

GENDER MARGINALISATION AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL VOICE IN NIGERIA'S LEGISLATURE: THE CASE OF SENATOR NATASHA AKPOTI-UDUAGHAN

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ABSTRACT

The study examined gender marginalisation and women's political voice in Nigeria's "hallowed chamber", assessing the story of Senator Natasha. Gender marginalisation demonstrates women's exclusion based on a systemic underrepresentation of women in political spaces, which is often reinforced by socio-cultural norms. One of the objectives of the study examines the extent of gender marginalisation in Nigeria's political institutions. The study was anchored on the Spiral of Silence Theory by Noelle-Neumann (1974) and the Standpoint Theory by Sandra Harding (2004). The study adopted descriptive statistics and Chi-square to test the significance of the findings. A descriptive survey research design was employed, and data were collected using a Self-administered digital questionnaire via social media platforms to residents across four senatorial districts: Kogi Central, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Rivers West, and Lagos West to a sample size of 384 derived from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to respondents selected through multi-stage sampling technique. One of the findings revealed a significance value of 79.42 and 344.91 which exceeded the critical value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that cultural beliefs significantly hinder women's political participation, while supportive government policies can significantly improve their legislative involvement. The study concludes that gender marginalisation remains a major barrier to women's political voice in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that the National Assembly should reform its Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions Committee procedures to ensure impartiality, and gender sensitivity in handling complaints involving female legislators.

Keywords: Gender, marginalisation, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, political voice, public office.

Introduction

Women's political representation remains one of the most persistent indicators of democratic deficit in Nigeria. Despite constituting nearly half of the national population, women occupy less than 3.7% of seats in the federal parliament, with subnational representation similarly limited only 54 women hold positions across 990 seats in State Houses of Assembly, and fifteen states have no female legislators at all. This places Nigeria among the ten lowest-ranked countries globally on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's 2023 index of women's parliamentary representation, far short of both the Beijing Platform's 30% affirmative action threshold and Nigeria's own National Gender Policy target of 35% (Husseni, 2024; Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2025).

Nigerian politics has consistently underscored the marginalisation of women while identifying major obstacles against their political engagement, with earlier studies focusing on how the intersection of socio-economic and cultural norms leaves women on the margins of politics, alongside specific constraints such as gender-based violence (Faleti, Ibitoye, Adebayo, & Ajakaye, 2025). Similarly, recent investigations confirm that Nigerian society, operating largely on patriarchal sentiment, allocates sensitive and powerful political posts to men while deliberately marginalizing women, even where formal commitments to inclusion exist.

This dynamic crystallized in the 2025 suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, representing Kogi Central, after she publicly alleged that Senate President Godswill Akpabio had repeatedly blocked a legislative motion and tied its advancement to demands for sexual favours. The Senate instead suspended her for six months on grounds of "gross misconduct and unruly behaviour" related to a seating dispute, a sanction a court later found excessive and ordered reversed, though it simultaneously fined her for contempt of a gag order (Chiazor, 2026).

The episode reduced an already small female cohort, leaving only three women among 105 male senators, and was described by women's rights advocates as having exposed deeply entrenched gender-based violence and the systemic marginalisation of women in Nigerian politics. This case offers a timely lens for examining how institutional power, gender, and silencing intersect within Nigeria's legislature.

Statement of the Problem

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and increasing advocacy for inclusive governance, women remain significantly underrepresented in Nigeria's political institutions. Chiazor, (2026) indicates that women occupy less than 3.7% of seats in the National Assembly, while several states have no female legislators at all. Nigeria was also ranked among the lowest countries globally in women's political participation by the World Economic Forum (2025). These statistics suggest the persistence of structural and institutional barriers that marginalise women from active participation in governance and decision-making processes.

Existing studies have established that patriarchal norms, discriminatory political structures, inadequate access to campaign finance, political violence, and gender stereotypes contribute to women's exclusion from politics (Ette & Akpan-Obong, 2023; Han & Heldman, 2023; Nartey et al., 2023). This type of exclusion weakens women's political voice and limits their influence in governance. The experience of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan has renewed public attention to the issue, particularly following allegations of harassment, suspension from legislative activities, and subsequent debates surrounding gender equity in Nigeria's legislature.

