinion does not apply to all women:

I believe... if a woman is able to get to the position of president in Nigeria, and she is a woman with focus who has programmes that she wants to implement, I believe that she will perform better than the men. Because, generally, I know women are more God-fearing, women are more religious, more spiritual. So, because of that most women, in whatever they do, they have the fear of God, and with that, they operate. I know that I'm not saying every woman, but most women ... – **AG_F_JOURN**

Another resonating theme in the data is the evaluation of women's competence based on traditional gender roles. These participants assume that women's ability to effectively administer affairs at the home-front attests to their capability to handle political leadership positions. In other words, due diligence in domestic chores and childcare is believed to confer on women the capability to handle political leadership positions if given the opportunity. It is worth noting that this view is held by both male and female respondents alike:

It's very, very good for women to partake in politics ... I believe ... they have what it takes to excel in politics ... You see, the father may just maybe running around to bring [in] the finance, and once in awhile stay at home. But it's the women that take serious care of the children more than men. And someone that can do that in the household, definitely, should be able to excel when it comes to the general public. Because it's those feelings they have in training their children that they will put to the general public. I think they will be able to excel very well in public positions ... –
AA_M_POL

The views expressed by this set of participants is congruent with the representations of gender roles identified in the analysed media articles. These responses highlight another prevalent stereotype in the Nigerian society which informs media representation of women in politics, namely gender roles. The participants' responses contain assumptions that qualities such as the ability to multitask, meticulousness, financial prudence, and other related qualities, which is believed to set women apart from their male counterparts, are learnt through their roles as wives and mothers. Therefore, the ability to effectively juggle domestic tasks with career demand is adjudged to be beneficial for women holding or seeking to hold political leadership positions. Despite these assumptions, it could be asked why more women have not been elected or appointed into political leadership positions in Nigeria. The promotion of this line of thinking by women and men alike calls attention to the underlying patriarchal intentions which have upheld patriarchal structures that have kept Nigerian women continually relegated.

Aside from the above, the participation of women in politics was also viewed in terms of gender equality. This shows that there is a level of social awareness about the marginalisation of women in politics and public governance. Undoubtedly, Nigerian women have been marginalised in many aspects of societal life in relation to growth and development. As have been stated earlier, Nigerian women have never achieved the benchmark of 35% representation in political leadership positions as stipulated in both international and national gender policies. It is worth noting that, since the country's return to democratic rule, Nigerian women have barely had more than 10% representation in parliamentary positions. Although this view was not espoused by all of the respondents, their responses underscore the need to achieve gender parity in all aspects of the Nigerian society, particularly in political empowerment. This is necessary to enhance inclusivity and all-round development in Nigeria in line with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5). As one of the

participants noted, gender bias and discrimination are part of the factors responsible for some of the lingering development challenges being experienced in Nigeria:

And research has also shown that there is really no area of variance, you know, no area of difference when it comes to the issue of competence – with regards to work experience or otherwise. But unfortunately, we live in a society where women are largely judged by their gender, you know, not really by what they are able to do. And, unfortunately, we are where we are today because we are yet to give women the rightful place that they are expected to occupy.... **KO_M_JOURN**

Furthermore, some of the respondents argued that the inclusion of women in political leadership positions is essential to achieving gender parity. They argued further that equality should not be sought at the expense of competence. These respondents believe that a gender equality campaign for inclusion in political leadership positions should be based on merit rather than favour for a candidate's gender. This is exemplified by the following excerpt:

Women holding political leadership positions, if the woman is competent, it's good enough, you know. Competence should not be about gender. It should not be. Competence is competence, if you are competent, you are good enough, whether you are male or female. So, that is why I disagree with people who say it's now the turn [of] the women. based on what? If a woman is competent, I don't mind having [an] all-around women cabinet if you're good enough. You do not give [an] elective position to a woman because she is a woman. If a woman is competent, she deserve[s] the best, if a man is competent, he deserves the best. I will not subscribe to you dropping a competent man because you want to favour a woman because of her gender, that would not [be] fair. So, if a woman is competent enough, she should hold any position, she deserves to hold it, that is my position on this argument of gender equality and all that crap... – **EA_M_JOURN**

While the benefits of the inclusion of women in political leadership positions cannot be overemphasised, the perception that women can function effectively in political leadership positions and the fact that the longstanding marginalisation of women in public governance deprives the nation of valuable contributions to national development is stated more explicitly by another participant in the following excerpt:

We now know that it is not only men who can contribute to the growth of society, women too can. We've seen it from experience that women, too, they have a lot to contribute to society. So, we've seen that they should be given a chance... – **AS_F_JOURN**

Also evident in the data are participants who are indifferent to issues of gender distinction in determining an individual's leadership potential. Some of the opinions under this category highlighted competence as the most important factor in determining a candidate's potential of being a political leader rather than gender or any other such bias. Even though these participants believe that there is a need for more women to be allowed to take up political leadership positions, they argued that gender should not be a denominator for political participation. What matters to this set of respondents is competence, instead of gender. This is premised on the argument that competence is not a function of an individual's sexual or reproductive features. The following excerpt contains the thought of one of the respondents:

I personally don't have any gender bias. I see people first. I don't see gender. So, if a woman holds a political position, what matters is her competence... – **DA_M_JOURN**

The respondents in this category argued for the consideration of competence over gender identity as a criterion for the selection of women for political leadership positions. However, it is worth noting that such arguments have been used to the advantage of the male gender to promote and sustain the domination of leadership positions in society. Historically, women have always been considered as unsuitable to hold public leadership positions on account of their lack of some leadership traits which are mostly related to gender differences than to women's ability to function effectively in political or public leadership positions (Inal, 2017: 616; Rhode, 2017: 10; Vu *et al.*, 2017: 2). Therefore, the competence argument may pose some fundamental challenges to the emancipation of women, especially if it is equated with prior experience in a similar position for which a woman is contesting. Also, knowing that women have not been entirely "incompetent" all through the years they have been relegated, one may assume that such a line of reasoning contains some implicit bias which could keep women perpetually side-lined.

The overall view of the respondents to women political participation is positive. Even though some of the views are stereotypical, the respondents mentioned the fact that some

women, just as some men, do not have the potential to function effectively in political leadership positions. They opined that women should not be side-lined in politics, because they are equally as capable as men in effectively functioning in public leadership positions, as well as in bringing about positive developmental change to a nation.

7.2.1.2 Participants' perceptions of media construction and representation of women in politics

Four different questions were placed on the Interview Guide to understand the participants' views of the media representation of women in politics. The questions were aimed at getting the respondents' general perceptions, as well as their specific positions on different aspects of media representation of women in politics based on previously identified media bias. This was done to enable the researcher to get the participants' opinions on some of the arguments raised in previous studies about the portrayal of women in politics in the media (Ette, 2017; Lee, 2015; Walsh, 2015; Van Dembroucke, 2014; Campus, 2013; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Lundell & Ekström, 2008; Bystrom *et al.*, 2001; Braden, 1996). The questions in the Interview Guide are the following:

- How can you describe the portrayal of women political leaders in Nigerian media?
- Studies from other parts of the world have shown that women are treated differently by media compared to their male counterparts. In light of this, how can you describe the media representation of female politicians in Nigeria?
- From your observation, can you say that women political leaders in Nigeria are given adequate attention in media? Please provide reasons and examples?
- What is your opinion of the assumption that the representation of women political leaders in Nigerian media undermines their capability to function effectively in positions?

7.2.1.2.1 General opinion of media representation of women in politics

The participants were asked to express, in broad terms, their views about the portrayal of women in Nigerian media. This question was targeted at understanding their overall

perceptions of the representation of women in politics in terms of quantity and quality³² of coverage. The responses on the quantity of coverage are grouped into two, based on participants' perceptions of the adequacy or inadequacy of the coverage given to women. The quality of coverage on its own was evaluated on the bases of respondents' perception of media biases or lack of thereof.

7.2.1.2.1.1 Quantity of coverage

Quantity of coverage in this study talks about the number of representations which media have given women in politics. The amount of coverage, in this case, was based on respondents' perceptions of the frequency of mentions, or degree of visibility women political leaders enjoy in the Nigerian media.

Quantity of coverage: Adequate

In terms of respondents' perception of the degree of visibility media have given women political leaders in Nigeria, seven of the respondents agreed that media has given women adequate quantity of representation (AS_F_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN; NT_F_POL; SO_F_GA). Some of the respondents who expressed this view believe that media representation of women in politics is increasing compared to what they had in the past. The argument of one of the respondents is as follows:

Well, since[the representation was] not there before, or since we couldn't locate [women] before since the awareness before is little or nothing, ... I will say sincerely this time around, media house[s], they really tried. Because I can't even say how many media houses that I have gone to that are so much interested in female participation. So, this time around, the media tried their own best. They really interview[ed] us. They really... try to give us support, not financial but at least ... interviewing us, giving us audience on-air and everything. In fact, I want to say it is a new beginning. But before now, it is not as strong as this one [the attention given to women in politics by the media is better compared to what it used to be]... – NT_F_POL

³²Quantity: number of media articles published about women in politics. Quality: nature of the content or frames as well as other nuanced considerations in media representations.

Despite the assumption that women in politics are becoming increasingly visible in media, some of the respondents who agreed that media give women adequate representation also argued that media do not deliberately seek out women in politics to promote positive stories about their achievements. Rather, the media representation of women in politics tends to be biased or negative, except where women in fact purchased media space to publicise their achievements by themselves. The following excerpt confirms this:

Two sides, they've enjoyed attention adequately. But I am not sure it is the kind of attention they need. The media tr[y] to witch-hunt women who are politicians. They look for their pitfalls, they look for their mistakes, that is one. Two is that ... the cost of appearing in media is high. You must do something unusual to get into the media or to catch media attention. And so, for women who are just coming up, you know, in politics ... in leadership ... they are not likely to get it. Except they are buying it. You will have to buy the space to put what you did. And that is why we have some platforms that we say the unusual, that we say things that women did that will naturally not come in the media. So, I will say that as much as [women] get attention, it is not attention that results in positive portrayal for them ... – **SO_F_GA**

The foregoing argument does not only confirm the assumptions about the various intricacies involved in media representation of women in political leadership positions, but also pointed out that, although the quantity of representation given to women by media may have increased, the representations are mostly negative. The respondent also highlighted one of the fundamental challenges to women's empowerment in Nigerian society: finances. This indicates that Nigerian women have been underrepresented in the mediasphere because of their financial incapacitation. Even though many journalists are quick to refute this claim, the veracity of the respondent's claim cannot be doubted because despite running a mixed market economy, many of the newspaper organisations currently operating in Nigeria are founded as businesses by private individuals (Nwabueze, 2019). Hence, revenue generation plays a vital role in the operations of these newspaper organisations. Although journalists themselves have confirmed the assumption that media organisations in Nigeria are commercially oriented, they argued that money does not play a huge role in their representation of women in politics. The following excerpt confirms this:

First, we have to understand: Is media commercially oriented? We have to agree. The thing is, how do we define this commercial orient[ation]? We want to sell papers. Then we want advert[s]. If that is what you mean by commercial orient[ation], then nobody stops a woman or a man from buying space in [a] newspaper. If you bring one of your adverts to the newspaper, no one is going to discriminate against you because you are a woman. Then you ... if you are inviting journalists to a press conference [or] whatever, we are obliged to attend. In fact, I have a pull-out [called] ... Wondrous World of Women – it's [a] four-page [pull outpublished on] Tuesdays ... [Also] the two weekend titles [in my organisation] are devoted to women and they are not tagged. They are not told to pay anything. It's free. I disagree that the media discriminate against women because of commercial ... what did you call it? ... –

DA_M_JOURN

Besides the official costs of getting sponsored stories into media, another aspect of Nigerian journalism which women in politics still grapple with is the aspect of providing incentives or so-called “brown envelopes”³³ to reporters as motivation for covering their events. This has constituted an impediment to women seeking adequate representation in media for some reasons. Firstly, many journalists in Nigeria are poorly remunerated. Hence, many of them tend to gravitate towards financially rewarding assignments. This becomes a problem for women who, due to either financial lack or moral principles, would not aid such behaviour. One of the respondents explained this in the following excerpt:

[W]e don't know what is happening to the Nigerian system ... most areas are now corrupt ... that is why you see the women are not been given a fair hearing in terms of media coverage. If men are invited [by the media] or [the men themselves] invite pressmen [sic], after saying ... what they want to say, when they are going the men [will give] out money or gift[s] or incentives reasonably for the journalists or ... mass media people to go away with as gift. And that brown envelope will determine how the pressman [sic] or the media man [sic] will put up the reportage in their media organisation – be it electronic or print media. [But] you know you,

³³“Brown envelopes” are, mostly, monetary gifts given to journalists by news sources (individuals or organisations) to ensure that their activities are covered and published in media. Although receiving “brown envelopes” is not an acceptable practice in Nigeria, it is common among Nigerian journalists. One of the foremost reasons for this practice is poor remuneration which has made many journalists dependent on hand-outs from news sources (Oberiri, 2016; BBC News, 2015).

women, ... have a reservation for spending, ... So, by the time a woman speaks or [grants an] interview, when [journalists] want to report it, they will just mouth[report] it faintly, or once. Even her activities, that they are supposed to report, maybe for almost a week, they will just report it maybe in one news bulletin and forget about it, because women find it very difficult to part with what is not legitimate... **AO_M_POL**

From the responses in this section, it is evident that even though some respondents believe that media representation of women is adequate, the representation might not be as bias-free as desired. Aside from this, there are some factors which women still have to contend with to get the desired media visibility. These include the level of participation in politics, financial capability, as well as women's readiness to give journalists inducements to get their activities published in media.

Quantity of coverage: Inadequate

While seven of the respondents in the foregoing section have agreed to the fact that media representation of women in politics is adequate, thirteen of the respondents (**AA_F_GA; AA_M_POL; AO_M_POL; AG_F_JOURN; AO_M_POL; AI_F_GA; EA_M_JOURN; KO_M_JOURN; OA_M_POL; RS_F_POL; TW_M_GA; YA_F_JOURN**) stated that the representation of women political leaders in media has been inadequate. The overriding agreement among respondents in this category is that the media representation of women in politics is poor and needs to improve. The following excerpt exemplifies this:

It's not enough, they are coming up with that now, but it is not enough, they should put more effort into that aspect ... [The coverage] given to women now is not enough. Media should be able to do more in order to encourage women in public office ... – **AA_M_POL**

Various reasons were advanced by the respondents for the underrepresentation of women in media. Among this is media house policy, finances, news selection determinants such as prominence, as well as gender bias. Some of the respondents in this category believe that inadequate representation of women in media is a result of some inherent gender bias held by media against women which have led to a systematic side-lining of women in media reports. As one of the respondents argues:

Absolutely very low, very low, ... you know, as we are in the political space the media still give a lot of [attention] to men – to male actors more than female actors. In Nigeria, it is apparent ... we see it every day that apart from the media coverage [being inadequate] for women, even when we see the coverage, the things that are focused on... [are] things like they are trying to analyse or evaluate the woman based on gender and ability ... at the detriment of other things – their intellect, what they have done before – their antecedence, their precedence, you know ... –**AI_F_GA**

On the other hand, four of the respondents in this category contended that the underrepresentation of women political leaders in media may not entirely be the fault of the media because of some underlying factors which are not deliberately caused by media. As a respondent argued in the following excerpt:

Well, you know I am a media practitioner and from experience, I will not say that the media deliberately are leaving out women – not giving [them] enough coverage. If you look at it, the women are not being given enough coverage, but I will not lay the blame at the doorstep of the media ... – **AG_F_JOURN**

Using the example of a previous election in Nigeria, the respondent in the foregoing excerpt explained that the lack of visibility of women in Nigerian media is not an act of deliberate omission on the part of media, because mostly, their publication is subject to the availability and access to information. Therefore, when women in politics do not push information about themselves, their events or achievements, to the media, they might not get the needed publicity or attention in media.

The overriding view regarding this question is that women in politics are still largely underrepresented in the Nigerian media space for various reasons. Some of the stated reasons border on gender bias, socio-economic challenges, women's media engagement style, as well as news selection criteria.

Next, I present findings relating to respondents' perception of the quality of coverage given to women in media.

7.2.1.2.1.2 Quality of coverage

There is no gainsaying that the quantity of representation given to women is equally important as the quality of coverage given to them. The quality of media representation has

to do with the nature of the content published about women in politics. The participants' responses contained views about the dimension or angle of coverage given to women in media. The responses were grouped into two categories, namely biased and unbiased respectively. The respondents are equally divided in their opinion of the quality of media representation of women in politics. Each category (biased or unbiased) has seven respondents (biased: **AA_F_GA**; **AI_F_GA**; **KA_F_POL**; **OA_M_POL**; **RG_F_JOURN**; **SO_F_GA**; **YA_F_JOURN**; unbiased: **AS_F_JOURN**; **DA_M_JOURN**; **EA_M_JOURN**; **MA_M_JOURN**; **NT_F_POL**; **TW_M_GA**; **EO_M_JOURN**), while the other respondents expressed neutral views (**AA_F_JOURN**; **AA_M_POL**; **AG_F_JOURN**; **AO_M_JOURN**; **AO_M_POL**; **DF_F_JOURN**; **MT_F_JOURN**; **RS_F_POL**).

