



## Beijing Convention of 1995 and Women Political Liberation in Nigeria

Augustina Ikechukwu, PhD <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

### Abstract:

Despite global advancements in women's political participation, Nigeria lagged significantly behind. The Beijing Convention, which advocated for gender equality and women's empowerment in politics, had not been fully realized in Nigeria. The country's political landscape remained predominantly male-dominated, with systemic barriers hindering women's involvement in decision-making processes. Cultural norms, socio-economic challenges, and inadequate legal frameworks contributed to this disparity, limiting the effective implementation of the Beijing Convention's objectives. This persistent underrepresentation of women in politics undermined democratic principles and hindered comprehensive socio-economic development. Therefore, the study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Beijing Convention in enhancing women's political participation in Nigeria. The study was anchored on the intersectional feminism theory, examining how overlapping social identities influenced women's political participation. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing content analysis to examine relevant literature, policies, and case studies. The findings revealed that systemic barriers, cultural norms, and inadequate legal frameworks significantly hindered women's political participation in Nigeria. Effective implementation of the Beijing Convention required addressing these multifaceted challenges. The study recommended developing comprehensive policies and programs to support women's political empowerment and ensure their active participation in governance.

**Keywords:** Beijing Convention, Liberation, Women's Participation, Politics.

**Citation:** Ikechukwu, A. . (2024). Beijing Convention of 1995 and Women Political Liberation in Nigeria. *American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research*, 5(7), 1–12. Retrieved from <https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr/article/view/2826>

Received: 21 May 2024

Revised: 29 May 2024

Accepted: 20 Jun 2024

Published: 12 Jul 2024



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution- 4.0 International License (CC - BY 4.0)

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the rights of women have been abused. Women were subjected to the traditional role of taking care of the household and never to interfere with issues of governance or leadership. Beyond this, women were relegated to the background in all spheres of human endeavour. Also, women rights to socio-political and economic dimensions of society were undermined.

Even in the so-called advanced societies of Western Europe and North America, women rights were undermined. In fact, it was in 1918 that women were given the right; and in the United States of America, women were not given the right to vote until 1920. In these societies, it took centuries of protests before women were enfranchised. To be sure, the struggle for women Liberation and their right to vote coincided with the first wave of feminism in the 19th century.

It was after the formation of the United Nations in 1945 that 'women rights' became 'human rights'. Burkett (2020) maintains that it was in the 1960s and 70s that equal rights and opportunities and greater personal freedom for women became a focal point. Burkett (2020) further stated that this coincided with second wave of feminism. Second wave feminism of the women's rights movement touched on every area of women experience including politics, work, the family, and sexuality.

The above buttresses the fact that women are entitled to enjoy the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as other individuals. International human rights treaties require State parties to take proactive steps to ensure that women's human rights are respected by law and to eliminate discrimination, inequalities, and practices that negatively affect women's rights. Under international human rights law, women may also be entitled to specific additional rights such as those concerning reproductive healthcare (International Justice Resource Centre, 2022). As a particularly vulnerable group, women have special status and protection within the United Nations and regional human rights systems. International human rights treaties prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender and also require States to ensure the protection and realization of women rights in all areas – from property ownership and freedom from violence, to equal access to education and participation in government (International Justice Resource Centre, 2022).

Over the years, the issue of gender equality has occupied a pivotal place in intellectual discourse. It has assumed a central place in government policies and as such academic literature has created a link between gender equality and national development. In essence, equality of gender is now a sine qua non to national development. This stems primarily from the fact that when women participate in all spheres of life, they bring fresh ideas to the table which contribute to national development. As a matter of fact, gender equality is now used as an indicator or indices by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to measure the level of human development in a country. Put somewhat differently, gender equality is one of the indicators that dictate a country's place or rank in the Human Development Index (HDI). Kasu(2006) contends that gender equality is one of the indicators of Sustainable Human Development (SHD) and one of the indicators of success of social development programs. Russet, et al, (2010, p.87) aver that;

Expanding the social and economic opportunities for women reduces rate of populations and introduces an otherwise untapped reservoir of talent into the national economy. Thus, gender equality is not only a human right issue but also part of an effective strategy for economic development.