However, gaps remain in the literature. Most previous studies such as Faleti, Ibitoye, Adebayo, and Ajakaye, (2025), have focused broadly on women's political participation, representation, and electoral challenges, with limited attention to how institutional mechanisms and gender-based exclusion specifically affect women's political voice within legislative

environments. Furthermore, few empirical studies have examined the Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan political narrative as a contemporary case for understanding gender marginalisation in Nigeria's legislature.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by empirically examining the extent of gender marginalisation in Nigeria's political institutions, its impact on women's participation in governance, the effect on women's political voice and representation through the Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan case, and the factors limiting women's effective participation in legislative and decision-making processes.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the extent of gender marginalisation in Nigeria's political institutions
2. To determine the impact of gender marginalisation on women's participation in governance.
3. To analyze how gender-based exclusion affects the political voice and representation of women, with particular reference to the Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan's political narrative.
4. To evaluate the factors limiting women's effective participation in Nigeria's legislative and decision-making processes.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of gender marginalisation in Nigeria's political institutions?
2. What are the impact of gender marginalisation on women's participation in governance?
3. How does gender marginalisation influence women's political voice and representation, particularly in the case of Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan's political narrative?
4. What factors hinder women's participation in Nigeria's political and legislative processes?

Review of Related Literature

Gender Marginalisation in Nigeria's Political Institutions

Nigeria's political institutions have long operated as patriarchal enclaves that structurally marginalise women from meaningful governance roles. Agbortanyi, (2024) trace this pattern to the colonial period, arguing that the marginalisation of women in Nigerian politics was intensified at independence in 1960 through the entrenchment of patriarchal traditional norms that institutionalised male dominance as a natural feature of governance. Similarly, Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023), observe that despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing women equal rights to political engagement, marginalisation has been normalised and woven deeply into the fabric of Nigeria's patriarchal political structure what they describe as a "masculinist" cultural framework that grants men automatic access to public space while confining women to the domestic sphere. This analysis aligns with findings by Adegboyega, Ojo-Oba, and Aladesawa (2024) who establish that gender disproportionate representation in power structures, skewed overwhelmingly in favour of males, is the primary driver of women's marginalisation in Nigerian governance, and recommend statutory gender quotas as a corrective mechanism.

However, scholars diverge on the depth of institutional versus cultural causation. Han and Heldman (2023) argue that socio-cultural norms are the principal mechanism, constructing an environment in which female politicians are routinely perceived as anomalies rather than legitimate equals to their male counterparts. Singh (2024), by contrast, contends that political marginalisation is actively reproduced through material structures specifically, women's limited access to leadership opportunities, financial resources, and political networks that intersect with but are not reducible to cultural attitudes.

The case of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan illustrates this intersection with devastating clarity: after accusing Senate President Godswill Akpabio of sexual harassment in February 2025, she was suspended for six months without pay, her salary frozen, security detail withdrawn, and office access denied a multi-layered institutional response that deployed procedural, financial, and physical tools to silence a lone female voice in a 109-member chamber occupied by only four women (Kato, 2025; CBS News, 2025). Nwankwo (2025) extends this critique by noting that despite the existence of laws prohibiting discrimination, women continue to experience marginalisation across multiple domains, creating compounding conditions that undermine political agency before women even enter the legislature.

Impact of Gender Marginalisation on Women's Participation in Governance

The consequences of gender marginalisation for women's effective participation in Nigeria's governance structures are well-documented, though scholars differ in their emphasis and conclusions. Chiazor (2026), drawing on Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data, reports that women occupy less than five percent of seats in Nigeria's federal parliament, with 54 women holding positions across 990 State House of Assembly seats and fifteen states having no female legislators at all. The World Economic Forum's 2025 Global Gender Gap Report, cited by Chiazor (2026), ranks Nigeria 143rd out of 144 countries in women's political participation a ranking that situates Nigeria at the very bottom of global performance on this metric. Aina-Pelemo (2025), corroborates this by noting that since Nigeria's democratic transition in 1999, the country has never produced an elected female president, a female state governor, or attained ten percent women's representation in either legislative chamber.