Quality of coverage: Biased

Respondents in this category expressed views that media coverage of women in politics tend to focus on women's gender or other inanities, like beauty, children, family, ability, and past political experience. One of the seven respondents in this category (**RG_F_JOURN**) also stated that the media representation of women in politics tends to be embarrassing compared to that of their male counterparts. Another respondent (**AI_F_GA**) stated that the media lay less emphasis on women's competence and manifestoes. This view, as expressed by another one of the respondents, can be seen in the following excerpt:

Well, I... have been working in that area for some time now. And, I have done some kind of research on the portrayal of women, on the public perception of women in leadership, in politics[,] and I found out that ... the media has a way of portraying women. If they have ten political aspirants vying for a particular office and you have two women amidst those ten, there is a tendency that the reportage on those women will be funny, will be embarrassing ... **SO_F_GA**

Aside from the foregoing, the respondents also believe that when women in political leadership positions are caught up in political scandals, media often make criticisms targeted at the women's gender rather than the offence of which they are being accused. The respondents also believe that sometimes the criticisms are more severe than that of men. Respondents in this category also believe that media tend to "witch hunt" women in politics

and give more prominence to their pitfalls than they would if it were their male counterparts (SO_F_GA). They cited examples such as Sarah Jibril, a presidential aspirant, who lost by a wide margin to her male opponents at their party primaries, Kemi Adeosun, who was accused of forgery of her National Youth Service Corps exemption certificate, and Patricia Etteh, a former speaker of the House of Representative, who was accused of misappropriation of funds (AI_F_GA; RG_F_JOURN; YA_F_JOURN). The following excerpt is the opinion of another one of the respondents:

If you consider the issue of Etteh, the way the media painted it, no, it wasn't good enough. Though she might not have done well, the painting was gender-based. If you look at a lot of publications... I won't mention the name of the newspaper organisation, their editorial criticised Etteh based on gender – which I felt [was] uncalled for. In fact, there are several cases in which they have accused women in leadership positions[of]... attaining that position... through immoral acts –I feel that kind of [portrayal] is not good enough for the society. If we want more women participation in leadership positions, it is not good enough... –
OA_M_POL

Also, the respondents believe that the media in Nigeria display gender insensitivity by promoting gender stereotypes through their portrayal of women in political leadership positions. The respondents also stated that media relegate women in politics by portraying them as political backbenchers whose involvement in politics is basically to “eulogise male contestants” (AO_M_POL;YA_F_JOURN). While one of the respondents contend that there is a high level of resentment against women in politics, she complained that media reinforce stereotypical perceptions of women in politics (SO_F_GA). Aside from this, some of the respondents submit that the use of family relations and personality frames at the expense of competence frames is not only stereotypical, but also biased, because such representations are mostly not applied by the media in Nigeria to men in politics (OA_M_POL; RS_F_POL).

Quality of coverage: Unbiased

In terms of objective coverage, eight of the respondents believe that media representation of women is commensurate to that of men based on the level of women's participation in politics. They also argued that the nature of the content published about women in politics is

comparable to contents published about men. Aside from this, the respondents who expressed this view assume that media do not promote stereotypes about women in political leadership positions. One of the participants responded as follows:

Political leaders, how have we been portraying them? ... I'm trying to remember ... to think about how we have been portraying them. I'm not sure we have portrayed them differently. As a matter of fact, I think we try to celebrate them, ... [T]ake Florence Ita-Giwa for instance ... any woman political leader that survive the shark-infested waters of Nigerian politics, and emerges as a leader deserves to be celebrated because our politics is not about fairness. [...] It is a very tough terrain to survive, you know. If a woman goes through all of that and emerges, she deserves to be celebrated ... –
EA_M_JOURN

Although the respondent speaking in the foregoing claimed that the media in Nigeria, at least his own media organisation, do not represent women in politics in a stereotypical light, the woman politician he mentioned was one of the women in the analysed media articles whose physical appearance has received a lot of attention from media. Although the said politician also had objective representations, in some of the articles in which she appeared there is a mention of her beauty, or her fashion sense. For example, in one of the articles, she was described as “One of Nigeria’s most glamorous and well-connected women (GN_28022015_17; see also PN_21042007_A7_A9; TD_01032015_38). It is equally important to mention that these stereotypical mentions are from the other three media outlets other than this respondent’s medium.

While the respondents in this category believe media treatment of women in politics is not different from that of their male counterparts, they put forward various reasons for their views. One of the women in politics who was part of the study argued that male politicians, rather than the media, are responsible for the biased representation of women political leaders in media. In other words, this respondent believed that gender bias or stereotypical representations do not directly emanate from the media, but stems from men’s “plot” to sustain the relegation of women politically. Also, the respondent argues that the media in Nigeria are being used by some men in politics to victimise women in order to ensure that women remain politically marginalised. Her argument is as follows:

The media has not done that [to] us. It is the men that will be picking [up the] phone [to] say, ‘Ehn! *Sebi* somebody was there the other time, and [s]he embezzled money ... The fact [is] that they want to prove to the whole world that [women] cannot [lead]... And you know in politics, [some] people are there ... to make sure that the other person is [relegated] ... Media are not raising such issues, media will always tell you, ‘Ah! Kuti did this in her own time, Akunyili did this in [her] own time, former Minister of Finance, Okonjo ... She did this, she did th[at]. The media are always helping us[,] but [male politicians] are not always happy when they hear that a woman is out there ... – **NT_F_POL**

Other respondents, mostly journalists, in this category cited “soft-sell” newspapers or tabloids as the domain for stereotypical and biased media representations of women in politics. They also opine that serious news publications often portray women in politics in a balanced and objective manner as opposed to tabloids, because of the difference in the objectives of both publication types. These respondents explained that the difference in objectives between “soft-sell” and serious news publications determines the quality of representation given to women in politics. While the respondents’ submissions may be true to an extent, the findings in the CA of media articles in this study indicate the contrary. Even though all of the news publications for this study are serious news publications, there is identifiable evidence of stereotypical and biased representations of women in politics in all of them. Another respondent in this category, a gender advocate, believes that the issue of gender stereotyping and bias against women in the Nigerian media is mediated by the geographical location of the media (**TW_M_GA**). This respondent also submits that the media in the South-west, unlike those in the Northern part of Nigeria, give women in politics adequate and fair representations.

7.2.1.2.2 Respondents’ perception of media representation of women in politics compared to their male counterparts

Previous studies have established that media portrayal of women in politics differs both in quantity and content compared to men (Meeks, 2013; Bligh *et al.*, 2012). To further test respondents’ perception of media representation of women in politics in relation to how it differs from that of their male counterparts, the participants were asked to state their opinion about the assumption of the perceived difference in coverage. Their opinions were categorised

into two, namely that media representations of women and men in politics are different, and that media representations of women and men in politics are the same.

7.2.1.2.2.1 Media representations of women and men in politics are different

In terms of respondents' perceptions of difference in representation between media treatment of women in politics compared to men, ten of the participants (**AA_F_GA; AG_F_JOURN; AO_M_JOURN; KA_F_POL; KO_M_JOURN; OA_M_POL; RG_F_J; RS_F_POL; YA_F_JOURN; SO_F_GA**) supported the assumption that media treat issues relating to women in politics differently. They identified various aspects of dissimilarities in media treatment of women in politics compared to their male counterparts. These included difference in the type of questions media ask women and excessive focus on gender or personality (**RS_F_POL**). They also highlighted the fact that women are subjected to a more critical coverage when they commit a blunder in public office (**SO_F_GA; YA_F_JOURN**). Some of the reasons they gave for their responses centre on socio-cultural gender norms which have influenced the way society, specifically, journalists, perceive women (**AA_F_GA; KA_F_POL; RG_F_JOURN**). Other reasons include women's lack of financial capacity to gain adequate media attention (**KO_M_JOURN**).

It is true. I agree that they are actually differently portrayed. I have said that over and over, and it just stereotypes them. That's what the media do to women in politics. There is that strong stereotype. They have a particular mould that they expect them to fit into. And, so every gesture they bring up ... When the man is stealing and looting public funds, nobody complains, when they complain, they say it like, well, it's just one of those things politicians do, sometimes [they] are corrupt and the likes. But when it is a woman who does it, the publicity doubles and they say it like 'Oh! can you imagine a saint doing this?' You know that is really not fair on women. Although we know that corruption is not to be tolerated, why should they put more emphasis on it when it is a woman. So, the media is just not fair on women... – **SO_F_GA**

As have been stated earlier, the respondents argue that media questions for women in politics are usually different from that of men, even when both genders are competing for the same positions(e.g., **AI_F_GA**). The respondents stated that media, through their representation, promote men's competence and capability, while they denigrate the competence and

capability of women vying for political leadership positions. Aside from this, other respondents stated that media have the propensity of taking the words or statements uttered by women out of context, especially issues negating existing socio-cultural norms. A gender advocate explained her ordeal in the following excerpt:

I have spoken about abortion some years back, and I had woken up in the morning, I saw [*The*] *Punch* newspaper say ‘I believe in abortion’. And my church people were waiting for me, you know, to crucify me over that opinion, whereas when you read the context, yes I said abortion for issues of rape and all of that, and of course, where there is no information, you know, been provided by the government. And, that if such people find themselves pregnant, they should be allowed to abort the pregnancy. So, there should be a legalisation of abortion. So, if you see the way they put it forward, other women ... will never get over it. There was a newspaper where I said that ... ‘I got married on Friday and I had to travel on Sunday for my master’s degree.’ And ... the newspaper brought out, ‘I left my husband three days after wedding’. So, a lot of people assumed [that I divorced my husband after three days of marriage] when they s[aw] that ... if you google my name on the internet, that is what you’ll see ... – **AA_F_GA**

As have been explained in the foregoing excerpt, misrepresentation is another issue which women in Nigeria have to grapple with. While it can be argued that anyone is susceptible to misrepresentation, or being quoted out of context by the media, the situation is more precarious for women, especially in instances where their actions seem to challenge existing socio-cultural norms and practices. Misrepresentation of women in media may be equally as bad as underrepresentation, if not worse (Butler, 2010: 2; Dolan, 2005: 31–33). If anything, it exposes women who are already endangered by the virtue of their participation in politics to more backlash from society, as can be seen also in the excerpt above. The following excerpt is another illustration of the treatment meted out to women in politics in Nigeria:

I remember one of President Muhammadu Buhari’s...erm [...] I can’t remember her name. She was one of [his] media assistants, a social media assistant. Whenever she goes on social media to try to defend the policies of [the president], the kind of responses she gets will frighten you. People will insult her. Now they tie those insults to her gender ... ‘you should go home and take care of your husband.’ ... ‘Go home and take care of your children.’ ‘You are a

prostitute.’ ‘You are irresponsible.’ ‘This is how a woman should dress.’ So, when a female political office holder tries to go beyond these boundaries, she’s been cautioned, and if she refuses to listen, she is cut down. So, you ask yourself, when women operate in such environments, very simple, ... you will hardly find them in media spaces. Because they are forced to be quiet ... So, the media will not report those who are not in the limelight... –
KO_M_JOURN

The foregoing argument confirms the assumption that women in politics and public governance may, sometimes, be wary of their engagements and interactions with the media, either by avoidance or through tactful interactions with media. When women avoid or guard their interactions with media it denies them visibility and the privilege of presenting the best of themselves or their intentions to members of the society through the media. Such acts may invariably lead to further marginalisation of women in political leadership positions.

7.2.1.2.2.2 Media representations of women and men in politics are the same

Still, on the comparison of media treatment of women in politics compared to men, five of the respondents (**DA_M_JOURN**; **MA_M_JOURN**; **MT_F_JOURN**, **NT_F_POL**; **TW_M_GA**) opined that media representations of women in politics do not differ from that of their male counterparts. This set of participants believes that the perceived differences might be due to several reasons, some of which are not caused by the media. These respondents claimed that journalists in Nigeria do not engage in deliberate discrimination of women and would not intentionally side-line women in politics. One of the journalists interviewed explained this view in the following excerpt:

I don’t believe so ... I deal with these things, I don’t think I have that kind of consciousness, that when I see something coming from a woman, I will treat it [differently]... [That] I won’t treat it like I will treat the one that I get from a man, I don’t think so. I think it’s just kind of this narrative that people want to push. As far as I’m concerned, I don’t think it’s real, for me, it’s not. I don’t think that way. I think if a woman is good enough, she is doing something positive, she will be celebrated and supported ... –
MA_M_JOURN

The respondent in the foregoing excerpt saw the claim that women are not given the same treatment as men in the media as a false claim which does not have a basis in reality. His argument also contains implicit claims that women's relegation could be a result of incompetence or docility on women's part. Although such views of the causes of women's relegation or stereotyping might seem insensitive to the plight of women in Nigeria, it confirms the assumption that women have to work twice as hard as men for their efforts to be noticed by society. This is especially true for women who find themselves in sectors that are dominated by men. Another respondent also argued that women get underrepresented in media because men generate more newsworthy events which get them into media.

No, the media does not do that. The media must not in any way discriminate in [their] reporting. But somehow, the flow of events may just determine it. If you look at it even if you take a newspaper on a typical day and do content analysis. You will see that 80% of the content will be around activities generated by men. And so, where a woman really shows some progress, the media actually go out of [their] way to bring that out, yes. But you will now see that this one will be so far in between, and then they don't really add up to a strong threshold that can now begin to rule the media in terms of content... – **AO_M_JOURN**

This in a way does not only show a subtle acknowledgement of the issue, but a denial of the responsibility of its cause. In this case, even though respondents in this category deny having observed differences in media representation of female and male political actors, they submit that the natural flow of events which the media cannot control could lead to the perceived differences in media representations of women and men in politics. The overall argument for this category of respondents is that media do not hold conscious biases against women in general, and specifically, women political leaders.

7.2.1.2.3 Respondents' perceptions of media emphasis on gender and personality compared to competence

This section contains respondents' perceptions or claims that the media focus on the gender and personality of women in politics rather than their competence. The question was targeted at getting more nuanced responses from the participants on areas of perceived differences in coverage. This theme also composed of two opposing views. Ten of the respondents (**AA_F_GA; AA_M_POL; AI_F_GA; AO_M_POL; KO_M_JOURN; NT_F_POL;**

OA_M_POL; RG_F_JOURN; RS_F_POL; TW_M_GA) agreed with the assumption that the media in Nigeria emphasise gender and personality rather than competence, while eight of them (**AG_F_JOURN; AO_M_JOURN; AS_F_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN; EA_M_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN; KA_F_POL; SO_F_GA**) disagreed with the notion. These two opposing views are presented in the following sections.

7.2.1.2.3.1 Media emphasise gender and personality

Ten of the respondents agree with the assumption that media focus more on the gender and personality of women in politics than their competence and policies, agreeing that media representations, sometimes, emphasise gender or personality instead of competence and other serious issues. The following excerpt is an example:

In Nigeria, it is apparent ... we see it every day that apart from the media coverage given ... [being in]sufficient for women, even when [they are given] coverage, the things that are focused on [are]... like they are trying to analyse or evaluate the women based on gender and ability ... at the detriment of other things [-] their intellect, what they have done before, their antecedence, their precedence, you know ... What I am saying is that even though we see improvement in the coverage, we can still see that the coverage focuses on certain things which are biological rather than intellectual ... women have also begun to think that they ... need to prove ... their ability to be caring, to be caregivers, to be homemakers and so on in order to appeal to the public and the electorates ... – **AI_F_GA**

One of the arguments of the respondents is that emphasis on gender roles or personality rather than issues of competence such as intellect, service delivery or policy takes fairness out of media representation of women, especially because such representations are not applied to men in a similar context (**AI_F_GA; KO_M_JOURN; OA_M_POL; RG_F_JOURN**). Another respondent stated that she considers it condescending for media to ask women political leaders questions about gender roles and personality, rather than governance (**RS_F_POL**). Conversely, another respondent in this category debunked the notion that the media's focus on the gender or personality of women in politics stems from an underlying biased intention. The respondent argued that media representations which highlight the gender or personality of women are meant to celebrate the uniqueness and beauty of African women, rather than denigrate them politically. Implicitly, the respondent assumes that

African women are naturally objects of the “male gaze”(Whelehan, 2014: 236). Hence, the media representation of women as objects of male fascination contains no fault lines. His explication is as follows:

Naturally, the African woman has a beautiful identity. In some circles, it will be abnormal for you to see an African woman and ... not be attracted by her beauty [at first sight]. And that is why ... most African poets ... portray the African woman in the form of a goddess. So, when you see a writer say, ‘She is a female senator.’ There could be reasons for that because the[re] are not many female senators. I can also interpret it to mean that the writer is saying that we need more female senators ... If I go to the market of 90 women and there is one man, I will say there is a man in a market of women. It is more on the perspective of [the person] looking at [the scenario]. So, if we now have more women [and] society gets use[d] to women being senators ... the language will change ... That is why I say this feminist persuasion is coming from the West is gonna run us into a conflict of ideals. We have forgotten the social constructions upon which the African societies were built ...
– **EO_M_JOURN**

Aside from the implicit normalisation of the objectification of women in politics, the respondent also explains that the rarity of women in politics calls for the emphasis on gender. He further contends that feminism and its attendant call for gender equality are at variance with African cultural ideals. The respondents’ argument cannot be entirely faulted, because until a few years decades ago when feminist research and activism began to gain ground, African women who have been long marginalised and subjugated because of their gender, are becoming increasingly vocal about their emancipation (Arnfred & Adomako Ampofo, 2010). The respondent’s argument basically speaks of patriarchal inclinations which seek to keep women perpetually subjugated in the guise of culture. Therefore, such a line of thought shows a lack of sympathy for the plight of women, as well as a lack of awareness of the gradual shift in global gender ideals.