In Nigeria and Rivers state in particular, vast majority of women are not conscious of their marginalization and subjugation in society. They have come to accept their position in society as natural. In essence, most of them are not conscious of the fact that their positions in all spheres of human endeavours are rooted in cultural norms and they are being programmed to think in a particular way. The few who are conscious have only done so through the re-socialization process in higher institutions. It is expedient to note that, vast majority of the so-called educated ones are still under the yoke of gender stereotypes. In this regard Oke (1992, p.2) avers that to worsen the deplorable situation, some women have cowardly succumbed to the superior ignorance of men. The self-defeatist attitude has relegated some women to the background. In fact, Osakwe (2005) cited in Obat and Amie-Ogan, (2010, p.25) rightly noted that uneducated women breed ignorance and poverty, and the two form a vicious cycle resulting to vulnerability and noiselessness.

Within the context of this study, women have been given lesser roles to play in politics and other spheres compared to their male counterparts. This is based on the gendered

ideas of society, and more often than not, it is rooted in cultural norms. In this regard, Egwu (2007) as cited in Mundi (2013) remarked that a quick look at the status of women in Nigeria shows that women are marginalized in all aspects of life ranging from education, employment, political participation, reproductive health, etc. This is in spite of the governments' various commitments at the international, regional and national levels. In particular, Nigeria endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which provides for Affirmative Action Policy and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment. Similarly, the NGP (National Gender Policy) has been formulated to promote 35% Affirmative Action (AA) because its strategy offers one of the surest guarantees to the meaningful participation of women in decision making and process of governance. Mundi (2013) clearly noted that:

In an effort to implement the 35% AA provided for by (NGP) Gender activities and civil society organizations such as the national coalition on AA has organized programmes of advocacy, training and research on AA to encourage female political participation (p.12).

While Kareem (2021) also reported that out of the available 1533 political seats available at each election, women representation over the years has been less than 6% whereas in 1999 2.5% of women representation was recorded. Those of subsequent years are 3.7% in 2003, 5.4% in 2007, 6% in 2011 and 4.7% in 2015. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the Beijing Convention of 1995 and women political participation in Nigeria,

### **Statement of the Problem**

Numerous studies have been carried out to ascertain the extent to which the Beijing Convention of 1995 promotes women's liberation (Makama et al, 2013). However, no such study has been carried out on how non-implementation of 35% Affirmative Action (AA) as stipulated by the National Gender Policy (NGP) undermines women's right to political participation in Rivers State. Several factors are responsible for the less political participation of women in Nigeria and Rivers State in particular. These factors range from socio-cultural norms, religion, financial constraints, poor political education, and political factors. What follows is a discussion of how these factors undermine women's right to political participation in Nigeria

Socio-cultural norms undermine women rights to political participation. Over the course of time, different societies have assigned lesser roles and functions to women, just because women are considered as the weaker sex. This state of affairs has become a general norm and it has become part of the culture of so many societies especially the patriarchal male dominated societies. Thus, every generation that is born into the society accept the existing orthodox notions of gender relations as if it is natural. The inter play of socio-cultural norms seek to down play the right of women to actively participate in politics. Sadly, this is the case in Rivers State in electoral positions and political appointments. In this connection, Alapiki (2010) contends that;

Numerous societies have culture restrictions that keep women subordinate, there exist some way of restricting women from attaining equal status with men in all spheres of life. Apart from this widespread discrimination against women, some culture factors had contributed in no small measure to the lack of interest in public life on the part of women (p.179).

Due to discrimination against women in the labour market, most Nigerian women who work are still engaged in informal sector such as petty-trading, food processing, hair dressing, tailoring etc. It is expedient to note that the income derived from these is relatively low. As Momsen (2004, p.2) noted, male mobility is higher than female, both between places and between jobs, and more women are being left alone to support children. This has pushed women away from the political space and it accounts for why

women's political participation is low, compared to their male counterparts.