More critically, Kato (2025) frames the Akpoti-Uduaghan suspension as a paradigm case for understanding how governance itself is distorted by the near-total male domination of the Senate: with only four women among 105 male senators, the suspension of one Senator represented a 25 percent reduction in female legislative voice, disenfranchising the entire constituency of Kogi Central in the process. The African Women's Leadership scholars at The Republic (2025) argue that Akpoti-Uduaghan's case demonstrates that gender equity in governance goes beyond symbolic representation it is fundamentally a question of power, legitimacy, and the structural ability to resist institutional exclusion.

Gender-based Exclusion: the Effects of Political Voice and Representation of Women

Gender-based exclusion operates as a systematic mechanism that erodes both the political voice and legislative representation of women, functioning not merely as an incidental barrier but as an institutionalised feature of patriarchal governance structures. Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023), establish that women in Nigeria face a compounded form of exclusion: they encounter formidable obstacles not only in accessing decision-making positions but also in exercising substantive influence once inside them a condition they aptly describe as a "double hurdle to power." This finding aligns with the trajectory of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, who, having successfully passed a historic bill increasing women's representation in Nigeria's legislature, subsequently became the target of a process that culminated in her suspension from the Senate after she filed a petition of sexual harassment against Senate President Godswill Akpabio in March 2025 a sequence that multiple gender advocates characterised as deliberate institutional retaliation (Feminegra, 2025; Mbamalu, 2025).

The exclusion of women's political voice in Nigeria is therefore not an aberration but a system, one in which the Akpoti-Uduaghan case functions simultaneously as symptom and symbol. Chiazor (2026) argues that women's political underrepresentation constitutes a critical

democratic deficit because policies are less likely to reflect the priorities of half the population when women are absent from legislative deliberation.

Factors Limiting Women's Effective Participation in Nigeria's Legislature

Barriers constraining women's legislative participation in Nigeria reveals a convergent set of structural, cultural, financial, and physical factors, though authors differ on their relative weight and interaction. Chiazor (2026) identifies political violence and gendered media bias as twin pillars of exclusion, observing that Nigerian elections are frequently characterised by intimidation and violence, making female participants fearful for their physical and online safety. She points to the case of Funke Akindele during the 2023 Lagos governorship elections, where personal and marital details were weaponised to undermine her candidacy, reflecting a disturbing pattern in which women face scrutiny of their private lives rather than their policy positions.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2023) identifies four primary structural factors driving women's attrition during electoral primaries: political party gatekeeping, conservative cultural norms, differential competitiveness between executive and legislative contests, and the combined effect of women's novice candidature status and low electoral persistence following initial failures.

Adida (2025), presenting research at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute, identifies a central paradox: although women's formal rights to vote and contest elections are constitutionally guaranteed, deep gender gaps persist in informal political participation including contact with government officials and community-level political engagement that may be more consequential in Nigeria's hybrid democracy than formal electoral exclusion. Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023) add that women face a "double hurdle" to power, encountering formidable barriers not only to accessing decision-making positions but also to exercising substantive influence once within them a finding directly illustrated by Akpoti-Uduaghan's experience, where procedural mechanisms were deployed to neutralise her voice despite her elected status (Ozor, 2025; Falola, 2025).

Financial barriers constitute a further critical dimension. Nartey, Bahar, and Nabunya (2023) argue that women's limited access to campaign financing and political party networks creates structural ceilings that legal reforms alone cannot dismantle, a position that contrasts with Han and Heldman's (2023) who both emphasis on the normative cultural barriers as the primary obstacle. The replacement of Akpoti-Uduaghan in Nigeria's delegation to the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women with a male senator (Pulse Nigeria, 2026) illustrates how institutional mechanisms interact with informal gatekeeping to compound exclusion across multiple political spaces simultaneously.

Theoretical Framework

Standpoint Theory and the Spiral of Silence Theory

This study is grounded in two theoretically complementary frameworks: Standpoint Theory, rooted in feminist epistemology, and the Spiral of Silence Theory, drawn from political communication scholarship. Standpoint Theory, developed through foundational contributions by Dorothy Smith, Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, and Patricia Hill Collins, posits that social location shaped by gender, race, and class fundamentally determines what individuals are positioned to know, experience, and articulate (Harding, 1991; Collins, 2000).