7.2.1.2.3.2 Media do not emphasise gender and personality

In the preceding section, I presented the arguments of the ten respondents who agreed with the assumption that the media highlight issues relating to the gender and personality of women in politics. In this section, I present the arguments of the eight respondents who opposed the

notion for various reasons, among which is the fact that media representations highlighting a woman's gender or personality stems out of women's incompetence, lack of eloquence or intellectual capacity to engage in intellectually stimulating arguments. Invariably, these respondents argue that media only focus on the personality and gender of incompetent women, as one of the respondents contends in the following excerpt:

I strongly disagree. No, I strongly disagree [with the notion that media focus on women politicians' gender and personality instead of their competence], except [a] woman [does] not have anything to say. If you go and cover a woman politician and she is making a good point, as a reporter [will you] not report that angle? [Will you, instead, say], "she is pretty ...? No, that [can only be done in] entertainment – gossip columns. I told you we have other [sections] for [entertainment and gossip news]. [If a] woman is able [and] capable, if she is intellectually [sound], if she deserves that post, she will be able to marshal her points and the reporter will report whatever she [says] ... – **AG_F_JOURN**

The respondent in the foregoing excerpt also indirectly acknowledged media focus on trivialities in their coverage of women in politics, albeit, in entertainment and gossip columns. In a way, the distinction between representations in serious media which publish straight or hard news, and the ones that publish entertainment news, may serve to normalise bias representation of women in the context of entertainment. Judging by this response one might assume that hard news publications are devoid of biased or stereotypical representations, however, the CA aspect of this study showed that both hard news publication and the weekend editions, which are predominantly entertainment media, are implicated in the usage of gender stereotypes and bias.

Similarly, respondents in this category believe that women's engagement with issues of social-political significance immunises them from stereotypical and biased representations. One of the women whose name came up several times during the interviews as an example of objective and balanced reportage of women in political leadership positions is Oby Ezekwesili, as can be seen in the following:

Yes! Yes! Take Oby for instance, the 'Bring Back our Girls Movement'. I'm not sure anybody has talk[ed] about her husband, [instead] people are talking about her activities ... – **EA_M_JOURN**

This respondent's argument is based on the assumption that media would ignore salient issues for inabilities if women political leaders are constantly engaged in newsworthy activities. Oby Ezekwesili, which the politician cited as an example, is a high performing politician who generates news almost all the time. Also, one may assume that her appearance has not attracted attention for some probable reasons. Ezekwesili's cropped hair and her barely made-up face do not place her into the category of the stereotypical woman politician in Nigeria. Most importantly, the number and nature of activities Ezekwesili engage in may make it challenging, if not absurd, for journalists to represent her in terms of some gender stereotypes or bias. However, my analysis of media articles also shows that irrespective of the amount of news a woman political leader generates, media might still represent her in stereotypical or biased light, especially if she seems to be fashion-conscious, or encourages such representations. A case in point is Florence Ita-Giwa, whose representations are both objective and stereotypical as seen in the analysed media articles (see Chapter Six, sections 6.2.2.5 and 6.2.2.9).

7.2.1.2.4 Respondents' perceptions of media representation of the capability of women in politics

This section contains responses to the question which sought to examine the interviewees' perceptions of the notion that the representations of women in politics in Nigerian media undermine their capability to function effectively in political leadership positions. As with the previous responses, opinions were divided. Five respondents (AA_F_GA; AI_F_GA; AO_M_POL; KA_F_POL; RG_F_JOURN) agreed that media representations undermine the capability of women in politics, and eight respondents (AA_M_POL; EA_M_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN; KO_M_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN; RS_F_POL; TW_M_GA; SO_F_GA) opposed the assumption. The third group, consisting of nine respondents (AA_F_JOURN; AG_F_JOURN; AO_M_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN; DF_F_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN; NT_F_POL; YA_F_JOURN), were uncertain of the influence of media representations on the capability of women in politics.

7.2.1.2.4.1 Media representations undermine the capability of women in politics

Of the five respondents who agreed that the media undermine the capability of women in politics through their representations or framing, one argued that even though the subjugation

and trivialisation of women's capability for public leadership may have emanated directly from cultural and societal norms, media, as one of the agents of cultural socialisation, contributes to the subjugation of women through stereotypical representations. Using stereotypical frames in media, representations of women generally further strengthens the myth that women do not belong in public leadership positions by casting them according to traditional gender roles. One of the respondents confirmed this by saying:

Yes, even in the adverts that we see. If it is seasoning [cooking spices], it has to be the woman that is going to be there, that has to be the homemaker. That's going to be the one, you know, doing the homework, etc. So, the media do promote that and it is not right – [women are not the only ones who cook]. There are lots of chefs out there that are men who [also] cook. There are men who [play active roles in] the lives of their children – who do hair, who take the girls to the salon and all of that. I have a lot of friends who said their fathers were even the ones buying sanitary towels, etc. But the media still project, 'Oh! in the kitchen, it is the woman that you are going to see, cooking, and doing all of those things.' So, the media need to do more to just take the woman out of that box. That's a horrible box and women are fed up of being in that box...
– **RG_F_JOURN**

Also, the respondents argue that media undermine the capability of women to hold political leadership positions by denying them visibility in publications. Furthermore, they argue that asking women certain stereotypical questions, or foregrounding certain stereotypical frames about women, impinge on public perceptions of women's capability to be political leaders. Rather than give women visibility, stereotypical representations relegate their competence and intelligence by enhancing perceptual bias against women. This can be seen in the argument of the following respondent:

Media is definitely one of them. So, definitely, I will say that media ha[ve] a role. And media have not entirely played that role adequately. So, it is not unusual to still [notice] that even when the media set up certain platforms[programmes], the nature of questions that are thrown at women ... who are vying for positions, ... the way the women are addressed, or the kind of questions that they are asked, you can definitely fault the media ... You [may] want to take a cue from ... Prof Remi Sonaiya [who] was totally

undermined [in 2015]. I mean ... people had no clue what she was capable of, or [the depth of her knowledge or competence] until the moment of that Peace Accord ... in Abuja ... As she took the floor and she was able to express herself ... she made some cogent points that made her the cynosure of all eyes. It was that point that she really caught attention, like you know Kofi Annan, the rest of them, they got up and were wondering, 'Who is this?' That was the point that she became popular... – **AI_F_GA**

While the woman aspirant cited in the foregoing excerpt took advantage of the Peace Accord platform to change the perception of a cross-section of society about her capability, one can certainly say that such opportunity rarely comes for all women in politics. Also, the perceived effect of the candidate's action can be taken as an attestation of the possible implications of increased and objective representation of women in media.

In addition to the above, respondents pointed out that representations in which media question the involvement of women in politics cannot only be seen as biased, but also belittling women's participation in politics (**AA_F_GA**). In the media articles analysed for this study, there are instances where media asked women in politics why they left certain professions for politics (see **TD_01032011_23**; **GN_03042007_8**). Such questioning, if not properly handled, tends to undermine women's political aspiration by creating the impression that the women being so questioned are venturing out of the terrain they are familiar with into one in which they possibly lack expertise.

7.2.1.2.4.2 Media representations do not undermine the capability of women in politics

In this category, eight respondents were opposed to the notion that media representations undermine the capability of women in politics. The respondents argued that culture, more than media, undermines women's capability. They believe that culture gives rise to norms and practices which cause women to be perceived in a certain light which impinges on the success of women in politics. These respondents argued that media representations promote, rather than relegate, women in politics. This view is expressed by one of the respondents as follows:

No! I don't think so ... media want to celebrate successful women, if anything, ... to encourage women to be successful. But let me tell

you, what affects women more in our society is not what the media say of them. It's what our culture [says] ... – **EA_M_JOURN**

Also, one of the respondents argued that fielding seemingly incompetent women for political leadership positions undermines women more than media representations. This respondent's argument seems to focus on the representation of women who are already holding certain public leadership positions. She assumes that competence would override biased or stereotypical media representations, as can be seen in the following:

I don't agree. A competent woman will function effectively, no matter what the media is doing. In fact, she will seek to correct and educate the media – as I and some others have often done. Several women in positions are themselves not competent (for example, those who got there because they are wives, sisters, daughters of powerful men) ... – **RS_F_POL**

Although the foregoing line of reasoning is not entirely faulty, it negates real-life experiences in which women with credible academic qualifications and professional experience, which can be counted as competence, have been forced to abdicate leadership positions because of overwhelmingly negative media representations. This is especially so for women caught up in a political scandal. Nevertheless, this view may not hold in all instances whereby women are aspiring for political leadership positions, as media representations have the potential of influencing people's perceptions of such women's capability to hold the positions for which they are aspiring.

7.2.1.2.5 Respondents' perceptions of the relationship between media representations and women's political participation

This section contains the respondents' answers to two questions with which I sought to examine the opinions of the interviewees about the correlation between media representations and the level of women's participation in politics. The responses also provided insights into the respondents' perceptions of the influence of media processes such as constructions and representations on women's participation in politics. The questions which I put to the respondents are:

- What is your opinion on the notion that the portrayal of women political leaders in media is connected to the low participation of Nigerian women in politics?
- In your opinion, how can increased and positive media representation of women in political leadership positions increase Nigerian women's participation in politics?

7.2.1.2.5.1 Media representation and the participation of women in politics mutually influence each other:

In terms of the relationship between media representation and the low participation of women in politics, five (DF_F_JOURN; KA_F_POL; AS_F_JOURN; TW_M_GA; EO_M_JOURN) out of the 22 participants believed that the relationship between media construction and political participation is mutually influential. On the one hand, they believe that the rarity of women in politics is responsible for the lack of visibility of women in media reports as well as the nature of the coverage they are given. On the other hand, they believe that the nature of media coverage given to women in politics can also deter women from participating in politics. Also, within this group, is the assumption that the inability of Nigerian women in politics to adequately harness the potential of the media is also responsible for the low quantity and nature of the coverage they receive in media (DF_F_JOURN). The following is a typical response:

I think the low participation of women partly affect[s] the way media [portray them] ... For instance, if there are more women participating in politics, then obviously [they] will be noticed ... We are in the minority. And, if you are in the minority, your voice cannot be heard ... I think both ways. Yeah. I think both ways because the way the media portray women also can hinder women from participating in politics... – KA_F_POL

Another respondent in this category argued that limiting women to ancillary roles such as “women leader” and deputy governors influences the nature of the representation they receive in media (AS_F_JOURN). This respondent's assumption presupposes that giving women major political roles may increase their chances of being represented in media. However, while this may improve women's visibility, it might have little influence on the utilisation of gender stereotypes in media representation. One of the respondents argued that despite women's higher population, their disadvantaged position in society determines the quantity and nature of the coverage they receive in media (TW_M_GA). Lastly, another respondent

argued that women's apathy and lack of motivation for political matters determines the quantity of representation they receive from media (**EO_M_JOURN**).

7.2.1.2.5.2 Media representation influence the participation of women in politics

Furthermore, six of the respondents (**AI_F_GA; RG_F_JOURN; AO_M_POL; AA_F_GA; SO_F_GA; OA_M_POL**) believed that media representation could be related to the low participation of women in politics in Nigeria. Their responses are hinged on several reasons, among these is the argument that media representation of issues relating to women in politics is such that could promote self-doubt for other women who might be interested in politics (**AI_F_GA**). Some of the respondents argued that, sometimes, media in Nigeria do not only ridicule women in politics when they make mistakes or are caught up in political scandals, they also portray women in politics in ways that could cause women to be perceived as people who are "morally loose" and in need of male support to thrive in politics (**RG_F_JOURN**). This argument underscores the influence of the harsh media criticism which women in politics are sometimes subjected to, as well as the influence of unnecessary use of family relations, personality, and gender norms frames earlier identified in this study. Other opinions in this group include the view that the lack of visibility of women in media is denying other the benefit of having role models who could inspire them to participate in politics. The following further explains this:

Yes! Yes! Absolutely, because ... a lot of women won't come and participate because of the women they have seen, women that have gone ahead of them, who maybe have been ridiculed. [...] There are a lot of women, especially this year. [...] This coming election there have been [...] good participation from women in politics. But we find that a lot of them don't make it through, and politics is expensive in Nigeria. Where do women get this money from? Men are seen as the breadwinners. So, yes – a lot of them work. Is it the women who are housewives that would get all of this money to be able to participate in politics? So, yes, I believe that portrayal that, 'Oh! women that are in politics are maybe prostitutes or they are sleeping around, that is how they get the money, in order to be able to run in elections.' ... really does hold a lot of women back ... because they don't want to be labelled as prostitutes, etc. So yes, the way women are portrayed must change, so that we can have more women dare to come out ... – **RG_F_JOURN**

Another respondent in this category argued that media contributes to the low participation of women in politics because of their failure to adequately promote women political leaders who have done creditably well in the past (AO_M_POL). The respondent explained further that doing this will change societal perceptions of women in politics and increase women's interest and participation in politics.

7.2.1.2.5.3 Media representation does not influence the participation of women in politics

Lastly, in this category, eleven respondents (AA_M_POL; AG_F_JOURN; AO_M_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN; KO_M_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN; NT_F_POL; RS_F_POL; YA_F_JOURN) stated that media do not contribute to women's low participation in politics. The opinions of these participants are centred on the argument that certain socio-cultural processes, such as gender norms, have led to the inability of women to rise above certain barriers and limitations which have kept women relegated in the political sphere. Some of the respondents in this group argued that, since the media in Nigeria seek to constantly promote and fight for the cause of women in politics, their activities could not have led to the low participation of women in politics (AO_M_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN). The respondents explained that cultural practices and other sociological processes rather than the media determine the mindset of society about women's participation in politics. This respondent succinctly explains:

No, it does not affect their participation. [...] The media... within all the constraints ... ha[ve] done [their] best. Th[at] women are not coming out more in politics ... is not as a result of media portrayal. Because [of] ... this affirmative reasoning, even instinctively, the media will be trying to show some sympathy towards women. So, you will now see that if I have two compelling photographs, one is composed of women, the other one is composed of men, somehow, I will use the women because they don't come too often. And so, any time they can create that kind of impression, we will want to give it to them. And so, the media do [their] own bit. But the women, I don't know by whatever limitation they are not just able to rise to the challenge, especially in this part of the world ... –
AO_M_JOURN

The opinion of one of the respondents in this category is that sociological processes, rather than media, have led some women into being contented with playing subservient roles in society. Another respondent also argued that poverty and economic hardship rather than media have kept women's political participation at its barest (**KO_M_JOURN**). These respondents' attempts to absolve the media of the relegation of women in politics assume that media outputs do not influence social perception and sociological processes in any way. In the same vein, it assumes that sociological processes do not influence media processes. In other words, media and the society in which they function run parallel with each other. Although researchers have shown that there is no mutual exclusivity between the two, it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the extent to which the two mutually influence each other. The next respondent shows his uncertainty regarding the influence of media on women's participation in this way:

Maybe socio-culturally ... maybe... we are children of this environment. We are children of this culture. Some of us were trained to believe that women are mothers and that they should be at home, you understand. Maybe it affects us in our language. Maybe it affects our language. [...] It may creep in once in a while, but it does not mean that ... is how we want women to be because we have wives, we have children too, who are aspiring ... –
DA_M_JOURN

As the respondent in the foregoing quotation has argued, media and culture do not run parallel of each other. Any attempt to demarcate media from sociological processes is not only based on a faulty premise source, but also a denial of the inherent power of each construct. Undoubtedly, media and culture are not only mutually inclusive but also jointly culpable in promoting ideologies and structures which have persistently kept women subjugated in society.

7.2.1.2.5.4 Increased and positive representations and women's political participation

The second question posed by the researcher borders on whether increased and positive media representation can lead to increased political participation for women in Nigeria. There are two major strands of arguments in this regard. While opinion about the influence of media representation on women's political participation was highly divided, sixteen of the participants (**AA_M_POL**; **AG_F_JOURN**; **AO_M_JOURN**; **KA_F_POL**;

KO_M_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN; NT_F_POL; OA_M_POL; RG_F_JOURN; RS_F_POL; TW_M_GA; YA_F_JOURN; AA_F_GA; SO_F_GA; AO_M_POL) agreed that increased and positive media representation of women in politics will increase the visibility of women in politics. Conversely, two of the respondents (**DA_M_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN**) argued that increased and positive representation might not necessarily improve the participation of women in politics.