Another area of concern is to ascertain how religion serves as impediment to women rights to political participation. This is a major problem in Nigeria as a whole where the major religions, namely, Christianity and Islam undermine the rights of women in society, including their rights to political participation. The above point is reiterated by Oluyemi, (2016) who aptly noted that, both Christianity and Islam do not accord women much role in public life, and same is obtainable in most cultural values, where women are seen culturally as quite submissive and image of virtue. However, they are not to be seen in public domain. And so, it is a challenge to women participation in politics, more so, women found in the corridor of politics are not often religious in practice.

There are also political impediments to women's right to political participation in Rivers State. Among political parties, there is less effort to support a female aspirant to represent a given political party as the flag bearer. Speaking generally, Ouafa Hajji, founder president of Jossour Forum of Moroccan Women (cited by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) noted that "in political parties, when a woman succeeds in affirming herself, there is a huge mobilisation against her".

The Beijing Convention of 1995 appears to be the fourth world convention on women which took place in China and unanimously successfully recommended 30% affirmative action for them. However, in Nigeria, the National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% to ensure more inclusive women participation in politics. However, the evidence on ground seems that such noble attempt only pays lip service to Affirmative Action (AA). It is more in theory, than in practice. Therefore, this study was to examine the Beijing Convention of 1995 and women liberation in Nigeria, with focus on its implications for the political participation in Rivers State, 1999-2021. To this end, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between Beijing convention and women liberation in Nigeria?
- 2) What are the factors affecting women liberation in Nigeria?

## **Literature Review**

### **Politics**

Understanding politics is crucial for comprehending how societies organize themselves, make collective decisions, and address conflicts and challenges. Scholars and thinkers have approached the definition of politics from various perspectives, reflecting the complexity and diversity of political life. This article explores distinct definitions of politics, providing a comprehensive overview of the concept.

Aristotle, often regarded as the father of political science, provided one of the earliest and most influential definitions of politics. In his seminal work, "Politics," Aristotle defined politics as the study of the polis, or city-state, and the art of governance. He argued that politics is fundamentally about the pursuit of the common good and the organization of society to achieve justice and virtue. For Aristotle, politics involves citizens participating in decision-making processes to shape their collective destiny and promote the well-being of the community (Aristotle, 2013). This classical definition emphasizes the ethical and communal aspects of politics, highlighting its role in fostering a just and harmonious society.

Weber (2019), a prominent sociologist and political economist, offered a different perspective on politics. In his work "Politics as a Vocation," Weber defined politics as the struggle for power and the legitimate use of force within a given territory. According to Weber, politics is fundamentally about the authority to govern and the mechanisms through which power is exercised and maintained (Weber, 2019). He introduced the

concept of the "monopoly of legitimate violence," which underscores the state's unique role in enforcing laws and maintaining order. Weber's definition focuses on the pragmatic and institutional dimensions of politics, emphasizing the dynamics of power and authority in shaping political structures and processes.

Easton (2017), a prominent political scientist, provided another influential definition of politics. Easton defined politics as the "authoritative allocation of values" within a society. In his systems theory approach, Easton viewed politics as a system of interactions through which values are articulated, debated, and allocated by authoritative institutions (Easton, 2017). This definition emphasizes the processual and systemic nature of politics, highlighting the importance of institutions and procedures in resolving conflicts and distributing resources. Easton's perspective underscores the role of political systems in managing societal demands and maintaining stability through the continuous allocation of values.

Arendt (2018), a renowned political theorist, offered a unique and thought-provoking definition of politics. In her book "The Human Condition," Arendt defined politics as the space of appearance where individuals come together to engage in speech and action, creating a shared public realm (Arendt, 2018). For Arendt, politics is not merely about governance or power but about the capacity for collective deliberation and the creation of meaning through public discourse. She emphasized the importance of plurality, freedom, and participation in political life, arguing that politics is an arena for human interaction and the expression of diverse perspectives. Arendt's definition highlights the communicative and participatory dimensions of politics, focusing on the potential for individuals to shape their world through dialogue and action.

