RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the evaluation of the role of women in leadership positions in Nigeria, focusing on their contributions to sustainable development. Despite the presence of constitutional frame works and advocacy for gender inclusion, female representation in leadership remains significantly low in Nigeria's governance and economic sectors. The population of the study comprises all the prominent female leaders across politics, business, academia, and civil society in the South- East of Nigeria. The sample size was fifty (50) female respondents that were selected from the population by simple random sampling technique from the South- East of Nigeria. The subjects responded to a 14-item questionnaire in the Evaluation of the Role of Women in leadership Positions and their Contributions to sustainable Development. Empirical research data reports from different sources were also used to explore the social, political, and economic impact of women's leadership. Mean was used to answer the four research questions. Results indicated that women in leadership have proven to be strategic actors in driving sustainable development despite the structural, and cultural barriers that impede women's participation and offers pragmatic strategies to bridge the gender gap in leadership. Ultimately, the findings underscore that inclusive governance and sustainable development is intricately tied to women active participation in leadership roles. The paper also recommends that legislative action should be taken to enact and enforce gender quotas at all levels of governance.

Keywords: Evaluation, women, leadership, contributions, sustainable development.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a crucial component of national development especially in the context of Nigeria, a country grappling with social- political instability, economic challenges, and developmental gaps. While women constitute nearly half of Nigeria's population, their inclusion in leadership remains minimal. Historical narratives, cultural norms, and institutional frameworks have often undermined women's leadership capacity. Research Reports and Academic journals in 1999 studied on women's political participation in Nigeria, such as "Nigerian Women in Politics: 24 years after the Return to Electoral Democracy" and "Women's Political participation in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects", observed that Nigeria returned to democratic rule, with women holding 3.2% of seats in the National Assembly (12 out of 360 in the House of Representatives and 3 out of 109 in the Senate.

Reports also from organizations, news from Nigerian newspapers, such as punch, The Nation, or Vanguard, Government reports from Nigerian government agencies such as the National Assembly, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development have that in 2003, women's representation increased slightly, with 5.1% of seats held by women (21 out of 360 in the House of Representatives and 4 out of 109 in the Senate). In 2006 by Daily Report Nigeria: The National Gender Policy was adopted, recommending 35% affirmative action for women in politics and governance. In 2007 Women peaked, with 7.2% of Seats held by women (27 out of 360 in the House of Representatives and 8 out of 109 in the senate).

In 2011 women's representation decreased slightly, with 6,6% of seats held by women (26 out of 360 in the House of Representatives and 7 out 109 in the senate). In 2015, women's representation remained low, with 5.3% of seats held by women (19 out of 360 in the House of Representatives and 8 out of 109 in the senate). Finally, in 2019- 2023, women's participation in politics remained a drug challenge, with patriarchal societal structures and cultural practices cited as barriers to women's participation. However, global trends and local case studies reveal that female leaders often prioritize transparency, social justice, and inclusive policies that align with sustainable development goals (SDGs). This study situates women in leadership within the broader discourse of good governance and sustainable development. It argues that without the active engagement of women in decision-making processes, efforts at national development will remain incomplete and unsustainable.

The absence of women in leadership positions within Nigerian universities is a pressing concern, reflecting the broader societal issues of patriarchy and gender inequality. Despite the importance of women's leadership in higher education, they are virtually absent from key decision-making roles. This under representation is rooted in the patriarchal values and practices that permeate Nigerian society, influencing the culture and dynamics within universities. According to Akudo and Okenwa (2015), "women leadership in higher education has been implicated as imperative and alternative in the development of higher education in Nigeria. Mejuini, (2013): highlighted the impact of the hidden curriculum on

women's empowerment in higher education. Mejuini noted that the hidden curriculum can perpetuate gender stereotypes and reinforce patriarchal norms. Perpetuation of patriarchal norms in universities reinforces the notion that leadership positions are the prerogative of man. Afonja, Soetan, *et al*. (2002): Discussed the underrepresentation of women in enrolment, employment, and decision-making.