Respondents who support the notion that increased representation would lead to greater political participation for women argue that it will foster positive perceptions of women in politics and invariably engender increased political participation for women (**AA_F_GA; OA_M_POL; MA_M_JOURN; YA_F_JOURN**). The respondent in the following quote strongly affirms the argument:

That is capital YES! Capital YES! Capital YES! Capital YES!
 People will [will be motivated to participate in politics]. When there is positive news about the [few] ones that are participating already, then we will have more people getting involved ... There are times when a husband will [even encourage] his wife to get involved in [politics] in as much as we don't have evil stories flying around.
 [...] Yes! They will get involved in politics ... – **OA_M_POL**

Respondents in this group argued that increased and positive representation of women in media would be advantageous for women for several reasons. Representations which enhance the credibility of women would change societal perceptions of women in politics. It would also enhance the viability of women aspiring for political leadership positions. Improved representation of women in media would also lead to increased visibility for women who could serve as role models, who will inspire other women who might be interested in politics. This would also enhance the mentoring process and enhance the confidence and competence of women in politics. Ultimately, they believe that increased and positive media representation could enhance the attraction of politics for women.

Conversely, the second group of respondents, consisting of two respondents (**DA_M_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN**), argued that media lack the power or capacity to wrought social change which could lead to a change in the sociological processes which have kept women relegated until now. One of the respondent's argument is premised on the assumption that past media efforts have not yielded perceptible social change. This argument is unequivocally stated in the following quote:

The thing is this, you are correct. But just look at this: the media is an agent of change,[right?] They write editorials, they report. I don't know the number of editorials that have been written against electoral rigging, violence, [and] vote-buying. What has changed? It's getting worse. In fact, there may be another problem for the media using [their] power. If we answer that, we should now look at [the fact that] if we have not been able to effect change in the way elections have been militarised, [votes] are being bought, how do you think that what we write will affect the role of women in politics? These things are being written ... – **DA_M_JOURN**

The respondent who argued that media do not have the power to increase the participation of women in politics stated that women themselves need to step up and assert their position in politics by moving away from tokenistic participation which casts them as women leaders and vote canvassers (**DA_M_JOURN**). The second respondent argued that the low participation of women in politics is more of a societal issue than a media-induced one (**EO_M_JOURN**). He advised that sociological processes such as the Aba Women Riots of 1929³⁴ are the only ways to achieve reforms that will evoke a change in women's political participation.

7.2.1.3 Respondents' suggestions for improved media representation

If understanding media representation of women in politics are important, then understanding ways to improve the representation of women in media is equally important. To this end, the respondents were asked the following question:

- In your opinion, what measures can be taken to ensure that women political leaders in Nigeria get adequate and objective representation?

The respondents were asked to make suggestions for the improvement of women's representation in media with the aim that increased and positive representation of women political leaders in media could engender increased participation of women in politics and political leadership positions in Nigeria.

³⁴ A massive protest organised by women in the South Eastern part of Nigeria which led to significant socio-political reforms in that part of the country during colonial rule (Eshiet, 2016; Esomchi & Akoji, 2016).

The responses to this question are grouped under five sub-headings, namely change in media engagement, active political participation, support for women, reorientation and other suggestions. These are presented in the following section.

7.2.1.3.1 Change in media engagement/Strategic media engagement plan

There are ten respondents (AA_F_GA; AG_F_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN; DF_F_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN; SO_F_GA; TW_M_GA; YA_F_JOURN) in this category. One of the suggestions was that women should develop an understanding of the role and importance of the media to their political career and should be more willing to cooperate with media practitioners (MT_F_JOURN). Four of the respondents also suggested that women should actively seek to harness and utilise the potential of media in pursuance of their political career (AA_F_GA; DA_M_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN). They explained that women in politics could reach out to media to request coverage through interviews, by sending out press releases to media organisations, or inviting media to their events such as press conferences. To engage the media strategically, another respondent suggested that women in politics, especially those aspiring to leadership positions, can improve on their media relations strategies by engaging media professionals to handle their communication portfolios, as well as help them develop a media agenda/plan (AA_F_GA; DF_F_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN). In so doing, women will not only be able to have a definite idea of what they want to communicate to the media, but also advance their desired message and image to the members of the public. Meanwhile, to mitigate the issue of a lack of funds, one of the participants suggested that women in politics should scout for media organisations who publish free of charge, to circumvent the challenge of financial hardship (AA_F_GA). Given the high concentration of media ownership in the hands of men, some participants also suggested that women should work towards owning media organisations to enable them to push their narratives to public consciousness (SO_F_GA; TW_M_GA). Another way to push women to public consciousness is by publishing their charitable work or acts of philanthropy in media, like men do (YA_F_JOURN). This can be done by organising press conferences, granting interviews, or placing advertorials in the media.

7.2.1.3.2 Active political participation

Seven of the respondents (AI_F_GA; AO_M_POL ; AO_M_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN EA_M_JOURN; RG_F_JOURN; YA_F_JOURN) pointed to the need for Nigerian women to be actively engaged in politics. Going by the assumption that women cannot get the visibility or representation they desire “on a platter”, some of the respondents suggested that women need to change their apathetic stance to politics and seek active political participation by seeking an understanding of political issues where necessary (AI_F_GA; EA_M_JOURN; RG_F_JOURN). This can also be done through active engagements in party matters for those who are already registered with a political party. The respondents suggested that women should also seek to take up political leadership positions within their political parties as well as in society at large (YA_F_JOURN). Similarly, another respondent suggested that women need to “blow their own trumpet” whenever they attain political leadership positions (AO_M_POL). The respondent explained further that women should not be afraid of displaying their competence modestly. Two of the respondents also advised women aspirants and candidates to be more resolute and confident and to stop perceiving themselves as mere statistics whenever they contest for political leadership positions (AO_M_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN).

7.2.1.3.3 Support for women

One of the factors identified in extant literature as being responsible for the low participation of women in politics is the lack of support which has made it difficult for women in politics to break through the “glass ceiling” of political leadership (Nwabunkeonye, 2014: 288). In this vein, five respondents suggested the need for other women to give support to women in politics to enable them to achieve their aspirations with minimal stress. This support could include one-on-one mentorship and the creation of a network of support for women who are interested in politics to help them build their confidence and capacity (AI_F_GA). This can be done through organising training workshops for women in politics, providing financial support for women in politics through women’s networks, or crowdfunding to ease campaign and media related costs (AG_F_JOURN; AO_M_JOURN; SO_F_GA), and increasing “media sympathy” for women related issues (TW_M_GA).

7.2.1.3.4 Reorientation

Eight of the respondents (AA_F_GA; AO_M_POL; DF_F_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN; NT_F_POL; OA_M_POL; TW_M_GA; YA_F_JOURN) highlighted the need for a “reorientation”, both on the part of media as well as society, especially, women. They suggested that media practitioners and civil societies should be given continuous training to increase their awareness of gender-related issues and the critical role of women in politics (OA_M_POL; TW_M_GA). For women, it was suggested that they need to have a renewed mindset and fresh perspectives about media dynamics through training and awareness campaigns (AA_F_GA; MT_F_JOURN; NT_F_POL). There is a need for women to see beyond the superficiality of their financial incapability as the only reason why men get more media attention. They should understand other underlying factors or processes which have been militating against their rise in politics and seek ways to mitigate their effects on them (DF_F_JOURN). It was also suggested that women should be aware of their rights and privileges to enable them to know their rights and when it is being breached (AO_M_POL). Another respondent opined that instead of rigidly sticking to routines, women in politics should learn to be creative and adaptable in their approach to issues in the political terrain to have the desired result (MT_F_JOURN). Lastly, one respondent suggested that women should learn how to build up followership for themselves through sponsorship and philanthropy long before they signify interest to contest for leadership positions (YA_F_JOURN). The respondents explained that beneficiaries of politicians benevolence usually constitute a strong network of support for them during campaign and elections periods.

7.2.1.3.5 Other suggestions

Other suggestions which came to the fore in the data, and which was not included in my original set of themes, include the following:

- Media should collaborate with political parties in identifying women who are generating activities within the parties, even at grassroots levels (AA_M_POL);
- Maintaining a “sterling” reputation (KA_F_POL) or having a “clean bill of health” (AA_M_POL);
- Women should seek to compete on the platforms of well-known/popular political parties (KO_M_JOURN); and

- Government's involvement through the implementation of the Nigerian National Gender Policy which advocates for 35% representation of women in politics (AG_F_JOURN; TW_M_GA).

7.2.1.4 Awareness of legal frameworks guiding gender reportage in media

Three questions were posed to the journalists to ascertain the existence of legal frameworks or policies guiding the reportage of women-related issues in media as well as to examine their perceptions about the implementation of guidelines which could foster balanced and increased representation of women in the Nigerian media. The first two questions, that is, questions twelve and thirteen, are presented as follows:

- Are there ethical codes, policies or guidelines regulating the reportage of gender-related issues in media?
- If there are ethical codes, are these rules adequate for balance in the reportage of gender-related issues? If there are no rules, would you suggest the enactment of rules to ensure that women are given balanced and adequate coverage in media?

Aside from the media houses' policies or guidebook,³⁵ all twelve journalists interviewed (AA_F_JOURN; AO_M_JOURN; AG_F_JOURN; DA_M_JOURN; DF_F_JOURN; EA_M_JOURN; EO_M_JOURN; KO_M_JOURN; MA_M_JOURN; MT_F_JOURN; RG_F_JOURN; YA_F_JOURN) stated that they were not aware of any written law or guideline regulating the media in the reportage of women issues in Nigeria other than the general code of conduct guiding journalists in the country. All of the journalists emphasise the importance of objectivity and fairness in media reportage. Also, they all claim that their organisations have gender-balanced policies with which they regulate the reportage of women as well as the inclusion of women in managerial positions in their respective media organisations. However, none of them referenced definite sections within their guidebooks which stipulate gender equality.

In terms of suggestions for the enactment of laws to regulate media publications concerning the inclusion of women, two out of the ten respondents who answered this question, agreed that regulations should be put in place to improve on existing media

³⁵ The researcher's efforts to get a copy of each media house's guidebook for evaluation was not successful.

guidelines as well as to ensure that journalists are conscious and deliberate in their treatment of women issues (**EA_M_JOURN**; **RG_F_JOURN**). Seven respondents disagreed with the suggestion for the enactment of laws to guide journalists in the reportage of women-related issues. One argued that, based on the notion that the low participation of women in politics is not caused by the media, therefore, legislation without a commensurate change in the rate at which women generate newsworthy activities, may not yield the desired change in media representation (**YA_F_JOURN**).

Another respondent argued that the existing media guidelines would suffice in the reportage of women issues. He pointed out that enacting gender-specific laws to get media to report on women might interfere with the freedom of the press (**EO_M_JOURN**), while another respondent suggested the adoption of gender quotas in place of gender-specific guidelines to improve on the existing system (**AO_M_JOURN**). One of the respondents suggested that educating journalists regarding sensitisation or reorientation on things like the appropriate questions to ask women and politicians during interviews, and story placement, would help to change the representation of women political leaders in the Nigerian media (**AG_F_JOURN**). Out of the remaining three respondents in this category, two of them argued that it is unnecessary to enact rules to guide media in such issues because media have accorded space to women politicians in terms of the respect they deserve (**DA_M_JOURN**; **MA_M_JOURN**). The eleventh respondent thought that the implementation of existing regulations is the major challenge, not the enactment of new ones (**KO_M_JOURN**). The only respondent who was unsure about the enactment of gender-specific guidelines objected to the enactment of rules on the premise that issues related to gender mainstreaming need to be handled with caution, stating that even though women in politics are mostly put in “cheerleader” roles, they still have their way of influencing some of the decisions of the party leadership (**MT_F_JOURN**). On the other hand, she stated that the only reason why it may be necessary to enact laws would be to prevent journalists, especially the men, from portraying women politicians in a derogatory light.

7.2.1.4.1 Media organisations’ handling of women’s issues

Question fourteen on the IDI schedule was targeted at journalists to ascertain how their organisations handle the reportage of women-related issues in their various publications in terms of the quantity of coverage given to women and the amount of space allocated to them in each media publication. The question is as follows:

- As a journalist, how does your organisation handle the reportage of gender-related issues to ensure equality and fairness?

All twelve of the journalists interviewed explained that aside from including women in the normal news publications, they also have specialised sections within each publication which are meant for women related issues. Based on some of the explanations of the respondents, the specialised sections are published to complement the articles published about women in the daily editions to increase the visibility of women in media (**AO_M_JOURN**; **EA_M_JOURN**; **DA_M_JOURN**; **DF_F_JOURN**). The specialised sections are published once within the daily titles, while the weekend editions, that is, the Saturday and Sunday editions of the newspapers, focus mainly on “women issues” – ranging from Health/Medicine, Religion, Relationship, Family, Motherhood, and Career, among others (**AS_F_JOURN**; **AO_M_JOURN**; **DA_M_JOURN**). One of the respondents explained that one of the specialised titles published by her organisation also focuses on articles about men (**DF_F_JOURN**).

Juxtaposing the claims made by the respondents with the CA of this study, I could establish that some of the specialised pages allocated to women are published under titles which are meant to show their focus. Examples of such pages which I observed during the CA are *Glitterati*, *Lip Stick*, *Spectacles*, *Spice*, *High Society*, *Essence*, *Feminique*, *High Heels*, *SpyGlass*, and *Super Saturday Lounge*. Titles of some of these dedicated pages are indicative of the stereotypical perceptions of the feminine gender by the media organisations. Even though some of these pages featured interviews with women political leaders, many of the interviews contain stereotypical undertones such as gender roles, gender identity or personality frames. In some other articles, women political leaders were featured like fashion models setting fashion and beauty standards. For example **PN_20022011_37** devoted a full page to photographs of the necklines of high profile Nigerian women in politics with the headline “By their necklaces ...”. At the centre of the page, there was an eight-column inch insert with a single-paragraph of text spreading across two column inches while the remaining part of the article contained the photograph of a woman senator with the headline “Dressing stirs self-confidence – Senator Bent”. The single paragraph article contained fashion and lifestyle tips. Another similar example is **GN_19032011_46** which has the photograph of the former first-lady, Dame Patience Jonathan, with the wife of a former state governor, Mrs

Judith Amaechi, covering half of the page. Overlapping the lower part of the photograph are five pairs of trendy sandals, underneath which, at the bottom of the page, is an eight-column inch media article with the headline “Smart campaign trail footwear”. The article contains pieces of advice on the appropriate footwear for women politicians who were campaigning at the time. Interestingly, even though the article mentioned the names of some women contestants, it contained no mention of any meaningful activity which the women engaged in other than the fact that they have been flying to several parts of the country to support male politicians. These are two extreme examples of the nature of representation given to women in some of the specialised sections assigned to them by the media organisations.

7.2.1.5 Summary of findings on research sub-question 3

The findings for the third research sub-question, What are the opinions of journalists, politicians, and gender advocates about the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria?, showed that women are adjudged equally capable of holding political leadership positions. However, some of the parameters for judging the capability of women is predicated on standards and characteristics that are not used for assessing men. These include the difference in temperamental disposition and managerial capabilities. In terms of respondents’ perceptions of media representation, thirteen respondents expressed views that women have not been given adequate representation in media, while seven respondents are opposed to the notion. In terms of quality of representation, the opinions are almost equally divided with seven respondents arguing that media representations have been biased against women, while eight respondents argued to the contrary. Also, in terms of assumption about media focus on gender and personality over competence, the opinions are almost equally divided, with ten respondents agreeing onto the notion, while eight disagreed. In terms of the influence of media representation on women’s political participation, the respondents are also equally divided – six respondents supported the notion that media influence political participation, while five respondents believe that the two variables mutually influence each other. Altogether eleven respondents disagreed with the notion that media representations relate to the low participation of women in politics. Lastly, although all of the journalists who were interviewed attested to having organisational codes of conduct or guide books which regulate their practice, many of them disagreed with the suggestion for an additional legal framework to ensure gender balance in media.

7.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the findings for the last research sub-question which was targeted at understanding the perception of a cross-section of the Nigerian society about media representation of women in politics. The findings were presented under four broad headings, namely

- Participants' perceptions of women in politics,
- Participants' perception of media representation of women political leaders,
- Participants' suggestions for improved media representation, and
- Awareness of legal frameworks guiding gender reportage in media.

Under each of the broad headings, the findings were presented to answer research sub-question three using relevant subheadings. The next chapter will contain the analysis and discussion of findings from the two data sets presented in this chapter and the previous chapter.

Chapter 8

Analysis and discussion of findings

If we do something over and over again it becomes normal. If we see the same thing over and over again, it becomes normal ...