Drawing from the aforementioned definitions, politics can be personally understood as a multifaceted process that encompasses the ethical pursuit of the common good (Aristotle), the struggle for power and legitimate authority (Weber), the systemic allocation of values (Easton), and the creation of a shared public realm through collective deliberation and action (Arendt). Politics involves the organization and governance of society, the distribution and contestation of power and resources, and the engagement of individuals and communities in shaping their collective destiny. It is both an institutional and a participatory process, where ethical considerations, power dynamics, systemic interactions, and communicative practices converge. Politics shapes and is shaped by the interactions between individuals, communities, and institutions, reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of human societies. It is through politics that societies navigate conflicts, make collective decisions, and strive for justice, stability, and progress.

### **Women's Participation**

Women's participation in various spheres of society has become a pivotal issue in discussions on gender equality and development. The term encompasses women's involvement in political, economic, social, and cultural activities. Understanding women's participation is essential for devising strategies to enhance gender equality and empower women. This section explores four distinct definitions of women's participation, highlighting its multifaceted nature and the critical roles women play in different domains.

**Political Participation:** Women's political participation refers to the involvement of women in the political process, including voting, running for office, and engaging in political activism. According to Nwankwo (2017), political participation of women encompasses their ability to influence decisions and policies that affect their lives through formal and informal political activities. This definition emphasizes the importance of women having a voice and representation in political institutions, which

is crucial for achieving gender equality in governance. Nwankwo argues that increasing women's political participation can lead to more inclusive and equitable policymaking, addressing issues that disproportionately affect women, such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and economic inequality. Political participation also includes women's roles in grassroots movements, advocacy groups, and civil society organizations, where they can mobilize and advocate for change.

### **Economic Participation**

Economic participation involves women's engagement in the labor market, entrepreneurship, and economic decision-making. Akinyemi and Isiugo-Abanihe (2019) define women's economic participation as their involvement in paid employment, business ownership, and access to economic resources and opportunities. This definition highlights the importance of economic independence and financial empowerment for women. Economic participation allows women to contribute to their households and communities, enhancing their social status and reducing poverty. Akinyemi and Isiugo-Abanihe emphasize that barriers such as discrimination, lack of access to education and training, and limited financial resources must be addressed to improve women's economic participation. By promoting equal opportunities in the workforce and supporting women entrepreneurs, societies can benefit from the full potential of their female populations, leading to broader economic growth and development.

**Social Participation:** Social participation refers to women's involvement in social networks, community activities, and civic life. Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2018) define social participation as women's active engagement in social organizations, volunteer work, and community development projects. This definition underscores the role of women in fostering social cohesion and addressing community needs. Social participation allows women to build supportive networks, share knowledge, and collaborate on initiatives that improve the quality of life in their communities. Ogunlela and Mukhtar argue that promoting women's social participation can enhance community resilience, promote social justice, and ensure that women's voices are heard in public discourse. Efforts to increase social participation include creating inclusive community spaces, supporting women's groups, and encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement.

**Cultural Participation:** Cultural participation involves women's engagement in cultural activities, including the arts, heritage preservation, and cultural expression. According to Olatunji (2018), cultural participation encompasses women's involvement in cultural events, artistic productions, and the preservation of cultural traditions. This definition highlights the significance of women's contributions to cultural diversity and heritage. Cultural participation allows women to express their identities, preserve their cultural heritage, and contribute to the cultural vibrancy of their communities. Olatunji emphasizes that promoting cultural participation requires addressing barriers such as gender stereotypes, lack of access to cultural resources, and limited representation in cultural institutions. By encouraging women's involvement in cultural activities, societies can foster greater cultural inclusivity and celebrate the diverse contributions of women to cultural life.

Drawing from the aforementioned definitions, women's participation can be personally understood as the active and meaningful involvement of women in all aspects of society, including political, economic, social, and cultural domains. It encompasses women's ability to influence decisions, access opportunities, and contribute to their communities and societies. Women's participation is crucial for achieving gender equality and empowering women, as it ensures that their voices are heard and their contributions are recognized. It involves breaking down barriers that limit women's involvement, such as discrimination, lack of access to resources, and cultural norms. By promoting inclusive

policies and creating supportive environments, societies can enhance women's participation and harness the full potential of their female populations. Women's participation is not only a matter of justice and equality but also a driver of social, economic, and cultural development, benefiting the entire society.