The absence of women leaders in universities means that there are few role models for female students and staff, perpetuating the status quo. Morley, (2006), examined the micro-politics of higher education and its impact on women's leadership aspirations. The micro-politics of higher education, including networking and informal interactions, often exclude women, making it difficult for them to access leadership positions. Ogene, (2011): Examined the division of labor between men and women and its impact on power dynamics. In the historical context, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is not unique to universities.

Historically, women in Nigeria have been socialized to prioritize domestic roles, and their participation in public life has been limited. While there have been exceptional women who have broken through these barriers, such as Amina of Zaria and Moremi of Ile-Ife. These women are often seen as anomalies rather than examples of what women can achieve. Nwosu, (2012): Analyzed the historical context of women's leadership in Nigeria and the societal norms that limit their participation. Abduraheem, (1996): cited Biers, (1968), work on the customary law and its impact on women's rights in Nigeria. These scholars have contributed significantly to our understanding of women's predicaments in leadership and gender issues in Nigerian higher education.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in Nigeria universities is a complex issue, rooted in patriarchal values and practices. Addressing this issue will require a multifaceted approach that challenges these norms and promotes greater inclusivity and diversity in higher education. The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarily drawing mutual enrichment from their differences (Inter-parliamentary Union 1999). This global low women's participation in politics has prompted the emergency of campaigns to increase women's political presence in countries around the world.

The first major international action in favor of women universally was taken by united Nations in 1946 when it sets up a commission on the status of women, Peterson, Spike, and Runyam, (1999): Akiyode Afolabi etal, (2003). In 1975 during the international women's year' the UN General Assembly Launched the UN decade for Women (1976-1985), with a view to creating greater global awareness on the status of women and the girl child (Akinboye, 2004:13). There was another conference on women in 1995 held in Beijing,

China, with the theme "Equality, development, and Peace," the aim of which was to review and appraise the achievements of the UN decade for women (Omotola, 2007:33). One of the major activities of the year was the World Conference on Women that took place in Mexico. Nevertheless, despite these international instruments to encourage women involvement in political activities, the world still witnesses slow progress of women participation in politics (UNDP Report, 2005).

Despite Nigeria's ratification of global treaties such as CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.) and the African Union Protocol on Women's Rights, gender inequality persists. Female representation in Nigeria's National Assembly remains under 5%. The Underrepresentation of women in governance is not merely a numbers issue but one that affects policy direction, priority- setting, and inclusive growth. The problem of women in leadership positions in Nigeria stems from various challenges and barriers that limit their participation. Women are underrepresented in politics and leadership positions, with Nigerian ranking 139 out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index.

Women encounter gender-based discrimination, sexist rhetoric, and hostile political environments that discourage their participation. Women face financial constraints, inadequate networking opportunities, and persistent stereotypes that limit their ability to succeed in leadership roles. Cultural and historical factors due to the legacy of colonialism and patriarchal systems have contributed to the marginalization of women in Nigeria society, limiting their roles and opportunities. These challenges result in a significant gap in women's representation and participation in leadership positions, affecting not only individuals but also the country's overall development and progress. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach changes, social support, and empowerment initiatives to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study
The general objectives of this study was to determine the evaluation of the role of women in leadership positions and their contributions to sustainable development in Nigeria
To examine the current state of women's participation in leadership in Nigeria
To identify specific contributions of female leaders to sustainable development.
To explore the cultural, institutional, and structural challenges limiting women in leadership.
To provide recommendations for promoting gender- inclusive leadership.

Research Questions:
What is the current representation of women in leadership positions in Nigeria?
How have women leaders contributed to sustainable development goals?
What are the barriers preventing more women from entering leadership roles?
What policies or reforms are necessary to promote gender-inclusive?

LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL FRAME WORKS.