– Adichie, 2014

8.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters I presented the findings from the data collected through CA done on the media articles, and IDIs done with 22 relevant stakeholders who are informed regarding the media, politics and gender activism in Nigeria. In this chapter, I present a discussion of the findings from the two data sets. This is done in line with the goals of this study which is to examine how Nigerian women holding political leadership positions are constructed in selected news media. This was done to evaluate the role of the Nigerian media in perpetuating gender stereotypes through their construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. I also sought to ascertain whether the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigerian media, specifically newspapers, have evolved. Another goal of the study is to evaluate the perceptions of some relevant stakeholders, namely journalists, politicians and gender advocates, about media treatment of women in politics (see section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2).

Three theoretical perspectives were adopted to enable the researcher to navigate the complexities of the construction and representation of women, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, and Feminist Theory. Each of these theoretical paradigms contributes in various capacities to engender a succinct and in-depth understanding of the objectives of this study. A brief overview of the theories is given in the following section after which the major findings of the study is discussed in relation to each of the theories.

8.2 Overview of theoretical frameworks

This section contains a brief recapitulation of the theoretical frameworks adopted for this study and will be presented in the order of Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory and Feminist Theory.

8.2.1 Framing Theory

As stated earlier (see Chapters One and Four), Framing Theory is one of the media effects theories with which scholars seek to explain how media influence their audiences' attitude or perception of an issue through the angle and nature of coverage given to a phenomenon in media. This presupposes that people's perception of the salience of an issue is consequent on the treatment given the said issue by media. One of the propositions of Framing Theory is that through framing, communication texts, or media contents, have the power to alter or shape people's perceptions, interpretation or preferences (Entman, 2010: 391; 1993: 51). Basically, framing focuses on media selection, accentuation or relegation and subsequent representation of events based on media practitioners' perceptions or interpretations of issues or events in society (Entman, 2010: 391; 1993: 52). Framing is a necessary aspect of journalism which enables media practitioners to simplify complex messages as well as select aspects which they consider to be the most suitable to their context or audience (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 12). More so, the guiding principles of the journalistic profession require media practitioners to consider certain factors before publishing a story, which ultimately leads to framing.

Another principle of framing is that both media and their audiences are jointly involved in the construction and interpretation of knowledge about their social reality (Carter, 2013; Van Gorp, 2007: 70). This shows that framing takes place at two distinct levels along the communication continuum, namely "macro-level" and "micro-level" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 11). The macro-level entails the process of media exposure, selection and interpretation of issues or events within the social reality as well as the subsequent representation of the events based on their perceptions of the relevance and salience of the event. At the micro-level, individuals adopt schemas or frames congruent with their lived experiences to interpret media content (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 11). It is worth noting that even though frames are supposed to guide media audience's interpretation of media content, sometimes their frame of interpretation do not align with the frame in the media message (Entman, 1993: 52–53).

Another important argument about media framing is that frames are guided by an individual's beliefs or cultural worldview (Entman, 1993: 52). Therefore, personal beliefs or prejudice may influence the nature of the argument made by media. To this end, gender and media scholars have sought to identify media frames that promote certain ideologies which have kept women relegated in society. So far, scholars across the world have been able to identify certain archetypal representations or stereotypes which media utilises in their

portrayal of women in politics (Ojiakor *et al.*, 2018; O'Neill *et al.*, 2016; Wright & Holland, 2014; Campus, 2013; Ritchie, 2013; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Hardin & Whiteside, 2010; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Devitt, 2002; Bystrom *et al.*, 2001; Braden, 1996). These stereotypes are evident in the gender bias and sexism to which women in politics have been subjected (Walsh, 2015; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Parry-Giles, 2000). Therefore, framing brings media into the intersection of gender power contestation and the marginalisation of women in society.

Framing Theory was adopted for this study to understand the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions as well as to ascertain if there have been changes in their representation in the Nigerian media.

8.2.2 Media Hegemony Theory

Media Hegemony Theory describes how media build, legitimate and perpetuate the ideology of a dominant group in society. According to this, media are involved in the construction of meaning and the maintenance of social order through the dissemination of representations which imbue the ideal and beliefs of the ruling class on the subordinated class (Louw, 2007: 98). By so doing, media do not only promote, but also reinforce a dominant social or political order in each society (Carragee, 1993: 331–332). To do this, media, promote certain meanings over others in the reportage of issues and events in society. As one of the agents of cultural production or socialisation, media is a site for ideological contestations and power struggle (Van Zoonen, 2001: 57).

Although it is challenging to measure the extent of ideological complexity in media content, it is unarguable that gender is one of the mediating factors in media representation of politics, especially with regards to women (O'Neill *et al.*, 2016; Lünenborg & Maier, 2015; Montiel, 2015; Wright & Holland, 2014). Hence, gender relations is one of the areas of interest for the study of ideological contestations in media. According to Van Zoonen (2001: 57), media are sites for the discursive construction of gender. Another area of interest in the study of gender power relations in media is the marginalisation or annihilation of the voices of women in media (Ross & Carter, 2011). Consequently, feminist contestations have sought to dislodge hegemonic patriarchal ideology which has been sustained by the promotion of gender stereotypes through certain agents of socialisation, among which is the media.

Although it has been argued that media promote and perpetuate the status quo, it is worth noting that hegemonic ideologies are not immutable, and media processes can also lead

to an alteration of the status quo in some respects (Altheide, 1984: 481–483). Therefore, considering media as sites for ideological contestations presupposes that hegemonic values and meanings may change overtime due to resistance from subalterns (Carragee, 1993:330). To achieve an ideological shift, Altheide (1984:487) argued that the dominated group must unfurl culture to identify and resist dominant or hegemonic forces. What this means for women is that they have to identify the factors that keep them relegated in society and seek to dislodge them if they were to make any progress towards emancipation.

In consideration of the propositions of this theory, Media Hegemony Theory was adopted as an interpretive framework for examining the portrayal of women political leaders in selected Nigerian media to identify the dominant narratives. In addition to this, the difference in the representations of Nigerian women across three different election periods was also taken into consideration to ascertain if there has been an ideological shift in the construction and representation of women political leaders in Nigeria.

8.2.3 Feminist Theory

Feminist Theory as a body of philosophical approaches seeks to understand gender inequality in various aspects of society using gender and other oppressive social categories such as race, class, ethnicity and sexuality (Espinosa, 2010: 9). Feminist theorists have sought to identify and understand the nature of the continued suppression and marginalisation of women in society by using gender as an analytical category for the experiences of women in different domains of life (Kim, 2008: 392). One of the areas of concern for feminist scholars is media. This is because media play a salient role in the building and sustenance of socio-political and economic processes in society. Feminists have argued that media have been largely involved in the promotion of patriarchal ideology through the promotion and perpetuation of gender stereotypes. The media do this through a selection of issues, choice of words and nature of presentation (Dolan, 2005: 33).

Based on the centrality of language to the process of ideology building, feminist scholars have been concerned about the use of language in media. Hence, feminist theorists have sought to identify traces of ideology in media discourses as well as its influence on the representation of women in various facets of life. Concerning women in politics, feminist scholarship has been dominated by considerations of women's visibility, stereotyping, and framing, as well as its attendant influence on the marginalisation and underrepresentation of women in politics and public leadership positions.

Considering the variegation in feminism, this study is situated within the specific context of African feminism. African Feminist Theory is a unique blend of emancipatory propositions from the Global North and African women's contestation of social injustices and marginalisation rooted in colonialism and patriarchy (see Chapter Four, sub-section 4.3.1.8). African Feminist Theory places the oppression of women on the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, class, religion and poverty. Therefore, African feminist theorists, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, have sought to understand the influence of patriarchy on women's socio-political, economic and cultural experiences (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 31; Ahikire, 2014: 9; Lewis, 2001: 5). To achieve this, African feminist theorists have sought to create a new understanding of gender and its attendant roles performance by identifying and dislodging assumptions and practices which have been taken for granted, and, which continually constitute impediments to the rising of women in politics and public leadership.

To this end, this study examines the role of the Nigerian media in the promotion of patriarchal ideology through stereotypical construction and representations of women in political leadership positions.

In the next sections, I present the analysis and discussion of the findings in relation to each theoretical framework adopted for this study.

8.3 Analysis and discussion of findings in relation to theoretical frameworks

8.3.1 Framing Theory

The findings of this study reveal that the media in Nigeria utilise various thematic frames in their representation of women in political leadership positions. The researcher identified twelve basic frames and twenty-six sub-frames (see Chapter Six, section 6.2.1). The basic frames are as follows:

- empowerment,
- subordination,
- gender identity,
- gender roles,
- gender equality,
- competence,
- personality,

- familial relations,
- godfatherism,
- misogynistic language,
- challenges, as well as
- “others”.

The above-listed frames are the resonating themes in the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions across the demarcated periods under study, that is, 2007, 2011, and 2015. The findings of the study revealed that the media in Nigeria utilise a combination of the above-listed frames in varying degree in their representation of women political leaders in Nigeria. The identified frames are intricately utilised by the Nigerian media in their representation of women political leaders in Nigeria. The combination of these frames in media representation of women political leaders in Nigeria creates a complex image for women political leaders in Nigeria – an image that is both empowering and subordinating. In other words, the construction and representation of women politicians in Nigeria can be described as both objective and stereotypical, depending on the nature of frames utilised by the media.

An important aspect of Framing Theory is the language or tone of media frames (Tankard, 2001: 98–99). Language is an integral part of framing because it serves as a premise not just for the propagation of ideology, but also for the construction of social reality (Goffman, 1986: 11–13). The findings of the study reveal that the media in Nigeria make use of words that could stereotype, empower, or, sometimes, marginalise women in politics. For instance, frames such as novelty, gender roles, personality, subordination, familial relations and misogynistic language are some of the identified ways in which media language choice can be detrimental to the identity of women in media. One of the concerns about stereotypes is that not only do they guide society’s thinking and perceptions of the world, but they are also subtle and pervasive, to the extent that they are difficult to discern, or notice, let alone challenging them (Rabe, 2002: 154). Rabe explained further that awareness of stereotypes can only be gained through education. Therefore, to effectively challenge gender inequality, it is important to create an awareness of its existence and underlying causes.

As stated earlier, equality is at the heart of feminist scholarship and advocacy, hence women and gender advocates seek every avenue to advance this cause. The findings show that even though media practitioners in Nigeria have claimed to be concerned about gender

equality and women's rights in the Nigerian society, the low volume of articles, $n=29$, focusing on issues of gender emancipation, especially concerning political empowerment, seems to negate their claims. It may be instructive to also note that the date for the commemoration of International Women's Day falls within the periods under study. Aside from a couple of opinion pieces published within the week of the commemoration of Women's Day, no front-page stories or editorial piece were published to celebrate the milestones women have achieved, nor to promote gender equality. The incongruity between the analysed media content and claims made by the journalists interviewed for this study attests to the level of media practitioners' awareness and commitment to gender equality and women's rights in the Nigerian society. The superficial representation of gender equality in Nigerian media raises concern about the prospects of women emancipation in Nigeria.

The identified frames were further categorised under two overarching themes, namely non-stereotypical and stereotypical frames to distinguish between objective and biased representation (see Chapter Six, section 6.2.2). The findings revealed that the media in Nigeria utilised more non-stereotypical frames ($n=529$) than stereotypical frames ($n=398$) frames in their representation of women. This is contrary to claims in some studies that media representations of women in politics are suffused with stereotypes and gender bias (Campus, 2013; Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Braden, 1996). Although one cannot deny the high occurrence of gender stereotypes in media, the utilisation of competing frames is not only indicative of the complexity of the framing process, but also the existence of contending views in the Nigerian media space.

Aside from the above, the placement of stories is another important consideration in framing analysis (Tankard, 2001: 99). The placement of stories in media publications, just like the quantity of coverage, is indicative of the salience accorded to the story by the media. In this regard, the findings of this study reveal that women are not accorded adequate prominence by the media in Nigeria. The analysis revealed that only $n=52$ (5.8%) out of the $N=3542$ were published on the front pages of the analysed newspapers. Women did not fare better in terms of placement of their stories on the centrespread and back pages of the analysed newspapers either, as only $n=12$ (1.4%) and $n=18$ (2%) stories were published on the centre spread and back pages of the analysed newspapers over the three election periods. This shows that despite the high occurrence of non-stereotypical frames, stories about women in political leadership positions were not considered important enough to be given prominent placement

in media. This implicitly means that women political leaders were relegated by the media across the three election periods.

Another salient principle of framing is that of change in frame trajectory overtime. Change in frame trajectory usually occurs as a result of the development of new issues which may be variants of old issues in media (Entman, 2010: 389; Chong & Druckman, 2007: 108; Van Gorp, 2007: 63–64). In this regard, the findings of my study showed that there was a 13% increase in the visibility or quantitative representation given to women political leaders by the media in Nigeria, while stereotypical representations or framing of women in politics decreased across the three years by 25%. What this connotes is that even though previous studies have shown that women political leaders are underrepresented in media discourses (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Ette, 2017), there are signs of hope for increased representation in future. More so, the reduction in the usage of stereotypical frames in media content, even though minimal, is indicative of a shift in media and societal perceptions of women holding leadership positions. The findings of this study, in terms of inadequate coverage, is congruent with findings from previous studies in which the researcher claimed that women in politics are still underrepresented in the Nigerian media space, especially in terms of political news (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Ette, 2017; Akinwehinmi & Ojebode, 2012). Also, according to the argument of Gamson *et al.* (1992: 385), “frame transformation” in media indicates that media framing is an on-going dynamic process of meaning construction which is dependent on social actors who contest to sponsor their preferred meaning. In this regard, I argue that women in politics as part of the social actors in Nigeria can influence the media narratives about women through conscious and deliberate promotion or sponsorship of their own preferred construction.

In relation to framing effects, the findings from the interview data show that more respondents agreed that women have not been given adequate representation in media. Also, with seven respondents opposed to, and seven in favour of the notion of bias in the quality of representation given to women, the results reveal that media representations of women in politics are perceived differently by members of the society. While respondents are also divided in their opinions about the number of representations given to women compared to men, the number of respondents who agreed that women in politics are given less representation in media is more than those who disagreed: n=13 and n=7 respectively. This indicates that the dearth in media articles on women in politics may have a more profound effect on media audiences than the bias or stereotypes in the representation of women political

leaders. Also, the inability of some of the respondents to identify the difference in the nature of coverage given to women in media may be indicative of the effects of taken-for-granted processes which guide the respondents' interpretation of media messages. Besides, this finding indicates that some of the respondents adopt similar frames with the media in the interpretation of media messages, while others differ in their schemata of interpretation. As scholars have argued, media audiences do not receive media messages passively, instead, they interpret messages using their own frame of reference (Matthes, 2012: 250; Druckman, 2001: 246–247; Gamson *et al.*, 1992: 384). Also, the difference in the respondents' perceptions of the representation of women political leaders in Nigerian media is indicative of the complexity of the possible effects of the identified frames on media audiences. Despite this incongruity in respondents' perception of media frames utilised by the Nigerian media, one cannot deny the influence of the media frames used in the representation of Nigerian women on the audiences' perceptions of women in politics.

8.3.2 Media Hegemony Theory

It is unarguable that media space provides a thriving context for ideological and power contestations. In relation to gender, hegemony plays out in the media sphere through the usage of gendered language and the promotion of a dominant ideology. Even though the results of the analysis indicate a high reoccurrence of the empowerment and competence frames, which affirms that the media in Nigeria promote positive representations of women in politics, however, judging by the equally high presence of gender stereotypes, it is obvious that the media in Nigeria also promote socio-cultural norms which serve to perpetuate patriarchy in the Nigerian society.

One of the arguments of feminist media scholars is that media contribute to gender contestations by disseminating, constructing, normalising and legitimating socially acceptable gender attributes, roles and behaviours (Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012: 424). One of the means by which the media in Nigeria sustain gender hegemony is by promoting an idealised notion of femininity through the usage of personality frames by which they commend women political leaders on their appearance rather than competence. By so doing, the media set up these womenas subliminal standards of femininity for Nigerian women, particularly, for prospective women politicians. In another way, such representation might also promote the notion that women are more concerned about their physical appearance than other important issues in politics, as also observed by Van Dembroucke (2014) in her study

of media representation of the Argentinean president. It is worth noting that calling attention to the appearance of women in politics could cause voters to evaluate the women negatively (Lizotte & Meggers-Wright, 2018: 21).

Aside from this, the media also promoted the notion that housekeeping and other similar tasks at the home front is the sole responsibility of women. This is evident in the constant questioning of women in politics about the demands of combining their political career with activities on the home front. Meanwhile, women in politics were also seen utilising this stereotype to enhance their profiles by showing their conformity to socio-cultural gender expectations and its merits on their candidacy. Women's show of compliance and support for the same cultural norms which is presumed to have contributed to their relegation in society shows the influence of a prevalent patriarchal ideology among Nigerians. Also, the media seemed to promote the notion that women are inferior to, or largely dependent on, men in politics. This was done through the use of negative familial relations frame in which women in politics are denied agentic roles for their decisions or actions by subsuming or attributing their actions, decisions or achievements to a male influencer. Such representations tacitly accentuate gender power relations in the Nigerian media space through representations which promote the patriarchal ideology of dominance and control. Thus, operations of the media in Nigeria can be said to be congruent with the proposition of Media Hegemony Theory in which the media serve as sites for the promotion and the perpetuation of the ideology of a dominant group, in this case, the ideology of the male gender in Nigeria.