### **Women Liberation**

Women liberation, also known as women's emancipation, refers to the movement aimed at achieving equal rights and opportunities for women across various facets of society, including political, social, economic, and cultural domains. This concept has evolved over time and has been interpreted in multiple ways by different scholars and activists. Women liberation has its roots in the feminist movements that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to historian Gerda Lerner (1993), women liberation is the struggle for the attainment of equal rights for women, which began with the suffrage movement aimed at securing voting rights. Lerner emphasized that this early phase of the movement was crucial in laying the groundwork for subsequent waves of feminism that focused on broader issues such as workplace equality, reproductive rights, and freedom from gender-based violence. This definition underscores the historical progression of women's rights and highlights the foundational role of early feminists in advocating for legal and political reforms.

Walby (2011) defines women liberation as the process of dismantling patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender inequality in social and cultural contexts. Walby argues that liberation involves challenging and transforming the societal norms and practices that marginalize women and restrict their opportunities. This perspective highlights the importance of addressing cultural attitudes and stereotypes that contribute to the subjugation of women. Walby's definition encompasses a broad range of issues, from media representation to education and family dynamics, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to achieving true gender equality.

Duflo (2012) views women liberation through the lens of economic empowerment. Duflo asserts that economic independence is a critical component of liberation, as it enables women to make autonomous decisions and improves their overall quality of life. According to Duflo, policies aimed at increasing women's access to education, employment, and financial resources are essential for achieving liberation. She highlights the positive impact of economic empowerment on societal development, noting that when women are economically empowered, they are more likely to invest in their families and communities, leading to broader social benefits.

Phillips (2020) focuses on the role of political participation in women liberation. Phillips defines liberation as the equal representation and involvement of women in political decision-making processes. She argues that true liberation cannot be achieved without women's voices being heard in the political arena. This includes not only increasing the number of women in political offices but also ensuring that women's interests and perspectives are adequately represented in policy-making. Phillips emphasizes the importance of institutional reforms and affirmative action policies to address the systemic barriers that prevent women from participating fully in political life.

Drawing from these diverse perspectives, women liberation can be comprehensively defined as the multifaceted process of achieving gender equality through the dismantling of patriarchal structures, the promotion of economic empowerment, and the enhancement of political participation. This definition recognizes that true liberation encompasses legal, social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. It involves not only securing equal rights and opportunities for women but also transforming societal norms and institutions that perpetuate gender inequality. Effective liberation requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including government, civil society, and the

private sector, to create an environment where women can thrive and contribute fully to their communities.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is intersectional feminism. Crenshaw (1989) an American law professor coined the term. Crenshaw explained Intersectional feminism as a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.

Intersectional feminism centres on the voices of those experiencing overlapping, concurrent forms of oppression in order to understand the depths of the inequalities and the relationships among them in any given context. Using an intersectional lens also means recognizing the historical contexts surrounding an issue. Long histories of violence and systematic discrimination have created deep inequities that disadvantage some from the outset. These inequalities intersect with each other, for example, poverty, caste systems, racism and sexism, denying people their rights and equal opportunities. The impacts extend across generations (UN Women, 2020).

The theory of intersectionality of gender analysis is both a theoretic device and an analytic tool to uncover the complex factors which interlink in the victimisation of women. Intersectionality is a feminist theory and methodology for research. It is extremely useful in studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how this contributes to unique experiences of oppression and subjugation.

Intersectional analysis provides a framework for action on social justice and human rights; it is premised on the assertion that people live multi-layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structures of power. To this end, intersectional analysis aims to uncover multiple identities, exposing the different types of discrimination and disadvantages that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities. It has the advantage of revealing how converging identities affects access to rights as well as the linkages between different policies and programmes which addresses specific problems.