Transformational leadership Theory: This theory posits that transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and empower followers to achieve exceptional outcomes. Female leaders are often associated with participatory leadership styles that emphasize collaborative vision- sharing, and long- term developmental planning, all of which are essential for sustainable development. These are prominent historical women who pioneered feminism in Nigeria. Historical women who left an impact on the sands of time, leading protests to demanding voting rights to defying patriarchal standards. These historical women cemented themselves as the forbearers of Nigerian feminism.

Fumilayo, Ransome-Kuti was the first woman to drive a car. She was also a revolutionary who was known to be media as the "lioness of lisabi". She founded the Abeokuta ladies club in 1944 which later became the Abeokuta women's union. This union was a thorn in the flesh of the Alaka and British officers. She was a member of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT). Mademe nwanyeruwa: ever heard of the Aba Women Riot of 1929. This woman led this protest of about 10,000 women; Margaret Ekpo was a frontier female politician in Nigeria's first Republic. She was a member of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). This was the political party leading the decolonization efforts in Nigeria. She was nominated to the regional House of Chiefs by the NCNC in 1953 and created the Aba town-ship Women's Association in 1954. A member of the Eastern Regional House of Assembly, thereby using her position to solve women's problems.

Hajia sawaba was the face of the Liberation of Northern women. A feminist and social Activist, politician and philanthropist who believed in social theory which argues that legal and social restrictions on women must be removed in order to bring about equality of the sexes in all aspects of public and private life. She served as the deputy chairman of Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) and was elected leader of the National Women's Wing of Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU).

Ngozi Okonjo- Iweala: special Envoy to Mobilize International Economic Support for Continental Fight against Covid-19. She was a minister of finance and coordinating minister of the Economy of Nigeria (2011-2015). She is a Nigerian Economist, who has been serving as the Director General of the World Trade Organization since March 2021. She is the first woman and first African to lead the World Trade Organization as the Director- General. Florence Nwapa was the female Nigerian author and has been called "Mother of Modern African Literature". She paved the way for a generation of African Women Writers. She published so many books both Home and Abroad. She founded Tena Press in 1970. One of the objectives of her publishing house was "to inform and educate women all over the world, especially feminists about the role of women in Nigeria, their economic independence, their relationship with their husbands and children, their traditional beliefs and status in the community as a whole".

Kofoworola Aina Ademola was awarded the member of the order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth in 1959. She was appointed as a member of the order of the Federal. Bolanle Awe was the first female Academic Staff in a Nigerian University. She was among the pioneers of the comprehensive study of women's history and feminist history. She was a professor at the University of Ibadan, where she worked. She spotlighted the constant neglect of the role of women in history. She served as the first chairperson of the National Commission for women (NCW) from 1990 to 1992. In 2005, she was made the Pro-chancellor of the University of Nsukka.

Oyinkansola, Abayomi founded the Nigerian women's party whose major aim was to achieve Equal rights between men and women. She also headed the Girls' Guard in Nigeria. She played a part in fund raising for Queen's College through the West African Educated Girls' club, an organization she founded. Let us not forget to honor our "Sheroes Past". Let the sacrifices of these historical Women inspire us to do more.

Amina J Mohammed: She was the Deputy Secretary- General of the United Nations and former minister of Environment in Nigeria, known for her advocacy on sustainable developmental Issues.

Yemisi Edun: She was the Managing Director of First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Known for her transformative leadership and focus on SME lending, particularly empowering women- owned businesses.

Nneka onyeali- Ikpe: first Female Managing Director/ CEO of Fidelity Bank PLC, recognized for her leadership and commitment to promoting financial inclusion

Folorunsho Alakija: Businesswoman and oil tycoon who has made significant contributions to Nigeria's oil and gas industry and known for her philanthropic work.

Obiageli Ezekwesili: Economist, educator, and activist, who served as Nigeria's Minister of education and vice president of the World Bank's Africa Division, advocating for education reforms and transparent governance.