Judging by the usage of negative gender identity and gender role frames, one can surmise that the Nigerian media's view of gender is hegemonic despite the existence of non-stereotypical gender frames. Their construction and representation of gender identity and gender roles expectations are dichotomic and in consonance with patriarchal ideology. Particularly, representations such as the ones which presume that women are frail and incapable of withstanding the rigours of politics, as well as representations in which women are presented as being solely responsible for house chores, do not only promote the binary notion of gender, but also subliminally promote and sustain gender hierarchy and the subordination of women. Budgeon (2014: 323) explicated that "to sustain hegemonic relations, masculinity and femininity must also be fixed as hierarchies ...".

Furthermore, hegemony in the media representation of women in political leadership positions is evident in terms of suppression of the voices of women in politics. Lack of visibility or quantitative representation has been one of the foci of feminist researchers and

gender advocates. For instance, Tuchman's study which was first published in 1978 (Tuchman, 2000) highlighted the annihilation of women in media. In the analysed data for this study, some of the reasons advanced for the disparity in the volume of representation between men and women in media include low participation of women in politics, which impacts on the amount of news they generate compared to men. Another reason is that women's financial incapability deprives them of the ability to get media exposure. Lachover (2017: 458) stated that while news exerts a significant influence on political processes, the ability of political actors to influence news is dependent on their financial and professional resources as well as their relations with media. In Nigeria, especially newspapers can be described as commercially oriented because of the high concentration of privately-owned news organisations. Hence, most of their activities are focused on profit-making. Women, who cannot afford to buy advertorials and sponsored news stories, are framed out of the media space. It is logical, therefore, that the capitalist undertone of Media Hegemony Theory is evident in the marginalisation of women in political leadership positions in the Nigerian media space.

Lastly, I conclude that even though the media in Nigeria utilise both stereotypical and non-stereotypical frames in their construction and representation of women political leaders, the media in Nigeria promote patriarchy and the subordination of women in the quality and tone of representation given to women in politics. Also, the marginal representation of women political leaders in the analysed newspapers attests to the domination of the media space by the male gender.

8.3.3 Feminist Theory

As stated earlier, while feminist theorists as a whole are concerned with unearthing and dislodging the causes of gender inequality in society (Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012), African feminists specifically focus on the interconnections of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, and structural as well as socio-economic factors in the suppression of women within the African society (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019: 31; Ahikire, 2014: 8–9; Mikell, 1997: 1–5). In line with this, the findings of my study reveal that the construction and representation of women in the Nigerian media are mediated by gender to some extent. Even though this can be unconsciously done, media practitioners in Nigeria hold certain preconceived notions about women that are evident in their construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in terms of gender roles, personality, familial relations, and gender

norms, among others. Some of these border on socio-cultural and religious norms which have become taken for granted in the Nigerian society.

Also in line with the proposition of African feminism, the construction and representation of women political leaders in media is mediated not just at the intersection of gender, but also culture, economy and religion. The representation of women at the intersection of gender and culture played out in the usage of negative gender identity frames, gender roles, personality, financial challenge and gender norms frames. In terms of gender identity, the findings reveal that women are perceived in terms of their strength and ability to withstand rigours and demands of politics, while in terms of gender roles they are framed as exclusively belonging to the private sphere, and solely responsible to taking care of the homefront. Also, the media highlighted certain desirable personality traits in women political leaders in relation to the women's appearance and behaviour, thereby subtly setting standards of personality traits for other women. Aside from this, women in politics were also framed as being financially incapable of bearing the financial demands of politics. In terms of social-cultural norms, women politicians are framed as being dependent on men for guidance and influence in politics, while in some instances, media highlighted the constraints on women in relation to certain religious and socio-cultural practices in some sections of the Nigerian society.

One of the major contestations of African women is the need to overcome the private/public sphere divide through which women have been subordinated and marginalised in politics and public governance (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2019; Mikell, 1997). In my study, the private/public divide is evident in media framing of gender roles in ways that suggest that certain roles such as housekeeping, child care and other domestic labours are the sole responsibility of women. This also includes sexual relations within marriage. Thus, women's involvement in politics is generally assumed to conflict with their traditional gender roles. Based on this finding, I argue that media should seek alternative ways of framing gender roles as a shared responsibility in order to dismantle the private/public divide perception of gender roles. This will help to ease much of the pressure caused by gender roles, which in itself has been one of the impediments to the participation of women in politics.

It is interesting to note, however, that despite seeking to challenge the subordination and marginalisation of women in politics and public governance, Nigerian women still embrace and take pride in their traditional gender roles, such as childcare and housekeeping. In the analysed data, there are instances of women in politics not only accepting, but also

highlighting, the advantages of gender roles to their political career. While this seems antithetical to the propositions of feminist ideology, it can be understood or explained in two ways, namely as a result of the influence of years of patriarchal socialisation, and secondly, it may also be borne out of a need to define their struggles in a way that suits their unique needs and cultural context. Anderson *et al* (2011: 2510) and Mikell (1997: 8) noted that the African conception of gender roles differ from that of the West because traditional gender roles were not considered as limitations to women's political and economic responsibilities. However, considering the development and evolution of culture, women's roles are being renegotiated and extended beyond the homefront. Given the argument that gender inequality stems from the division of roles based on biological sex, I argue that if Nigerian women were to truly overcome their subordination in society, they need to redefine their femininity in ways that blur gender roles distinction.

Another visible gender stereotype which feminist scholars have been seeking to dislodge is the objectification of women in media through representations which focus excessively on the appearance of women. Scholars have argued that such representations trivialise and diminish the credibility of women in politics in the estimation of members of the public (Anderson *et al.*, 2011: 2512). The findings of this study show that the media in Nigeria, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, construct and represent women political leaders in relation to their dressing or fashion sense. Another argument against the utilisation of personality frame against women is that it constitutes a double bind for women in politics because social expectations about appropriate feminine behaviour are incongruous with the male-centred attributes of leadership (Campus, 2013: 57; Klenke, 2011: 59).

Furthermore, the framing of women as weak and unable to withstand the rigours and violence which characterise the Nigerian political terrain, and the use of gender labels such as "woman leader" and "only woman" are some of the means by which Nigerian journalists frame women as political outsiders. Aside from this, the use of labels such as "Amazons" or "Iron lady", which are used in admiration of women's success in challenging the status quo of the male-dominated political world. While this sort of framing seems to be explicitly harmless, some of these words have denigrating connotations and are often used to implicitly show disapproval for the firmness and assertiveness of some women in politics (Laher, 2014: 108). Also, one of the IDI participants stated that terms such as "Iron lady" is usually perceived as connoting aggressiveness, which society does not consider a desirable character trait in Nigerian women. Therefore, I argue that media in Nigeria need to refrain from the use

of gendered language in their framing of women in politics because a failure to do so will serve to further perpetuate stereotypes and gender dichotomy, which, in the first place, is the fulcrum of oppression.

Another area of interest for African feminists is the silencing of women's voices through inadequate coverage. To justify the absence of women in media, some of the participants interviewed claimed that socio-cultural and economic factors are to be blamed, rather than the media. Irrespective of the causes, another participant argued that suppressing the voices of women in media could deprive other women of the opportunity of a role model to look up to in politics. Campus (2013: 53) buttressed this argument by stating that visible women in politics serve a symbolic significant role of showing to other women that politics is an inclusive domain for women as well as men. She explained further that media assessment of women in politics may fuel or dampen the other women's desire to aspire for political leadership positions. This shows the centrality of media to women's call for emancipation and equality because the more women politicians are seen in media the more the notion that women can effectively function in political leadership positions will be normalised in society.

Therefore, from a feminist standpoint, I contend that despite the utilisation of non-stereotypical frames, the media in Nigeria promote gender hierarchy and the subordination of women through the reproduction and promotion of gender stereotypes in media. Based on the evidence from this study, it would be right to conclude that the media in Nigeria contribute to the marginalisation of women in politics, albeit, inadvertently.

8.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the analysis and discussion of findings for both media articles, through CA, and the interview data from the IDI methodology utilised for this study. This was done in relation to the three theoretical frameworks which underpinned this study, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory and Feminist Theory. In the next chapter, I present a summary of the dissertation, final conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 9

Summary, conclusion, and recommendations

[I]t is hard to argue for a media conspiracy to exclude or marginalize women ... but undoubtedly data showed that [...] gendered mediation is a strong coverage differentiator ...

– Cantrell and Bachman, cited by Campus, 2013: 43

9.1 Introduction

The main goal of this study was to investigate how Nigerian women holding political leadership positions are constructed and represented in selected news media. In doing so, I analysed media articles, through CA, to examine the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions to ascertain whether media utilise and promote gender stereotypes in their publications. I also conducted IDI's with 22 journalists, politicians, and gender advocates. The purpose was to understand the role of the media in the underrepresentation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions, as Nigerian women politicians only counted for less than 10% of elective positions in the country, far from the goal of the stated 35% as per the Nigerian National Gender Policy.

The previous chapter contains the analysis and discussion of findings with regards to the CA and IDI results, as presented in Chapters Six and Seven. This chapter contains a discussion of the summary, conclusion, contribution of this research, as well as recommendations for practice and future studies.

9.2 Summary of the research project

Chapter 1 established the context of this study. Firstly, I presented an overview of the rationale, after which I referred to some preliminary studies as background for the study. I also defined the research problem within the context of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria. This period marked the return of the country to democratic rule after a total of 29 years of military rule and is, therefore, considered a significant period, not just in the history of Nigeria, but also for women empowerment and political participation. Given the persistent underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria, I considered it imperative to explore the marginalisation of women in politics at the intersection of media and gender. In this chapter, I also outlined the research questions, goals, and theoretical

frameworks which guided this study, in addition to a brief mention of the research design and methodological approaches adopted for the study.

In **Chapter 2**, I defined and discussed some fundamental concepts which guided this study, namely media construction and representation. I paid special attention to the unique usage of these concepts in media and communication research with a specific focus on the usage of the terms within the context of this study. I also discussed the concepts of gender and political leadership. Lastly, I presented an overview of the state of women's political participation from the global and local context.

Chapter 3 contains a review of previous studies on the media portrayal of women in politics. The review was subsumed under two headings, namely studies from the Global North and studies from the Global South. Recurrent themes found in existing studies on media coverage of women in politics were also discussed. These themes served as a guide for drawing up the coding scheme.

In **Chapter 4** I presented the theoretical approaches which underpinned this study, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, and Feminist Theory, as well as a critique of each. Also, I discussed the relevance of these theories to the study. For Feminist Theory, I first presented an overview of feminism with some of the waves and ideological strands inherent in the concept.

Chapter 5 contains the presentation of the research design and methodologies used in this study. I also explained all the key methodological steps taken. This study utilised the interpretive research paradigm, using the qualitative research approach. The case study was adopted as a research design, while Content Analysis (CA) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were combined as data collection methods. The samples for the study were collected using purposive sampling as well as snowballing, while the data was thematically analysed using Atlas.ti 8. The IDIs were analysed according to recurrent themes. Lastly, I highlighted the steps taken to ensure quality assurance and ethical conduct of the research.

Chapter 6 contains a presentation of the findings from the data gathered through the CA method of the media articles collected from the selected four national newspapers in Nigeria. The findings were presented according to the predefined themes. Relevant themes were grouped under the specific research question to which they proffered answers.

Chapter 7 contains a presentation of the findings from the IDIs. The findings in this section specifically addressed the last research sub-question which was targeted at understanding the perception of journalists, politicians and gender advocates about media

representation of women in politics. This was done under three broad headings, namely participants' perception of women in politics, participants' perception of media representation of women political leaders and suggestions for improved media representation. Lastly, the findings were presented to answer research sub-question 3 using relevant subheadings.

In **Chapter 8** I presented the analysis and discussion of the findings for both media articles and interviews. This was done in relation to the three theoretical frameworks which underpinned this study, namely Framing Theory, Media Hegemony Theory, and Feminist Theory.

In this chapter, **Chapter 9**, I present a summary of the study, which leads to the next part, namely the major findings and conclusions, presented according to the research questions. I also highlight the contributions of this study, after which I will make recommendations for media and relevant stakeholders, as well as suggestions for further studies.

9.3 Summary of major findings from media articles and In-Depth interviews

The findings for the two data sets used for this study, extracted with CA from media articles and a thematic analysis of the IDIs, revealed that the media in Nigeria utilise both stereotypical and non-stereotypical frames in the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions.

The stereotypes utilised by the media in Nigeria are consistent in some regard to the ones identified in previous studies across the world, namely novelty, gender roles, personality traits, familial relations, and misogynistic language (Campus, 2013; Thuo, 2012; Anderson, Diabah & hMensa, 2011; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003b; Braden, 1996). Aside from this, findings also reveal that women in political leadership positions are largely underrepresented in the Nigerian media space. This is congruent with the claims of Ojebuyi and Chukwunwike (2018) and Ette (2017), whose comparative analysis of media representation of the leading contenders in the 2015 elections in Nigeria showed that the only woman among the contenders was underrepresented and marginalised. All of these indicate that women are treated differently in the media space, as in other socio-cultural contexts (Funk & Coker, 2016; Campus, 2013; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). In addition, the data revealed that there has been minimal change in the nature and quantity of

coverage given to women by the media in Nigeria. This is indicative of a maintenance in the status quo of media, and indeed the social perception, of women in the Nigerian society.

The findings from the In-Depth Interviews revealed an overall positive disposition and support for Nigerian women's aspiration for political empowerment through the attainment of political leadership and public governance positions. However, the data revealed conflicting views about media construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions, as well as its influence on the low participation of Nigerian women in politics. While many of the respondents agree that women in politics have been underrepresented in media, opinions are almost equally divided on the notion that the media highlight the personality traits and gender of women in political leadership positions rather than their competence and capability to function effectively in political leadership positions. Lastly, most of the journalists who were interviewed were not favourably disposed to the enactment of guidelines or regulations to ensure gender parity in media reportage. This is based on the argument that enactment of regulations without a commensurate engagement of women political leaders in newsworthy activities may not have the desired impact.

9.4 Conclusions

9.4.1 Conclusions on the central research question

The central research question for this study was:

What is the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership roles in selected Nigerian media?

The first objective of this study was to examine how Nigerian women holding political leadership positions are constructed and represented in selected news media. Based on the findings of this study, I conclude that the construction and representation of women political leaders in Nigerian media is multidimensional, that is, consists of both stereotypical and non-stereotypical frames. The combination of these two broad categories of frames has both positive and negative implications for women in political leadership positions. Non-stereotypical frames, such as agents of change, insider, academic, policy/issue, and professional competence frames, showcased women in politics in terms of their strengths, abilities, and achievements, which qualify them for political leadership positions. I argue that the use of non-stereotypical frames in the representation of women political leaders could

serve to enhance the prospects of women in politics by improving people's perception of women's viability and their capability to function effectively in political leadership positions. But, the stereotypical frames, consisting of novelty, outsider, sexualisation, trivialisation, gender roles, gender identity, male displacement, misogynistic language and gender norms, which essentially emphasised women's gender, promote certain societal gender expectations. Therefore, I argue that such stereotypical portrayal of women in political leadership positions could contribute to the continued marginalisation of Nigerian women in politics and public governance through the promotion of unconscious or subliminal bias in people's perceptions of Nigerian women's roles in society as well as their ability to contribute to nation-building through public leadership.

Based on the presence of these overarching frames, I conclude that the construction and representation of women political leaders in the Nigerian media space involve the usage of contending frames which could have an equally conflicting influence on people's perceptions of women in political leadership positions. Furthermore, from the constructionist perspective of Framing Theory, I conclude that the frames utilised in media construction and representation of women political leaders are inventions of the broader cultural context. In this regard, both society and journalists are jointly involved in the construction and representation of women political leaders in the media. Therefore, one can assume that media audiences would assign similar schemas of interpretation to media constructions and representations of women in politics in Nigeria.

9.4.2 Conclusions on research sub-question 1

Research sub-question 1 was phrased as:

Do the media in Nigeria perpetuate gender stereotypes and bias through their construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions?