Feminist standpoint theorists make three principal claims: knowledge is socially situated; marginalised groups are situated in ways that render certain knowledge more accessible to them; and research on power relations should begin from the lives of the marginalised (IEP, 2024). Applied to the present study, this framework illuminates how women legislators in Nigeria, and

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan specifically, possess a gendered standpoint on institutional power that generates critical knowledge about governance inequities knowledge that the patriarchal legislature actively works to suppress.

The Spiral of Silence Theory, introduced by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974), proposes that individuals who perceive their opinions to be in the minority progressively self-censor to avoid social isolation, thereby generating a self-reinforcing cycle in which dominant views grow louder while minority perspectives disappear from public discourse. Noelle-Neumann identifies three conditions that drive silencing: the fear of isolation, the monitoring of public opinion through a quasi-statistical sense, and the suppression of minority views through social sanctions. In some cultures, women's perception of language and public opinion forces them into silence (Scheufele & Moy, 2024).

The justification for combining these frameworks lies in their structural and conceptual complementarity. Standpoint Theory explains what Nigerian women legislators know by virtue of their social location within a patriarchal political institution; Spiral of Silence explains why that knowledge remains unarticulated, suppressed, or publicly invisible. Together, they capture both the subjective dimension of gendered political knowledge and the communicative and institutional mechanisms that silence it. Standpoint Theory is centripetal, drawing attention inward to the unique knowledge generated by marginalisation; Spiral of Silence is centrifugal, tracing the outward social forces that prevent that knowledge from being heard.

Applied to this study's conceptual structure, Standpoint Theory directly illuminates gender marginalisation in Nigeria's political institutions by foregrounding how women's exclusion from governance generates a distinct epistemic perspective on institutional inequity, exemplified by Akpoti-Uduaghan's unique vantage point as one of four female senators. The Spiral of Silence, in turn, explains the factors limiting women's effective participation in Nigeria's legislature by mapping how institutional intimidation, procedural weaponisation, and gendered social norms combine to silence female legislative voices even, as the Akpoti-Uduaghan case demonstrates, through suspension, financial sanction, and international exclusion. Together, the theories provide a unified conceptual lens: marginalisation produces a standpoint of exclusion which institutional and social mechanisms of silencing then enforce and deepen, rendering women's legislative participation perpetually precarious.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to obtain systematic, factual data on gender marginalisation as it relates to female senatorial representation in Nigeria's National Assembly. The design was considered appropriate for its capacity to capture respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural dispositions in a structured and replicable manner (Creswell, 2018). Self-administered digital questionnaires were disseminated via social media platforms to residents across four senatorial districts: Kogi Central, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Rivers West, and Lagos West.

These districts were purposively selected on the grounds that each is currently represented by a female senator, thereby providing a contextually relevant basis for examining gendered legislative experiences. Collectively, the selected districts span three of Nigeria's six geo-political zones, enhancing the potential for broader national generalisation. The estimated populations were as follows: Kogi Central (1,235,000); FCT Abuja municipal area (2,060,000); Rivers West (2,366,158); and Lagos West (8,280,000) (City Population, 2026). Given the considerable scale of this combined population, a sample of 384 respondents was determined in accordance with the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) statistical sampling table.

A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to ensure adequate representation of population segments across constituent local government areas within each district, whilst simultaneously reducing logistical, financial, and temporal constraints inherent in large-scale survey administration. Face and content validity of the research instrument were established through expert review by seasoned scholars in communication and social science research. A pilot study conducted amongst 20 respondents outside the study area confirmed the instrument's clarity and internal consistency, yielding a reliability coefficient exceeding the accepted threshold of 0.70. Of the 384 questionnaires distributed, 44 persons provide no response hence, 344 yielded valid responses, representing a return rate of 89.5% classified as excellent by Mugenda and Mugenda (2019). Data were subsequently analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi-Square inferential tests to determine patterns and their statistical significance.