Prof. Dora Akunyili: Former Director- General of NAFDAC, who led a relentless fight against fake drugs, saving thousands of lives.

Dr. Kemi Dasilva- Ibru: Public health physician and specialist dedicated to enhancing the well- being of women and girls through her medical practice, social activism, and public advocacy

Juliet Shimuan Chiazor: Respected figure in Nigeria's Tech Industry, known for her exceptional leadership and commitment to advancing the field as the first woman to lead Google in Nigeria.

Omobola Johnson: Tech leader who served as Nigeria's first female minister of communication Technology, developing and implementing policies to position Nigeria as a digital hub.

Florence Seriki: Founder of Omatek Ventures, the first computer manufacturing factory in Nigeria and Ghana, transforming the perception of locally made tech products.

Prof. Nnenna oti, vice chancellor, federal university of Technology, Owerri (FUTO).
Prof. Ebunoluwa Oduwole: Vice Chancellor of Ajayi Crowther University Oyo State, (appointed in 2025).
Prof. Florence Obi: Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin (UNIBEN).
Prof. Folasade Ogunsola: Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos (UNILAG).
Prof. Katetapwa Farauta: Vice Chancellor of Adamawa State University (ADSU)
Prof. Ibiyemi Olatunji- Bello: Vice Chancellor of Lagos State University (LASU).
These are the Nigerian's women who have made significant contributions to the country's development in politics and Governance, Economy and finance, Education and Health, Technology and Innovation to make the SDGs aim to address the world's most pressing challenges, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and social injustice, and promote sustainable development for all to be achieved.

The Theory of Feminist Institutionalism suggests that political and societal institutions are inherently gendered, often structured to favor men. Feminist institutionalism provides a lens to understand the systemic and structural limitations women face within formal political systems, such as political party structures, electoral laws, and governance frame works. Internationally, countries like Rwanda (61% female parliamentarians), Ethiopia, and south Africa have demonstrated strong models for female inclusion in governance. Studies have shown that female -led administrations tend to invest more in health, education, and social protection.

In contrast, Nigeria has one of the lowest representation rates in Africa. This disparity is further exacerbated by sociocultural practices, lack of political will, and systemic violence against women in politics. Among 24 countries across the world, women constitute less than 10% of the national parliament (UN women 2021: 2022). Experts have discovered factors that restrain women from participating in politics. According to Asase, (2003, p1), the awkward time during which most political meetings are held are usually at midnight. This is the major reason women do not participate in politics in Nigeria. He went ahead to say that in a highly patriarchy society like Nigeria, most women are not permitted to pass the night outside their homes, otherwise it shows a sign of both disrespect for their husbands and a mark of irresponsibility. Alexander and Welzel, (2007), postulate that economic development is central to increasing the pool of women eligible for positive relationship between women political participation and the level of national economic growth. This means that increasing

women's representation in leadership positions can drive sustainable development and that women's participation in decision- making is crucial for Nigeria's development.

Kanter (1977) works on the glass ceiling theory highlights how organizational structures can limit women's opportunities for advancement. According to Kanter, women are often established in subordinate positions, with a "glass ceiling" blocking their access to higher-level positions. This theory focuses on the structural barriers within organizations that prevent women from rising to leadership positions despite their qualifications and abilities. Kanter's work also notes that numerical minorities, such as women in male- dominated industries, often experience heightened stereotypes, and pressure to conform. This can make it difficult for women to break through the glass ceiling and achieve leadership positions. In the context of Nigeria, the glass ceiling theory can help explain the challenges women face in accessing leadership positions in politics and business. The theory suggests that these challenges are not just individual failures, but rather because of systemic barriers embedded in organizational structures.