This research question aimed to ascertain the applicability of the gendered mediation thesis (Raicheva-Stover & Ibroscheva, 2014; Van Dembroucke, 2014; Campus, 2013; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Braden, 1996) to the Nigerian media context. Based on evidence across the four news publications analysed, the findings of my study showed that the media in Nigeria utilise gender stereotypes in their representations of women in politics. Specifically, the representation of women political leaders in Nigeria involves the use of

frames which portray women in politics as novelties, while highlighting gender roles as women's sole responsibility which could jeopardise women's involvement in politics, and vice versa. Also, the media in Nigeria portrayed women as weak and unable to withstand the demands of politics. Also, the media denied women in politics their agentic roles by ascribing the achievements or failure of women in politics to men who are either relatives or acquaintances of such women. Although the media portrayed women in terms of policies and competence, they also highlighted women's appearance and behaviour. Furthermore, women political leaders were framed by the media as outsiders in politics. Representations such as the foregoing have been criticised in previous studies (see Liu, 2019; Montiel, 2015; Campus, 2013; Bathla, 2004; Braden, 1996).

Unlike the predominant gendered media thesis, Hayes and Lawless (2015), in their study of media representation of women politicians in the US, reported that journalists do not consider gender in their coverage of political candidates. Similarly, Akinwehinmi and Ojebode (2012), in their study conducted on the media in Nigeria, argued that even though women in politics are underrepresented in the Nigerian media space, the nature of the coverage they receive is predominantly positive and without emphasis on women's gender. As these researchers have argued, it is difficult to hold the media responsible for women's underrepresentation in media because of the low proportion of women that are actively engaged in politics. It may also be unfair to accuse the media of being entirely biased against women in politics because the media used more non-stereotypical frames than stereotypical ones. However, from a feminist standpoint, I argue that a slight increase in the quantity of representation cannot be taken for granted as a sign of parity in media representation of women in politics, most especially considering the fact that men are not subjected to stereotypical representation, like women. Lachover (2017: 449) aptly observed that "gender parity in the level of coverage is not necessarily indicative of egalitarian cultural norms". From a feminist and interpretive epistemological standpoint, agreeing that women are not marginalised in media because of the minimal increase or presence of non-stereotypical frames will be tantamount to ignoring the implications of the paucity of publications about women in media, as well as the possible influence of the identified gender stereotypes. Therefore, I conclude that the media in Nigeria reinforce patriarchy by emphasising pre-existing gender norms about women.

9.4.3 Conclusions on research sub-question 2

Research sub-question 2 was phrased as:

Have the construction and representation of Nigerian women in political leadership positions changed between 2007, 2011, and 2015?

This sub-question was crafted to ascertain whether the claims that there have been changes in the quantity of media coverage given to women in politics were correct. The findings of this study reveal that only two out of the four publications, namely *The Guardian* and *Vanguard*, recorded an increase in the number of articles on women in politics, while there was a decrease in the other two publications, that is, *The Punch* and *This Day*. In terms of prominence, the result shows that women were rarely promoted on the front pages, editorial pages, centre spread and back pages of the analysed newspapers. Most importantly, it was found that there was a decrease in the number of stereotypical frames used in media representation of women in politics across the three election periods.

I conclude that even though the voices of men dominate the Nigerian media space, while that of women are still relegated, there is a change in media perceptions of women. While this can be taken as a sign of improvement for women, I believe that the struggle for women to have a voice in media is far from over. Therefore, I consider it imperative that women and gender advocates look for avenues to continually improve the narratives about women in Nigeria, not only by seeking ways to address the impediments to increased media representation, but also by seeking alternative media spaces, such as blogs and social media to get the voices of women out in society.

9.4.4 Conclusions on research sub-question 3

Research sub-question 3 was constructed as:

What are the opinions of journalists, politicians and gender advocates about the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria?

The last research sub-question was crafted to evaluate how certain members of the Nigerian society who are informed about media, politics and gender advocacy perceive media

construction and representation of women in political leadership positions. This was done to enable the researcher to make inferences about the implication of the identified frames.

First, it is worth noting that all the respondents were favourably disposed to women taking up political leadership positions. However, their opinions are divided on the notion that the media in Nigeria promote and perpetuate gender stereotypes about women in politics. Also, the participants' opinions on the proportion of representation given to women political leaders in media indicated that media representation of women in politics has been inadequate, meaning that women in politics have been invisible in media.

Furthermore, even though more respondents agreed that women were treated differently by media compared to men, many of them also disagreed with the notion that media representations undermine women's competence or capabilities to hold public leadership positions. These variegated responses are an indication that even though informed Nigerians are aware of women's struggles, some of them are oblivious of the existence and nature, as well as some of the possible influences, of gender stereotypes in media. Their attitude may be as a result of years of patriarchal socialisation which has normalised the biases and challenges with which Nigerian women contend. In relation to media, I conclude that Nigerian media and the wider society share a similar frame of reference and that the media and society mutually influence each other. In other words, the flow of hegemonic gender ideology in Nigeria is bi-directional – from society to media, and *vice versa*.

I conclude that the influence of the media representations of women political leaders in Nigeria is perceived more in terms of visibility or quantity of coverage, rather than the nature of the content. More so, respondents' alignment to media frames can be taken as an indication of a prevailing insensitivity to gender mainstreaming and women related issues, not only in the media, but among informed members of the Nigerian society as well as the society at large. Hence, there is a need to intensify gender awareness and for women emancipation campaigns to achieve the desired transformation in the overall perception of gender and its attendant power dynamics in Nigeria.

9.5 Overall conclusion of the study

Based on the results of my study, I conclude that women are still largely side-lined and relegated in the Nigerian media context. Even though media practitioners refute having any bias against women in their reportage, the findings of my study led me to the conclusion that Nigerian journalists are not aware that their socialisation and personal prejudices sometimes

interfere with their perceptions, interpretations and subsequent framing of events relating to women. Therefore, most of the stereotypical frames identified in media are products of subliminal gender bias based on years of patriarchal socialisation of Nigerians, among whom are media practitioners. Thus, being part of a society with patriarchal inclinations, Nigerian media utilise schemas and archetypes of gender roles expectations in their portrayal of women in politics.

As the findings of my study show, irrespective of qualification, Nigerian women in politics are first considered in terms of their gender before their competence. In other words, women's competence is assessed by their compliance or proficiency in the performance of societal gender expectations. Although stereotypes are not entirely bad, they become harmful when they are based on misconceptions which lead to the discrimination or marginalisation of a certain group in society (Baxter, 2018; Moranjak-Bamburac, Jusic & Isanovic, 2006; Rabe, 2002). Therefore, typecasting women using certain stereotypical frames has not only led to the underestimation of women's capabilities, but it has also limited women in the exploration and display of the limitless potentials they possess.

Another conclusion I made from my study is that women are treated differently by the media in Nigeria, both in terms of quantity and quality of representation, just like their counterparts in other parts of the world. The difference in media treatment is evident in the ratio of articles published about women compared to that of men. Aside from this, the presentation of some of the stories about women, as well as the nature of questions journalists ask women in politics, show another aspect of media treatment of women. For example, media representations of Nigerian women in politics still include frames such as 'novelty', 'greenhorn', 'daughter of...', 'wife of...', 'woman...', even as sexual partners, all of these frames serve to exclude women in politics by subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, presenting them as "others" in the male-dominated political sphere. More so, such representations may obfuscate the competence and ability of women in politics. Also, Adcock (2010: 150–152) argued that parity for women in media need to go beyond numerical visibility, as the quality or nature of coverage given to women has implications on the development of their career. Aside from this, Adcock argued that such stereotypical representations are not only reductionist, but also further perpetuate the myth that politics is a men's only domain, while posing a limitation to women's perception of their worth and capabilities.

I also conclude that stereotypes used by the media in Nigeria are similar to that found in studies in other contexts. The difference, however, lies in the slight nuances of their

applicability to the Nigerian cultural context, for instance, the ostensive negative application of personality frame and name-calling, which were visible in some of the studies conducted in the US and other parts of the world in which media made derogatory comments about women's appearance or behaviour (Ritchie, 2013; Klenke, 2011: 114–117), is absent in the analysed data. Meanwhile, media representation of familial relations, trivialisation, novelty, gender roles and, to some extent, socio-cultural gender norms (Lee, 2015; Adcock, 2010; Braden, 1996) exhibit some similarity in the way they are deployed in the Nigerian context.

Based on the result of this study, I conclude that the media in Nigeria do not produce gender stereotypes, rather, they reproduce and promote pre-existing stereotypes drawn from the nation's socio-cultural system. This explains the subtlety in the promotion and perpetuation of gender stereotypes of women in Nigerian society, such as that women in politics are expected to fit into certain stereotypical gender roles or socio-cultural expectations which are disadvantageous for women's career advancement. Hence, gender bias intermingled with economic challenges, as well as cultural expectations, have kept Nigerian women relegated in the media space and political leadership positions.

Considering the recurrence of the financial challenge frame in the analysed data, I also conclude that even though the underrepresentation of women in the Nigerian media space may have some patriarchal undertones, the low participation of women in politics, as well as the paucity of women as news sources, are also contributory to the lack of visibility of women political leaders in media. Drawing on the principles of media and political conflict, Lachover (2017: 459) explicated that political players adopt various means, such as the deployment of financial and professional resources, as well as the goodwill they have built with media, to influence the scope and nature of the coverage they are given by media. Therefore, Nigerian women seeking political leadership positions, as well as gender advocates, may need to rethink their media engagement strategy to increase the representation of women.

My conclusion is that patriarchy is the overriding cause of media bias against women in politics in Nigeria. To address this there is a need to reinvent socio-cultural norms to renegotiate beliefs about gender roles and power dynamics within the Nigerian society. One of the ways through which this can be achieved is through increased awareness about the evolution of the ideological processes guiding gender practices. This could start from those who are enlightened in this respect, to the media, and from the media, to the larger society.

Lastly, I conclude, based on the findings of this study, that the construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigerian media is still mediated

by gender, especially in terms of angle of reportage or framing. This is evident in the differential treatment women give to women in the guise of gender equity. Most importantly, I surmise that the gendered construction and representation of women in media could contribute to the underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions by sustaining traditional notions about women and their roles in society.

9.6 Contributions of the study

This study contributes to the on-going conversation on gender inequality by extending the body of scholarship on women, media and political representation, specifically in Nigeria, and Africa, in general. By adopting the African feminist theoretical perspective, my study offers a decolonised perspective to the understanding of women's struggles for political empowerment on the African continent with a specific focus on Nigeria. The country has one of the lowest participation of women in political leadership positions. This study offers a necessary understanding of how the media in Nigeria construct and represent women occupying political leadership positions, compared to their male counterparts. Considering the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society and the domination of leadership positions by men, a study of this nature, indeed, was overdue, as was also expressed by Oyinade *et al.* (2013: 25) and Eme and Onuigbo (2015: 21). This study offers a necessary understanding of Nigerian media's construction and representation of women occupying political leadership positions in relation to the perceptions of relevant stakeholders.

Also, by using theoretical and methodological triangulation, my study provides a more nuanced understanding of the media portrayal of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria. Firstly, this study identified a more extensive set of frames utilised in media coverage of women in politics in Nigeria compared to previous studies from a similar context. Thus, this study extends the conversation on media framing of women beyond the particularity of evaluating the representation of women in politics in terms of quantitative representation which focuses only on the quantification of media reports rather than the nature of the frames embedded in media content. By analysing the nature of frames utilised by the media in the representation of women in politics, this study did not only identify the intricacy of media framing of women politicians in Nigeria, but also acknowledges the absence of a single overarching perspective to the categorisation of media frames. In other words, media frames cannot be regarded as entirely objective or stereotypical. While exploring the influence of contextual factors such as gender norms and finance on media representation of women in

politics, I contend that gender intersects with cultural considerations and financial incapability in the framing of Nigerian women political leaders. This study concedes that even though the media serve as domains for the promotion and perpetuation of patriarchal ideology, media do not own the autonomy to generate ideologies which were not previously in existence. Put differently, the ideological inclinations of media in each society are products of interactions between society and media practitioners which lead to the reproduction and perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

More so, the analysis of media articles, in addition to IDIs, offers a unique and more encompassing insight to the study of the construction and representation of women political leaders in Nigeria by juxtaposing actual media contents with the perceptions of social actors in a single study. The difference in the findings emanating from the analysed media contents and the opinions expressed by the respondents showed that the interpretations which Nigerians give to media framing of women political leaders are complex and divergent, and particularly unique to the Nigerian context. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that media construction and representation of women in politics have or will always have a similar influence on Nigerians. Meanwhile, the ostensibly unanimous support for the political empowerment of Nigerian women and the conflicting conception of societal gender expectations are indications of the dilemma of the gender equality struggle in Nigeria. This is fuelled by the association of gender equality and women empowerment, with feminism, which is predominantly considered as an aberrant ideology among many Nigerians. Therefore, this study argues that the Nigerian society's preferred reading or interpretation of media construction and representation of Nigerian women in politics is concomitant to the ideological affiliation of individuals. In other words, gender bias and stereotypes in media representations will be identified for what they are by members of the society who have been infused with knowledge about the existence of gender stereotypes and its contributory roles in the sustenance of patriarchal ideology.

Lastly, the following factors were highlighted by the analysed media articles and the respondents as some of the challenges to women's participation in politics, namely a lack of funds, apathy, systematic marginalisation within political parties, lack of support from other women, and violence. Similarly, the respondents made the following suggestions for women's improved participation in politics, namely strategic media engagement, active political participation, support for women, and reorientation, among others.

Based on these, this study highlighted the need for women to engage in politics strategically through observational and hands-on learning of political dynamics. This is because of the conception of politics as a “sport” and for a sportsperson to win a game, such person must be thoroughly grounded in the rules of the game. Most importantly, considering the salience of media to politics, this study also emphasises the need for the media in Nigeria to revolutionise their portrayal of women in politics, while women in politics, themselves, need to re-evaluate their media relations and engagement strategies by having adequate knowledge of the workings of the media, while bearing in mind the socio-economic peculiarity of the Nigerian context.

In the next section, I present some recommendations stemming from the findings of this study.

9.7 Recommendations

Consequent on the findings of this study, recommendations are made for further research into women’s political empowerment within the Nigerian society.

9.7.1 Recommendations for media, women in politics and other relevant stakeholders

- The findings of this study reveal that women are still largely underrepresented in the Nigerian media space. Therefore, I recommend that the media should employ a more determined and concerted approach in their portrayal of women to help mainstream the voices of women political leaders in media. This can be done through a reconsideration of the quantity of coverage, prominence and nature of coverage given to women political leaders in media.
- The findings also showed that newspaper organisations in Nigeria do not have a unifying set of rules or regulations which adequately address issues of gender equity and usage of gender-sensitive language in media reportage. To this end, I recommend that media groups, in collaboration with self-regulatory bodies, should draw up guidelines to ensure gender-balance both in quantity and quality of representations in media. For example, the propositions of Chapter IV, Section J (Addendum F) of the Beijing Declaration, as well as that of UNESCO’s Gender-sensitive Indicators for

Media (Grizzle, 2012), can be used as guides to create such guidelines which specifically address the Nigerian context.

- Given the use of gender labels and stereotypes in media representation, I recommend that gender labels and other misogynistic terms used in the framing of women in politics which serve to set women in politics apart as “outsiders” or “others” should be relinquished. Instead, I advocate for the adoption of gender-neutral terms in media construction and representation of women in politics. There should be a single identificatory category such as “politician”, “minister”, etc., not “woman politician” or “female minister”. This is necessary to help blur gender imaginaries embedded in media usage of language, as well as to avoid upholding and nourishing the ideology which has set up dichotomous gender views wherein women have been subjugated.
- Based on the finding that the underrepresentation of women in media is partly due to the low participation of women in politics and its perceived implication on women’s representation in top political leadership positions, I conclude that women are likely to be given increased media representation when they actively engage in politics and engage in newsworthy activities. I, therefore, recommend that women should also get media experts to help them develop stories that would help them promote positive messages about themselves as well as their policies. To achieve this, it will be necessary for women to form a network of support in which women with certain relevant skills can provide training and mentorship for women in politics who are unable to pay for such services. Aside from that, financially buoyant women can sponsor women candidates, like men in politics do for one another.
- Also, given their lack of visibility and prominence in the Nigerian media, it will be instructive for women in politics to strive to make news through active engagement in issues of national relevance, event sponsorship, and philanthropic engagements and other relevant activities which could attract media attention. Although this might not always get them to the front page, it is still advisable for women to strive to get such media presence. As Campus (2013: 37) explained, for a political outsider to get media attention, such a politician has to become “interesting” by engaging in newsworthy activities which can be pushed to public consciousness through the use of alternate media such as the internet.
- A lack of finances was identified as reasons for the underrepresentation of women in media and their low participation in politics. I recommend that women explore utilising

an alternate source of funding, such as crowdfunding, to help women aspirants' to augment the financial demands of political campaigns. Women can take advantage of technological advancement in this regard by exploring the possibility of using online crowdfunding resources.