Ethical Considerations: Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. Respondents were assured of complete anonymity and confidentiality, with no personally identifiable information collected or retained. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any point without consequence. The study was conducted in strict accordance with established ethical standards governing social science research.

Data Presentations

Table One:

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 344)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	148	43.0
	Female	196	57.0
	Total	344	100.0
Marital Status	Single	214	62.2
	Married	118	34.3
	Divorced/Widowed	12	3.5
	Total	344	100.0
Age Bracket (Years)	18–25	96	27.9
	26–35	144	41.9
	36–45	68	19.8
	46 and above	36	10.4
	Total	344	100.0
Occupation	Student	102	29.7
	Civil/Public Servant	84	24.4
	Self-employed	98	28.5
	Private Sector Employee	60	17.4
	Total	344	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2026

Table one reveals that the majority of respondents were female with 196 respondents (57.0%), while males constituted 148 respondents (43.0%). Most respondents were single, accounting for 214 respondents (62.2%), followed by married respondents with 118 (34.3%). Respondents aged 26–35 years formed the largest group with 144 respondents (41.9%), indicating active youth participation. In terms of occupation, students recorded the highest frequency with 102 respondents (29.7%), closely followed by self-employed respondents with 98 (28.5%), showing diverse socio-economic representation in the study.

Psychographic Responses of Respondents (N = 344)

Decision Rule: A mean score of 3.00 and above indicates acceptance of an item, while a mean score below 3.00 indicates rejection. For the inferential analysis, the Chi-square (χ^2) test was employed at the 0.05 level of significance. An item is considered statistically significant when the calculated χ^2 value exceeds the critical χ^2 value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom ($df = 4$) and $p < .05$. Where the calculated χ^2 value is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected; otherwise, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2:

RQ1: What is the extent of gender marginalisation in Nigeria's political institutions?

Items	SA	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean	Remark
Women experience discrimination in Nigeria's political institutions.	210 61%	42 12%	2 1%	56 16%	34 10%	344 100%	3.98	Accepted
Female politicians are often denied equal opportunities in leadership positions.	197 57%	66 19%	4 2%	48 14%	29 8%	344 100%	4.03	Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2026

The findings reveal that 61% of respondents strongly agreed that women experience discrimination in Nigeria's political institutions, while 57% strongly agreed that female politicians are denied equal leadership opportunities. The mean scores of 3.98 and 4.03 respectively exceeded the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating acceptance of both statements.

Inferential Statistics (Chi-Square Test)

Item	χ^2 Calculated	df	χ^2 Critical	p-value	Decision
Women experience discrimination in Nigeria's political institutions	385.24	4	9.488	< .05	Significant
Female politicians are often denied equal opportunities in leadership positions	329.21	4	9.488	< .05	Significant

The Chi-square analyses revealed statistically significant differences in respondents' opinions regarding discrimination against women in political institutions ($\chi^2 = 385.24$, $df = 4$, $p < .05$) and unequal leadership opportunities for female politicians ($\chi^2 = 329.21$, $df = 4$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3:

RQ2: What are the impact of gender marginalisation on women's participation in governance?

Items	SA	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean	Remark
Gender discrimination discourages many women from actively participating in governance and political activities.	190 55%	111 32%	4 1%	19 6%	20 6%	344 100%	4.26	Accepted
Experiences of marginalisation reduce women's confidence to seek leadership positions in government.	192 56%	75 22%	4 1%	42 12%	31 9%	344 100%	4.03	Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2026

The findings indicate that gender marginalisation significantly affects women's participation in governance. A majority of respondents agreed that gender discrimination discourages women from engaging in political activities (87%), while 78% agreed that

marginalisation reduces women's confidence to seek leadership positions. The mean scores of 4.26 and 4.03, respectively, exceeded the criterion mean of 3.00, leading to their acceptance.