This theoretical framework is applicable in this study because it explains how existing social structures in Rivers State undermine women's right to political participation. The society creates an asymmetric dependence so that women confine themselves to the norms and cultural practices of society. This, in the long run, affects the ability of women to be part of the political process.

### **Discussion**

#### **Beijing Convention and Women Liberation in Nigeria**

The Beijing Convention, formally known as the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, has had a profound impact on women's liberation globally, including in Nigeria. This landmark event set forth a comprehensive platform for action, addressing critical areas of concern and establishing a global agenda for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The influence of the Beijing Convention in Nigeria can be examined through various sub-themes, including legal reforms, economic empowerment, political participation, and social change.

**Legal Reforms:** One of the significant impacts of the Beijing Convention in Nigeria has been the advancement of legal reforms aimed at protecting and promoting women's rights. The Convention encouraged the Nigerian government to review and amend existing laws that were discriminatory against women. For instance, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) of 2015 was enacted to address various forms



of violence against women, including domestic violence, rape, and female genital mutilation (Umaru, 2018). These legal changes reflect a commitment to upholding the principles of gender equality as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action, providing a legal framework to safeguard women's rights and enhance their protection under the law.

**Economic Empowerment:** The Beijing Convention also emphasized the importance of women's economic empowerment, which has seen considerable progress in Nigeria. Initiatives inspired by the Convention have aimed at increasing women's access to economic resources, education, and employment opportunities. Programs such as the Nigerian Women's Fund for Economic Empowerment have been instrumental in providing financial resources and support to women entrepreneurs, thereby fostering economic independence and reducing poverty levels among women (Akinyemi & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2019). These efforts align with the Convention's goals of enhancing women's economic status and ensuring their full participation in economic life.

**Political Participation:** Political participation is another critical area where the Beijing Convention has impacted women's liberation in Nigeria. The Convention's call for increased representation of women in political and decision-making positions has led to various initiatives to boost women's political engagement. For example, the implementation of affirmative action policies has resulted in a gradual increase in the number of women holding political offices in Nigeria (Nwankwo, 2017). Despite the challenges and slow progress, these efforts signify a positive shift towards achieving greater gender balance in governance and political leadership.

**Social Change:** The Beijing Convention has also contributed to broader social changes regarding gender norms and attitudes towards women in Nigeria. Public awareness campaigns and educational programs have been launched to challenge traditional gender roles and promote gender equality. These initiatives have led to increased recognition of women's contributions to society and a growing acceptance of women's rights as human rights (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2018). The Convention's emphasis on changing societal attitudes has been crucial in fostering an environment where women's rights are more widely respected and upheld.

Thus, the Beijing Convention has had a significant impact on women's liberation in Nigeria across multiple dimensions. Legal reforms have strengthened the protection of women's rights, economic empowerment initiatives have improved women's access to resources, political participation has seen gradual improvements, and social changes have fostered greater acceptance of gender equality. These advancements underscore the importance of the Beijing Convention's principles and the ongoing efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria.

### **Factors Affecting Women Liberation in Nigeria**

Women liberation in Nigeria has been a subject of significant discourse, reflecting both progress and persistent challenges. Understanding the factors affecting women liberation requires a comprehensive examination of cultural, economic, political, and educational dimensions. These factors collectively shape the landscape of gender equality and women's rights in Nigeria, influencing the extent to which women can achieve true liberation. Each of these dimensions presents unique challenges and opportunities for advancing the status of women in Nigerian society.

**Cultural Factors:** Cultural norms and traditional practices play a crucial role in shaping the status and liberation of women in Nigeria. Deeply entrenched patriarchal values often dictate gender roles, limiting women's opportunities and reinforcing gender inequality. Practices such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, and gender-based violence are prevalent in many communities, posing significant barriers to women's

liberation (Olatunji, 2018). These cultural norms not only restrict women's autonomy but also impact their health, education, and economic prospects. Efforts to address these issues require culturally sensitive approaches that engage community leaders and stakeholders in promoting gender equality and challenging harmful practices. Education and awareness campaigns are essential in changing attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate discrimination against women.