- In my interactions with participants during the data collection, I observed that some Nigerians are yet to fully come to terms with the emerging gender views on a global level. Although this was not addressed in my study, as it was not part of my research goals and questions, I recommend that government and gender advocacy associations should engage in increased awareness and sensitisation campaigns targeted at enhancing societal perception on issues of gender norms. This should be done in alignment with the peculiarity of the socio-cultural experiences and needs of Nigerian women. I also recommend the re-socialisation of women and girl-children to enable them to break free of the negative effects of the age-old patriarchal ideologies to which they have been subjected.
- One of the goals of feminist researchers is to seek ways of identifying and dislodging forms of impediments to women's emancipation. Although this study is focused on the role of the Nigerian media in the continued underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions, my findings indicate that the underlying causes of women's marginalisation go beyond the media. While the media certainly play a role in the sustenance of ideologies and socio-cultural norms which have been jeopardising women's growth in society, it is pertinent to search for an all-encompassing solution to gender inequality in Nigeria. Hence, in addition to other recommendations aimed at increasing the participation of women in politics and governance, I recommend that measures should be taken to ensure the implementation of Nigeria's National Gender Policy as well as the speedy legislation of the Gender Equality Bill which has been under consideration since 2016 (Iroanusi, 2019). Legislating gender quotas has led to an increase in women's political representation in other countries (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2020: 2–16).
- Lastly, I recommend the inclusion of gender studies into educational curricula at all levels in Nigeria to ensure early exposure of children to alternate ideological perspectives on gender, which can help to disabuse their minds from the negative influence of patriarchy.

9.7.2 Recommendations for further studies

- This study focused only on the construction and representation of women in newspapers. Given the variegated nature of media, I suggest a need for further studies into the representation of women in politics on other media platforms such as television, radio, digital platforms and alternative media within the Nigerian context, to add to existing studies and to create a more accurate understanding of media construction and representation of women in politics.
- Owing to the undulating disparity in the quantity of coverage accorded to women, as well as the difference in the utilisation of stereotypical and non-stereotypical frames across the years, I recommend a more nuanced study into the possible underlying causes or factors impacting the amount or nature of media coverage given to women in politics.
- Also, considering the emergence of alternative media such as blogs and social media which have opened up new areas of communication between politicians and citizens, there is a need to study how women in politics have been utilising such media platforms for political participation and inclusion, as well as to rewrite women's narratives in Nigeria.
- Also, this study provides a limited understanding of society's perceptions of media construction and representation of women because of certain limitations. This study also did not evaluate the implications of media frames on voters' behaviour. Therefore, I suggest a study which would help to ascertain the exact influence of framing on voters' perceptions of political candidates and voting choices in the Nigerian context.
- Considering the complexity of the news-making process, there is a need to study the dynamics of gender power play in the Nigerian media context.
- Similarly, I also recommend a study to examine the influence of stereotypical media representation on adolescent girls and young women's perception of politics. This would enable researchers and gender advocates to ascertain the link between media content and its effects in reality in order to proffer a more effective solution to the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics.
- The findings of my study revealed that women in politics encounter systematic marginalisation within political parties. Therefore, I recommend a study into how successful women political leaders in Nigeria negotiate the male-dominated political

space to foster an accurate understanding of the challenges to help provide more meaningful solutions.

- Furthermore, violence against women has been one of the recurrent themes among the reasons for the low participation of women in politics. I observed that there are few articles on violence against women in politics in the analysed news publications. Therefore, I recommend documentation of the experiences of women who have contested political leadership positions as well as a study of the factors mediating the reportage of violence against women in politics by the media in Nigeria.
- Given emerging opportunities provided by emerging media for political communication and citizen engagement, I recommend a study into Nigerian women's usage of new media for political participation. Also, I recommend a study on Nigerian women's experiences concerning online gender-based violence such as "cyberbullying".
- Lastly, considering the perceived influences of societal conception of gender individual's roles performativity, it might be insightful to do an analysis, within the gender and media field, of articles as written by women or men. This might also render some insights as regards to how women or men frame their female subjects.

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Addenda

Addendum A: List of Respondents

List of Participants for In-depth Interview

S/N	NAME	GENDER	PROFESSION
1	Dr Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi	F	Gender Advocate
2	Dr Sharon Omotoso	F	Gender Advocate
3	Dr Tola Winjobi	M	Gender Advocate
4	Barr Aderonke Ige	F	Gender Advocate/Journalist
5	Mrs Oluyemi Alabi-Taiwo	F	Gender Advocate/Media Analyst
6	Mrs Adenike Adewande	F	Journalist
7	Mrs Bisi Deji-Folutile	F	Journalist
8	Mrs Morenikeji Taire	F	Journalist
9	Mrs Ayo-Lawal Gbenoba	F	Journalist
10	Mrs Ronke Giwa-Onafuwa	F	Journalist
11	Mr Abraham Ogbodo	M	Journalist
12	Mr Martins Ayankola	M	Journalist
13	Mr Eze Anaba	M	Journalist
14	Mr Edmund Obilo	M	Journalist
15	Mr Kehinde Oyetimi	M	Journalist
16	Mr Debo Abdullahi	M	Journalist
17	Rev Adenike Victor-Tade	F	Politician
18	Mr Kehinde Ayeola	F	Politician
19	Prof Oluremi Sonaiya	F	Politician
20	Mr Akeem Ige	M	Politician
21	Mr Akintoye Akinwande	M	Politician
22	Mr Abioye Oladipupo	M	Politician

Addendum B: Interview Guide

Interview Introduction

Media Construction and Representation of Women in Political Leadership Positions in Nigeria

Dear Participant,

This study examines the representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria. The aim of this study is to ascertain the role the media play in the perpetuation of stereotypes and gender inequality in Nigeria. To reach the aims of this study, it is essential that your experience and knowledge can be accessed. I therefore request an interview, lasting about 30 minutes, with you.

I assure you that your identity and responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality, in line with the stipulations of Stellenbosch University's ethical policy. If you so wish, you may remain anonymous in the study and I will refer to you according to a numerical identification of which only I will know the real identity. I will also request you to sign a form of informed consent according to the SU's ethical guide policy.

The interview questions are included in this document. Your responses can be provided in a separate MS word document titled "Response". Each of your responses should be marked with the corresponding question number. Please feel free to seek clarification on any of the questions which might seem ambiguous to you. You also have the right to discontinue the interview session at any point if you so wish. However, I shall be highly grateful if you answer all the questions. I would also like to seek your permission to contact you again after the interview in case I need clarifications on some of your responses.

Thank you in advance for your time and contribution to an important study regarding the position of women in Nigeria.

Yours sincerely,

Bimbo Fafowora

Doctoral Student: Stellenbosch University

Interview Guide

Please, note that responses to the following questions can be provided in a separate word document marked "Response". Each of your answers should be marked by the corresponding question number.

1. What do you think about women holding political leadership positions?
2. How can you describe the portrayal of women political leaders in Nigerian media?
3. Studies from other parts of the world have shown that female politicians are treated differently by media compared to their male counterparts. In light of this, what can you say about the media representation of female politicians in Nigerian?
4. From your observation, can you say that women political leaders in Nigeria are given adequate attention in media? Please provide reasons and examples.
5. In your opinion, do you think that the media in Nigeria focus more on female political leaders' gender and personality traits than their competence and policies? Please, explain.
6. From your observation, are there noticeable differences in the nature and quality of coverage given to women politicians by Nigerian media in the past few years, that is, since the country's return to democratic rule?
7. What is your take on the notion that the portrayal of women political leaders in media is connected to the low participation of Nigerian women in politics? Please provide examples.
8. In what ways can the representation of women in media contribute to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in Nigeria?
9. What is your opinion of the assumption that the representation of women political leaders in Nigerian media undermines their capability to function effectively in leadership positions?
10. In your opinion, what measures can be taken to ensure that women political leaders in Nigeria get adequate and objective representation in the media?
11. In your opinion, how can increased and positive media representation of women in political leadership positions increase Nigerian women's participation in politics? Please explain.

(Questions 12 – 14 are for journalists and other media operatives. Please, ignore if you're not in that category)

12. Are there ethical codes, policies or guidelines regulating the reportage of gender related issues in media?
13. If there are ethical codes, are these rules adequate for balance in the reportage of gender related issues? If there are no rules, would you suggest the enactment of rules to ensure that women are given balanced and adequate coverage in media?
14. As a journalist, how does your organisation handle the reportage of gender related issues to ensure equality, balance and fairness?
15. Please, tell us a bit about yourself. This should include your full name, a brief description of your occupation and designation as well as your email address. *(Please, note that this is just for record purposes, if you choose to remain anonymous none of your personal details would be made public).*
16. Would you want to be identified by name in the research report or would rather prefer to remain anonymous?
 Yes, I would want to be identified by name.
 No, I would rather remain anonymous

Thank you for your time.

Addendum C: Informed Consent Form



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Participant,

My name is Bimbo Fafowora and I am a doctoral degree student at the abovenamed institution. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project entitled “Media Construction and Representation of Women in Political leadership positions in Nigeria”.

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of the study. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary**, and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

Please take note of the following:

This research poses no risk or harm to any individual or government.

This research is beneficial because it will create deeper understanding about how media portrayal of women in political leadership influences the participation of women in politics and other leadership positions considered to be a male exclusive preserve. The study is also expected to contribute to on-going global discourse as well as scholarship on gender and media in Africa.

This research is purely an academic research endeavour. Therefore, to achieve a high level of objectivity no form of payment or remuneration whether monetary or material will be given to individuals for participating in the study.

You will be required to answer the questions either in person, by Skype or email. Should you choose to answer the questions in person or by Skype, please know that the researcher will make audio recordings of the interview sessions for analysis purposes. However, be assured that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please feel free to indicate if you wish to be treated anonymously all through the study in which case you will be assigned a numerical tag.

Data for the study will be stored electronic and external storage devices, and virtual storage platforms like (One drive and google drive) for safekeeping. The information will only be shared with the

Alternative written consent. REC: Humanities (Stellenbosch University) 2017

researcher's supervisor and board of examiners for supervision and evaluation purposes. When completed, portions of the study might also be published in academic journals.

You have the right to choose not to participate in this study at any point if you so desire without any recourse or negative consequence to you or anyone related to you.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the following persons:

Bimbo Fafowora (Principal Investigator), Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Telephone: +27 740768964; email: fafowora.bimbo@yahoo.com or 22456597@sun.ac.za

Or

Professor Lizette Rabe (Supervisor), Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Email: lrabe@sun.ac.za

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

You have the right to receive a copy of the Information and Consent form.

If you are willing to participate in this study please sign the attached Declaration of Consent and send it back to the researcher through the following email address: fafowora.bimbo@yahoo.com or 22456597@sun.ac.za

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

By signing below, I..... agree to take part in a research study entitled “Media Construction and Representation of Women in Political Leadership Positions: A Case Study of Selected Media Outlets in Nigeria”, and conducted by Bimbo Fafowora.

I declare that:

- I have read the attached information leaflet and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.
- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide have been explained to my satisfaction.

Signed on

Signature of participant.....

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.



Signature of Investigator

Date: 16 May, 2018

Alternative written consent. REC: Humanities (Stellenbosch University) 2017

Addendum D: Ethics Approval Letter



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UNIVERSITY

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC Humanities New Application Form

23 July 2018

Project number: 7281

Project Title: Media Construction and Representation of Women in Political Leadership Positions: A Case Study of Selected News Media Outlets in Nigeria

Dear Miss Binbo Fafowora

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on 27 June 2018 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following for your approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
23 July 2018	23 July 2021

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (7281) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Informed Consent Form	SU HUMANITIES Consent template_Written 2	17/05/2018	First
Data collection tool	In depth interview guide	17/05/2018	first
Data collection tool	Coding scheme	17/05/2018	first
Data collection tool	Description of Texts to be Analyzed	17/05/2018	first
Research Protocol/Proposal	Fafowora_Bimbo_Proposal_	17/05/2018	first

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Charissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-030477-017.
The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No. 61/2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, the committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (1973) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research.

Addendum E: Letter of Introduction



22 November 2018

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that Ms Bimbo Fafowora, student number 22456597, is currently enrolled as PhD student at this University.

Ms Fafowora is registered to work on her dissertation “Media construction and representation of women in political leadership positions in Nigeria: A study of selected news media outlets in Nigeria”.

This is an exciting and ground breaking research project that will contribute to empower women on our continent, and to understand the role the media play in terms of gender construction and representation.

As Ms Fafowora’s supervisor, I sincerely hope you will be able to contribute to this important research project, as I have no doubt that it will make a difference for women’s position in society, not only in Nigeria, but also on our continent, and the Global South.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'L Rabe'.

Prof L Rabe
Supervisor
Department of Journalism
Stellenbosch University

Addendum F: Beijing Declaration – Chapter IV, Section J

J. Women and the media

234. During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women.

235. More women are involved in careers in the communications sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations.

236. The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications – electronic, print, visual and audio – must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society. Programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting. The world-wide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately.

237. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This will strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. Self-regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-biased programming. Most women, especially in developing countries, are not able to access effectively the expanding electronic information highways and therefore cannot establish networks that will provide them with alternative sources of information. Women therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact.

238. In addressing the issue of the mobilization of the media, Governments and

other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

Strategic objective J.1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication

Actions to be taken

239. By Governments:

- (a) Support women's education, training and employment to promote and ensure women's equal access to all areas and levels of the media;
- (b) Support research into all aspects of women and the media so as to define areas needing attention and action and review existing media policies with a view to integrating a gender perspective;
- (c) Promote women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research;
- (d) Aim at gender balance in the appointment of women and men to all advisory, management, regulatory or monitoring bodies, including those connected to the private and State or public media;
- (e) Encourage, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, these bodies to increase the number of programmes for and by women to see to it that women's needs and concerns are properly addressed;
- (f) Encourage and recognize women's media networks, including electronic networks and other new technologies of communication, as a means for the dissemination of information and the exchange of views, including at the international level, and support women's groups active in all media work and systems of communications to that end;
- (g) Encourage and provide the means or incentives for the creative use of programmes in the national media for the dissemination of information on various cultural forms of indigenous people and the development of social and educational issues in this regard within the framework of national law;
- (h) Guarantee the freedom of the media and its subsequent protection within the framework of national law and encourage, consistent with freedom of expression, the positive involvement of the media in development and social issues.

240. By national and international media systems:

Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, regulatory mechanisms, including voluntary ones, that promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women by the media and international communication systems and that promote increased participation by women and men in production and decision-making.

241. By Governments, as appropriate, or national machinery for the advancement

of women:

- (a) Encourage the development of educational and training programmes for women in order to produce information for the mass media, including funding of experimental efforts, and the use of the new technologies of communication, cybernetics space and satellite, whether public or private;
- (b) Encourage the use of communication systems, including new technologies, as a means of strengthening women's participation in democratic processes;
- (c) Facilitate the compilation of a directory of women media experts;
- (d) Encourage the participation of women in the development of professional guidelines and codes of conduct or other appropriate self-regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and non-stereotyped portrayals of women by the media.

242. By non-governmental organizations and media professional associations:

- (a) Encourage the establishment of media watch groups that can monitor the media and consult with the media to ensure that women's needs and concerns are properly reflected;
- (b) Train women to make greater use of information technology for communication and the media, including at the international level;
- (c) Create networks among and develop information programmes for non-governmental organizations, women's organizations and professional media organizations in order to recognize the specific needs of women in the media, and facilitate the increased participation of women in communication, in particular at the international level, in support of South-South and North-South dialogue among and between these organizations, inter alia, to promote the human rights of women and equality between women and men;
- (d) Encourage the media industry and education and media training institutions to develop, in appropriate languages, traditional, indigenous and other ethnic forms of media, such as story-telling, drama, poetry and song, reflecting their cultures, and utilize these forms of communication to disseminate information on development and social issues.

Strategic objective J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media

Actions to be taken

243. By Governments and international organizations, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression:

- (a) Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their multiple roles;

- (b) Encourage the media and advertising agencies to develop specific programmes to raise awareness of the Platform for Action;
- (c) Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media;
- (d) Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development;
- (e) Promote the concept that the sexist stereotypes displayed in the media are gender discriminatory, degrading in nature and offensive;
- (f) Take effective measures or institute such measures, including appropriate legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.

244. By the mass media and advertising organizations:

- (a) Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self-regulation to promote the presentation of non-stereotyped images of women;
- (b) Establish, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women in the media, including advertising;
- (c) Develop a gender perspective on all issues of concern to communities, consumers and civil society;
- (d) Increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels of the media.

245. By the media, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in collaboration, as appropriate, with national machinery for the advancement of women:

- (a) Promote the equal sharing of family responsibilities through media campaigns that emphasize gender equality and non-stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family and that disseminate information aimed at eliminating spousal and child abuse and all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence;
- (b) Produce and/or disseminate media materials on women leaders, inter alia, as leaders who bring to their positions of leadership many different life experiences, including but not limited to their experiences in balancing work and family responsibilities, as mothers, as professionals, as managers and as entrepreneurs, to provide role models, particularly to young women;
- (c) Promote extensive campaigns, making use of public and private educational programmes, to disseminate information about and increase awareness of the human rights of women;

- (d) Support the development of and finance, as appropriate, alternative media and the use of all means of communication to disseminate information to and about women and their concerns;
- (e) Develop approaches and train experts to apply gender analysis with regard to media programmes.