According to the report of the 2006 Census, women constitute 48.78% of National Population, yet this numerical strength of women does not automatically translate to increase in women's participation in political activities in the country, (kukah, 2003: 162, Abdu, Nigeria CEDAW – NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008) while the global average presentation of women in National Politics is 10%. In Nigeria, the figure has hardly ever been more than 3% (Ajayi, 2007:138: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2007). 48 years after Independence, various degrees of women's participation in politics and governance and varying sets of limiting factors to women's political participation, (Adu,2008)
Source: The Nigerian CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, (2008), New York, United Nations committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women Adopted from Ojo, John Sunday, (2013)

Table 1: Senate: Number of Seats and percentage.

Year	No of Seats	Men	%	Women	Percentage (%)
1999	109	106	97.2	3	18
2003		105	96.3	4	37
2007		100	91.7	9	8.3
2011		102	93.6	7	6.4
2015		101	92.7	8	7.3

3 of the 8 women in senate were from All Progressive Congress (APC), while the remaining five were from People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Table 2: House of Representative

Year	Number of Seats	Men	%	Women	%
1999	360	347	96.4	13	3.6
2003	339	318	94.2	21	5.8
2007	360	333	92.5	27	7.5
2011	360	335	93.1	25	6.9
2015	360	346	96.1	14	3.9

Source: The Nigerian CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, (2008), New York, United Nations committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women Adopted from Ojo, John Sunday, (2013)

Table 3: State Houses of Assemble

Year	Number of Seats	Men	%	Women	%
1999	978	966	98.8	12	1.2
2003	951	912	96	39	4.0
2007	900	843	94.2	57	5.8
2011	-	832	93.1	68	6.9
2015	-	-	-	-	-

Source: The Nigerian CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, (2008), New York, United Nations committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women Adopted from Ojo, John Sunday, (2013)

Intersectional Theory by Comberhee, River (1977) and Kimberie, crenshaw (1989), the political science view of this intersectional theory has been used to analyze political power and to understand how marginalized groups are excluded from political decision-making. Intersectional theory is not about creating a hierarchy of operations or about ignoring the commonalities among different groups. Rather, it is about recognizing the complexities of social inequality and developing strategies that address the specific needs of marginalized groups.

Challenges of women in leadership:
The problem of women in leadership positions in Nigeria stems from various challenges and barriers that limit their participation. Some of the key issues include.
Traditional Gender Norms: Societal expectations and stereotypes often restrict women's roles in decision-making processes and leadership positions, hindering their full potential in politics, and business,

Limited Access to Resources: Women face financial constraints, inadequate networking opportunities, and persistent stereotypes that limit their ability to succeed in leadership roles.
Discrimination and Bias: Women encounter gender-based discrimination, sexist rhetoric, and hostile political environments that discourage their participation.

Cultural and Historical Factors: The legacy of colonialism and patriarchal systems has contributed to the marginalization of women in Nigerian society, limiting their roles and opportunities

Work- life balance: Women often struggle to balance family and professional responsibilities, feeling forced to sacrifice one for the other.

High workloads and stress: Academic leadership roles can be demanding with high expectations and limited support.
Lack of cooperation: Women often lack support from colleagues and mentors, hindering their career advancement.

Empirical Reports
Empirical data from UNDP and Nigerian National Bureau of statistics indicate that less than 5% of leadership positions in Nigeria's political and economic institutions are held by women. However, the few who break the ceiling- such as Okonjo- Iweala former Finance Minister and now Director -General of the (WTO), Amina, mohammed (UN Deputy secretary- General), and Oby Ezekwesili (former minister of Education and co- Founder of transparency International)- demonstrate remarkable leadership, and policy impact. Achieving gender equality in academic leadership requires structural changes O' Connor, (2020). An empirical research work was carried out by four prominent researchers. Thomas, Hunjo, Wyk, and makaogbu, on women's underrepresentation in higher education. The AURORA project, (2023-2024), which identified four main themes in the articles, A significant portion, n=21, explores the lived experiences of women into their ongoing challenges, leadership journeys and strategies. The second category, n=7, addresses policy documents, organizational barriers and institutional challenges related to women's underrepresentation. The third category, n=6, covers studies on leadership styles and the representations of leaders and the fourth category, n=3, focuses on studies about development, programs, and training.