Inferential Statistics (Chi-Square Test)

Items	χ^2 Calculated	df	χ^2 Critical	p-value	Decision
Gender discrimination discourages many women from actively participating in governance and political activities.	340.66	4	9.488	< .05	Significant
Experiences of marginalisation reduce women's confidence to seek leadership positions in government.	318.80	4	9.488	< .05	Significant

The Chi-square results revealed statistically significant agreement among respondents regarding the effects of gender marginalisation on women's participation in governance. The calculated χ^2 values of 340.66 and 318.80 exceeded the critical value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that gender marginalisation significantly hinders women's political participation and leadership aspirations.

Table 4:

RQ3: How does gender marginalisation influence women’s political voice and representation, particularly in the case of Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan’s political narrative?

Items	SA	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean	Remark
Gender marginalisation reduces women’s political voice in Nigeria.	130 38%	82 24%	10 3%	90 26%	32 9%	344 100%	3.55	Accepted
The experience of Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan reflects the challenges faced by women in Nigerian politics.	186 54%	43 13%	6 2%	67 19%	42 12%	344 100%	3.77	Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2026

The findings show that respondents perceive gender marginalisation as a factor reducing women’s political voice in Nigeria. While 62% agreed that gender marginalisation limits women’s political expression, 67% agreed that the experience of Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan reflects broader challenges faced by women in politics. The mean scores of 3.55 and 3.77 exceeded the benchmark of 3.00, indicating acceptance.

Inferential Statistics (Chi-Square Test)

Items	χ^2 Calculated	Df	χ^2 Critical	p-value	Decision
Gender marginalisation reduces women’s political voice in Nigeria.	136.87	4	9.488	< .05	Significant
The experience of Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan reflects the challenges faced by women in Nigerian politics.	220.20	4	9.488	< .05	Significant

The Chi-square results indicate that respondents' views were statistically significant. The calculated χ^2 values of 136.87 and 220.20 were greater than the critical value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming

that gender marginalisation significantly influences women’s political voice and representation, as reflected in Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan’s political experience.

Table 5:

RQ4: What factors hinder women’s participation in Nigeria’s political and legislative processes?

Items	SA	A	U	SD	D	Total	Mean	Remark
Cultural beliefs do not discourage women from active participation in politics.	73 21%	82 24%	16 5%	92 27%	81 23%	344 100%	2.92	Rejected
Government policies and public support can improve women’s participation in legislative processes.	198 57%	88 26%	0 0%	27 8%	31 9%	344 100%	4.15	Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2026

The findings reveal that respondents disagreed with the statement that cultural beliefs do not discourage women’s political participation, as reflected by the mean score of 2.92. This suggests that cultural beliefs remain a barrier to women’s involvement in politics. Conversely, respondents strongly agreed that government policies and public support can enhance women’s participation in legislative processes, with a mean score of 4.15.

Inferential Statistics (Chi-Square Test)

Items	χ^2 Calculated	Df	χ^2 Critical	p-value	Decision
Cultural beliefs do not discourage women from active participation in politics.	79.42	4	9.488	< .05	Significant
Government policies and public support can improve women’s participation in legislative processes.	344.91	4	9.488	< .05	Significant

The Chi-square analysis showed that the responses were statistically significant. The calculated χ^2 values of 79.42 and 344.91 exceeded the critical value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that cultural beliefs significantly hinder women’s political participation, while supportive government policies can significantly improve their legislative involvement.

Discussions

The findings indicate that gender marginalisation remains prevalent within Nigeria’s political institutions. The majority of respondents agreed that women experience discrimination and are denied equal opportunities in leadership positions. The statistically significant Chi-square values further confirm that these perceptions are widely shared among respondents. This finding aligns with studies by Aina (2020), Okeke (2021), and Nwankwo (2022), who found that patriarchal structures and institutional biases continue to limit women’s political advancement in Nigeria. The result also supports the position of UN Women (2023), which observed that women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions despite democratic reforms. Similarly, studies by Krook (2017), Bauer (2020), and Tripp (2021) revealed that systemic discrimination constrains women’s access to political power globally. The experience of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan therefore reflects broader institutional barriers confronting women seeking political leadership and representation in Nigeria.