**Economic Factors:** Economic empowerment is a critical factor influencing women's liberation in Nigeria. Economic dependence on men is a significant barrier to achieving gender equality, as it limits women's ability to make autonomous decisions and participate fully in society. Women often face discrimination in the labor market, earning less than their male counterparts and having limited access to credit and financial resources (Akinyemi & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2019). The informal sector, where many women are employed, is characterized by low wages and poor working conditions. Economic empowerment initiatives, such as microfinance programs and entrepreneurship training, are vital in providing women with the skills and resources needed to achieve financial independence. Additionally, policies aimed at reducing gender pay gaps and improving working conditions can significantly enhance women's economic status and contribute to their overall liberation.

**Political Factors:** Political participation and representation are essential components of women's liberation in Nigeria. Despite the progress made in recent years, women remain underrepresented in political and decision-making positions. Structural barriers, such as discriminatory laws and practices, as well as socio-cultural factors, hinder women's political engagement (Nwankwo, 2017). Quota systems and affirmative action policies have been introduced to increase women's participation in politics, but their implementation has been inconsistent. Encouraging more women to run for political office and supporting their campaigns can help break down these barriers. Furthermore, creating an enabling environment that promotes gender equality in political institutions is crucial for ensuring that women have a voice in the governance and development of the country.

**Educational Factors:** Education is a powerful tool for women's liberation, yet access to quality education remains a significant challenge for many Nigerian women and girls. Gender disparities in education are evident at all levels, with higher dropout rates for girls and lower enrollment rates in secondary and tertiary education (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2018). Factors such as poverty, early marriage, and cultural attitudes towards female education contribute to these disparities. Investing in girls' education not only empowers them with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue their aspirations but also has broader socio-economic benefits for their families and communities. Policies that address the barriers to girls' education, such as providing scholarships, improving school infrastructure, and implementing programs to prevent early marriage, are essential for advancing women's liberation.

## Conclusion

The Beijing Convention, also known as the Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995, has had a profound impact on women's participation in politics in Nigeria. This landmark event set forth a comprehensive platform for action aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering women across the globe. In Nigeria, the Convention has served as a catalyst for numerous initiatives and reforms aimed at increasing women's political engagement and representation. The Convention's emphasis on gender equality has prompted the Nigerian government and various stakeholders to implement policies and programs that promote women's rights and political participation. For example, affirmative action policies and quota systems have been introduced to ensure that more women are represented in political offices. These measures have led to a gradual

increase in the number of women holding political positions, thereby enhancing their influence and decision-making power in governance. Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain, and continuous efforts are required to achieve the full potential of women's political participation in Nigeria.

Moreover, the factors affecting women's liberation in Nigeria are multifaceted and deeply rooted in cultural, economic, political, and educational dimensions. Cultural norms and traditional practices, such as early marriage and gender-based violence, continue to hinder women's progress and limit their opportunities for advancement. Economic dependence on men further exacerbates these challenges, as women often face discrimination in the labor market and have limited access to financial resources. Political barriers, including discriminatory laws and practices, also impede women's participation in governance. Furthermore, educational disparities restrict women's access to knowledge and skills necessary for political engagement. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that includes policy reforms, community engagement, and targeted interventions. Efforts must be made to challenge harmful cultural norms, economically empower women, promote gender equality in political institutions, and improve access to education. By tackling these factors, Nigeria can create an enabling environment that supports women's liberation and enhances their participation in all aspects of society, particularly in politics.

### Recommendations

**1. Strengthen and Expand Policy Reforms for Women's Political Participation:** To build on the progress initiated by the Beijing Convention, it is crucial for the Nigerian government to strengthen and expand policy reforms that promote women's political participation. This includes the implementation and enforcement of affirmative action policies and quota systems designed to increase the number of women in political offices. Additionally, training and capacity-building programs should be established to prepare and support women candidates in their political careers. These programs can provide essential skills in leadership, public speaking, and campaign management, thus empowering more women to successfully run for and hold political positions. Furthermore, creating a supportive network and providing mentorship opportunities for women in politics can help overcome barriers and challenges they face, fostering a more inclusive and equitable political environment.