Fafowora [2020], in her doctoral thesis, analyzed major Nigerian media and concluded that women in leadership roles are frequently marginalized or trivialized, reinforcing patriarchal norms that hinder broader participation in governance. Ibuot and Akanni [2023], examine visual representations across newspapers, including Vanguard and Daily Sun, and found that photographic and infographics often lack balance in representing women in leadership, favoring symbolic or ceremonial or images over substantive engagement.   Ejifoma, [2025], conducted a critical analysis of Nigerian newspaper coverage of maternal and child health and found that even health issues tied to SDG 3 are underreported or stripped of gendered leadership context.

Adinlewa and ShadeAde- Johnson [2023], studied gendered reporting on COVID- 19 and politics, noting that media coverage largely ignored the roles played by women during the

crisis, downplaying contributions aligned with SDG 16 [Peace and Justice].Empirical studies have shown that women leaders bring unique perspectives and skills to leadership positions, contributing to more effective and sustainable decision- making. Women's leadership has been linked to improved organizational performance, increased employee satisfaction, and Bett Favoring symbolic or ceremonial or images over substantive engagement.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design

This study adopted a mixed- methods approach to provide both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate women's leadership quality for sustainable development in Nigeria. The quantitative sources were from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the United Nation's Development program (UNDP), which is a global network that aims to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, and promote sustainable development in over 170 countries and territories, Research Reports and Academic Journals, Daily Report Nigeria, Nigerian Newspapers, such as the Punch, the Nation, Vanguard, and Reports from Organizations.

The qualitative data sources were from key information from 14 questionnaires by the researcher. These questionnaires were given to 50 female leaders across polities, business, academia, and civil society in Southeast of Nigeria. The questionnaires were summarized using 4 Likert Scale of Strongly Agree, (SA), Agree, (A), Strongly Disagree, (SD) Disagree, (D). Mean was used to analyze the data. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on their leadership roles, public engagement, and development impact.   The interpretation Guidelines is given thus:

Mean ≥ 3.5: Very positive response; $3.0 \leq$ Mean: < 3.5: positive response; 2.5< mean< 3.0: Neutral Response; 2.0 < mean < 2.5: Negative Response; Mean < 2.0: Very negative response.

PRESENTATION OF RESULT

Research Question 1: What is the current representation of women in leadership positions?
Table 4: Mean ratings on current representation of women in Nigerian leadership

Questions	SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	Total [TR]	Rating	Mean
Women are adequately represented in leadership positions in Nigeria's government.	5	5	20	20	95		1.9
Women hold influential positions.	5	5	30	10	105		2.1

Mean ratings here are less than 2.5 showing negative responses by prominent women. This showed that women are neither represented well nor hold influential positions in politics.

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Research question 2: How have women leaders contributed to sustainable development goals?

Table 5: Mean Ratings on contributions of female leaders to sustainable development

Questions	SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	TR	Mean
Female leaders in Nigeria prioritize sustainable development.	35	10	3	2	178	3.6
Women in leadership positions contribute significantly to Nigerian's economic growth	35	15	-	-	185	3.7S
Female leaders promote social justice and equity in Nigeria.	40	5	5	-	185	3.7

Mean ratings here are greater than 3.5 showing very positive responses by prominent women that if they are giving the opportunity to lead that they will do well.

Research question 3: What are the barriers preventing more women from entering leadership roles?