The findings demonstrate that gender marginalisation significantly discourages women from participating in governance and reduces their confidence to pursue leadership positions. The high levels of agreement among respondents and the statistically significant Chi-square results suggest that discrimination remains a major impediment to women's political engagement. This finding corroborates earlier studies by Inter-Parliamentary Union (2023) who found that women often encounter structural and psychological barriers that undermine their political ambitions. The findings also support the conclusions of Kabeer (2015), Afolabi et al. (2019), and Tamale (2020), who reported that exclusionary political cultures negatively affect women's willingness to engage in governance. Consequently, the marginalisation experienced by women in Nigeria limits not only their political participation but also their capacity to contribute meaningfully to democratic governance and national development.

The findings reveal that gender marginalisation significantly weakens women's political voice and representation in Nigeria. Respondents agreed that marginalisation limits women's political expression and that Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan's experience exemplifies the challenges confronting female politicians. The significant Chi-square values indicate strong consensus among respondents. This result supports the studies by National Democratic Institute (2022) and International IDEA (2023) who found that women's political voices are frequently marginalised through institutional exclusion and societal stereotypes. Research by Weldon (2018), Waylen (2017), and Rai (2019) also demonstrates that women politicians face unique challenges that affect their visibility and influence. Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan's political narrative therefore highlights the broader struggles women encounter in seeking equal representation and recognition within Nigeria's legislative institutions.

The findings identify cultural beliefs as a significant obstacle to women's political participation, while government policies and public support were perceived as mechanisms capable of enhancing women's involvement in legislative processes. The rejection of the statement concerning the absence of cultural barriers indicates that respondents recognise the continuing influence of traditional norms on political participation. This finding is consistent with studies by Tamale (1999), Aina (2020), and UNDP (2022), which found that patriarchal cultural values often discourage women from pursuing political careers. Likewise, research by Yoon (2018), Afolabi et al. (2019), and Krook and Norris (2014) highlighted the restrictive effects of social expectations and gender stereotypes on women's political engagement. The strong support for government intervention aligns with recommendations from UN Women (2023) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2023), which advocate affirmative policies, public awareness campaigns, and institutional reforms. These measures are essential for overcoming barriers and promoting women's effective participation in Nigeria's political and legislative processes.

Conclusion

This study investigated gender marginalisation and women's political voice in Nigeria's legislature, with particular reference to the political narrative of Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan. The findings revealed that gender discrimination remains prevalent within Nigeria's political institutions, limiting women's access to leadership opportunities and decision-making positions. The study further established that gender marginalisation discourages women's participation in governance, reduces their confidence to seek political office, and weakens their political voice and representation. Respondents also identified cultural beliefs and patriarchal norms as significant barriers to women's political advancement, while government support and inclusive policies were viewed as critical factors for improving women's participation.

The study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between gender marginalisation and women's political representation in contemporary Nigeria, while situating the experience of Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan within broader structural challenges faced by women in politics. However, the study was limited to residents of Kogi Central, the FCT Abuja, Rivers West, and Lagos West Senatorial District relied on survey responses, which may not fully capture the perspectives of women politicians and political institutions nationwide. Future studies should adopt mixed-method approaches involving interviews with female legislators, political party officials, and civil society organisations across different geopolitical zones to provide deeper insights into institutional and gender-related barriers in Nigerian politics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The National Assembly should reform its Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions Committee procedures to ensure transparency, impartiality, due process, and gender sensitivity in handling complaints involving female legislators. Independent review mechanisms should be established to prevent the abuse of disciplinary procedures for political or gender-based exclusion.
2. The Judiciary, particularly the Federal High Court and appellate courts, should ensure strict enforcement of reinstatement orders and judgments affecting elected representatives. Relevant institutions, including the National Assembly and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), should comply promptly with valid court orders to safeguard democratic representation and the political rights of women.
3. The National Assembly should enact stronger gender-equality legislation, including the reintroduction and passage of gender-inclusive constitutional amendments, affirmative action policies, and political party reforms that guarantee increased representation of women in elective and appointive positions.
4. Government agencies and advocacy institutions such as the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), INEC, civil society organisations, women's rights groups, and development partners should intensify advocacy, leadership training, legal support, and public enlightenment programmes aimed at combating gender discrimination, challenging harmful cultural stereotypes, and promoting women's participation in politics and governance.

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