**2. Address Cultural and Socio-Economic Barriers to Women's Liberation:** Efforts to enhance women's participation in politics must also address the broader cultural and socio-economic barriers that impede women's liberation in Nigeria. This includes implementing comprehensive educational programs that challenge harmful cultural norms and promote gender equality from an early age. Community engagement initiatives should be employed to change perceptions and attitudes towards women's roles in society and politics. Additionally, economic empowerment programs are essential to reduce women's financial dependence on men, providing them with greater autonomy and the ability to participate fully in political life. Access to credit, financial literacy training, and support for women entrepreneurs can significantly improve women's economic status. By addressing these underlying cultural and socio-economic factors, Nigeria can create an environment that not only supports women's political participation but also promotes overall gender equality and women's empowerment.

### References

1. Akinyemi, A. I., & Isiugo-Abanihe, U. C. (2019). Women empowerment and fertility preferences in Nigeria. *Journal of Family and Reproductive Health*, 13(2), 56-64.
2. Alapiki, H. (2010). *Politics and governance in Nigeria*. Amethyst and Colleagues Publishers.

3. Arendt, H. (2018). *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press.
4. Aristotle. (2013). *Politics*. Oxford University Press.
5. Burkett, E. (2020). Women rights movement political and social movement. <https://www.britannica.com/event/womens-movement>
6. Duflo, E. (2012). Women empowerment and economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50(4), 1051-1079.
7. Easton, D. (1965). *A framework for political analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
8. International Justice Resource Centre. (2022). <https://ijrcenter.org/thematic-research-guides/womens-human-rights/>
9. Kareem, J. (2021). Number of women in elective positions in Nigeria 1999-2015. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/gender/chartoftheday-number-of-women-in-elective-positions-in-nigeria-1999-2015/>
10. Kasu, D.A. (2006). Gender, peace and conflict in Africa. In best, S.G (Ed.). *Introduction to peace and conflict Studies in West Africa*.
11. Lerner, G. (1993). *The creation of feminist consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*. Oxford University Press.
12. Makama, G. A. (2013). Patriarchy and gender inequality in Nigeria: The way forward. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(17), 32-37.
13. Mordi, C. (2019). Migration, poverty and development in Rivers State, Nigeria. *GeoJournal*, 84(4), 459-475.
14. Nwankwo, O. (2017). Women's political participation in Nigeria: Obstacles and challenges. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 11(2), 23-32.
15. Ogunlela, Y. I., & Mukhtar, A. A. (2018). Gender issues in agriculture and rural development in Nigeria: The role of women. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 29(2), 135-142.
16. Olatunji, O. (2018). Cultural practices and women's rights in Nigeria: The role of culture in gender-based violence. *International Journal of Human Rights and Constitutional Studies*, 6(1), 54-67.
17. Oluyemi, O. (2016). *Monitoring participation of women in politics in Nigeria*. National Bureau of Statistics.
18. Oluyemi, O. (2018). *Monitoring participation of women in politics in Nigeria*. [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Finland\\_Oct2016/Documents/Nigeria\\_paper.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Finland_Oct2016/Documents/Nigeria_paper.pdf)
19. Osakwe, G. (2005). Women political participation in Nigeria: problems and prospects in Akinboye SO (ed.) (2004). *Paradox of gender equality in Nigerian politics* concept publication limited Lagos.
20. Phillips, A. (2020). *The politics of presence*. Oxford University Press.
21. Russett, B., Starr, H., & Kinsella, D. (2010). *World politics. The Menu for Choice* (9th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
22. Umaru, E. T. (2018). An appraisal of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015. *Nigerian Journal of Human Rights Law*, 8(1), 15-28.
23. Walby, S. (2011). *The future of feminism*. Polity Press.
24. Weber, M. (2019). *Politics as a Vocation*. In P. Lassman & R. Speirs (Eds.), *Weber: Political Writings* (pp. 309-369). Cambridge University Press.