Table 6: Mean Ratings on barriers preventing women entering leadership roles to answer

Questions	SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	TR	Mean
Cultural norms and stereotype hinder women's participation in leadership.	26	14	9	1	163	3.5
Institutional biases limit women's opportunities for leadership roles.	30	15	3	2	173	3.5
Structural barriers, such as lack of mentorship, prevent women from entering leadership positions.	30	15	3	2	173	3.5

Here, mean ratings are under 3.5 showing positive responses by prominent women that a lot of barriers are preventing women from holding leadership positions.

Research question 4: What policies or reforms are necessary to promote gender-inclusive?

Table 7: Mean Ratings on policies and reforms for promoting Gender- Inclusive Leadership to answer RQ4

Question	SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	TR	Mean
Affirmation action policies are necessary to promote women's leadership in Nigeria.	35	10	3	2	178	3.6
Implementing policies that support work- life balance can increase women's participation in leadership skills.	30	20	-	-	180	3.6
Providing mentorship opportunities can help women develop leadership skills.	40	5	1	4	181	3.6
Increasing women's representation in leadership positions can drive sustainable development.	30	15	3	2	173	3.5
Women's participation in decision- making processes is crucial for Nigerians.	35	10	4	1	175	3.5
Female leaders can be unique perspectives to policy-making	30	15	5	1	176	3.5

Here, the mean ratings are 3.5 and above 3.5 showing very positive responses by prominent women who are of the opinion that policies that support work-life balance should be adopted to increase women's participation in leadership skills.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study show that women are not adequately represented in leadership positions in government and that they do not hold influential positions in Nigeria. This finding agreed with empirical support by Aladi, and Okoro. (2021), revealing that National newspapers including Vanguard consistently underrepresent women and give their stories less prominence. The study also reveals that women in leadership play a crucial role in driving sustainable development, bringing unique perspectives and approaches to addressing complex environmental and social challenges. This agrees with (Singh, et al., 2022; Ajewumi, 2025), who observed that women play vital role in sustainable development through leadership, education, and environmental stewardship, thereby complementing their roles as decision- makers and change agents. The study went ahead to reveal that cultural norms, stereotypes, institutional biases, and structural barriers limit women's opportunities for leadership roles. (Fafowora, 2020), supported this discovery, by saying that "Even when women appear in political coverage, they are often relegated to symbolic or stereotypical roles, limiting their perceived agency". The study discovers that Affirmation action policies, implementing policies that support work- life balance, provision of mentorship, increase women's representation, and policy-making opportunities should all be provided by government, institutions, and organizations for women to show their best

Key Benefits of Women in Leadership for Sustainable Development:
Diverse Perspectives: Women leaders offer distinct viewpoints, fostering innovative solutions and more inclusive decision-making processes.
Collaborative Approach: Female leaders tend to prioritize collaboration, long-term thinking, and community well-being, leading to more sustainable outcomes.
Social Equity: Women in leadership positions often emphasize social justice and equity, addressing underlying inequalities that exacerbate environmental issues.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that women in leadership make significant contributions to the sustainable development of Nigeria. However, their participation is constrained by a mix of institutional, cultural, stereotype, gender, limited access to education and training, financial barriers, balancing work and family responsibilities. It, therefore, highlights the importance of promoting women's leadership in Nigeria's government and private sector. The findings suggest that women leaders prioritize sustainable development goals, contribute to economic growth, and promote social justice and equality. The study also identifies potential strategies for promoting women's leadership, including implementing policies and programs to support

women's leadership development, providing mentorship and networking opportunities, and understanding and addressing gender biases and stereotypes. The findings of this study have implications for policymakers, business leaders, and individuals seeking to promote women's leadership and sustainable development in Nigeria. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable environment that supports the growth and development of women leaders.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Implement policies and programs to support women's leadership development

- Provide mentorship and networking opportunities for women

- Increase representation of women in decision-making positions

- Address gender biases and stereotypes

- Encourage women's participation in STEM fields

By implementing the recommendations, we can promote women's leadership and sustainable development in Nigeria, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and prosperous society.

Competing Interest

The authors have declare that no conflicting interest exist in this manuscript.

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