

## **SUBALTERN THEORY AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN SOCIETIES, NCWS – NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

*This study interrogates how the organizational structure of the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS)-Nigeria is interfacing with the activities of women in Nigeria taking the subaltern theory as a form of departure. Though the NCWS-Nigeria was created in 1958 to address issues of women empowerment, there is need for stocktaking vis-à-vis the high level of illiteracy, low participation in politics and decline in work force amidst cultural and religious barriers. Thus the study examines the structure of NCWS-Nigeria as an umbrella body in empowering women in Nigeria, and accordingly hypothesizes that the umbrella character of NCWS-Nigeria has significant effect on subaltern practice and the operations of the society in Nigeria. Anchored in the Radical Feminist Theory, data for the study were generated through documentary instrument and interview, and analysed using charts and analytical inductive technique. The findings reveal that the various structures instituted by NCWS-Nigeria in a bid to reach out to Nigerian women for empowerment through their organized structures could not tackle the increased challenges to women empowerment traceable to economic dependency of women on men which has its major expression in cultural practices against women created by patriarchy. Taking cognizance of these, the study recommends more openness (enlightenment programmes) from The Council so as to accommodate men and women who have genuine interest in women empowerment.*

**Key words:** Analytical inductive technique, Radical feminist theory, Subaltern theory, NCWS and Women empowerment,

### **Introduction**

The past four decades have witnessed increased global emphasis on women's issues (Nnachi, 2011). Many development agencies have also encouraged research and placed greater emphasis on gender and development issues for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives. As the world continues to emphasize the issue of good governance in a democratic setting, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were

largely seen as important agents of limiting authoritarian governments, strengthening popular participation, and improving the economy (Akindele, 2003; Anheier and List, 2005, Mathu in Ughamadu, 2006; Umeagbalasi, 2008 and Agbata, 2012).

Notwithstanding the previous World Women Conferences, the quest for women empowerment gathered greater momentum after the Beijing World Women Conference of 1995 which established internationally acceptable documents based on the universal precept of fundamental and inviolable human rights for its Platform of Action (Ughamadu, 2012). The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) set out to achieve equality of gender of which many countries of the world (Nigeria inclusive) are signatories.

The National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) Nigeria, otherwise known as 'The Council' created in 1958 serves as an umbrella which accommodates all women interest groups in Nigeria. She pursues programmes in line with Regional and International Organizations that uplift the status of women (Nwadukwe, 2010) more especially on the Platform of Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing World Women Conference (NCWS Constitution, 2005). As reflected in her constitution, The Council consists of National body, State branches, Local Government branches, member organizations and individual members. Because of her umbrella character, she is the only women interest group in Nigeria recognized at International Council of Women (ICW) ([www.connectnigeria.com/business/national-council-of-women-societies-23945.html](http://www.connectnigeria.com/business/national-council-of-women-societies-23945.html)).

NCWS-Nigeria, being the canopy that housed all women interest groups (Women's Civil Societies Organizations) in Nigeria pursues her programmes in line with the UDHR, CEDAW and 1995 Beijing Platform of Action. She therefore serves as a platform for disseminating women's opinions, liaison between the women and the government, and in the fore-front for actualizing equality of men and women in Nigeria. The Council holds periodic meetings, symposia and rallies to enlighten women towards achieving their full potentials. She had been struggling to make some positive impact towards empowering the Nigerian women through her activities which is expected to bring about 35% Affirmative Action of women appointments and representation in public offices, increased participation of women in politics, increased educational opportunities for the girl-child, and legal suppression of anti-socio economic empowerment practices and violence against women. This study serves as an insight to the organization of The Council so as to know how effective her structures aids the bid to women empowerment in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which recognized the equality of all men and women in the world through various agencies obliges signatories to undertake actions to ensure gender equality in both the public and private spheres. This is to eliminate traditional stereotyped ideas on the roles of the sexes which generate subaltern praxis

against women. In addition, through the well-planned 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (China), governments laid out specific actions set to attain equality and empowerment standards. The standards set by Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the Beijing Platform of Action contain clear statements on the rights of women to be free from discrimination.

Despite the various activities of NCWS-Nigeria to positively affect the status of Nigerian women through her organizational structures, only 48% of female Nigerians are literate; over 70% of Nigerian women are living below poverty line; women's numerical strength has not impacted positively on the political life and decision-making structures of the nation due to unfavourable political environment characterized by violence; the maternal mortality rate of females of reproductive age (as at 2015) is as high as 25.6%; and only 63.2% of women labour force are employed ([www.population.gov.ng/dailypost.ng/.../70-of-nigerianwomen...ar...](http://www.population.gov.ng/dailypost.ng/.../70-of-nigerianwomen...ar...); [www.premiumtimesng.com/.../179136-...](http://www.premiumtimesng.com/.../179136-...); Maternal Mortality in 1990-2015, WHO...Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group, Nigeria; [www.tradingeconomics.com](http://www.tradingeconomics.com)). Subaltern praxis still persists upon numerous agitations of NCWS-Nigeria. For instance, on October 14, 2016, the Nigerian President refused to recognize the efforts of the first lady during the campaign that ushered him into the presidential seat, rather relegated her position to his kitchen, common room and the other room (*Saturday Sun Newspaper*, 2016).

The preceding issues generated the need to question the efforts of The Council through her organizational structures towards combating the negative practices that impede women empowerment. With the foregoing, the clamour for women empowerment continues; even after two decades of the lauded Beijing Conference, gender issues still remain topical. Against this backdrop, the nature of subaltern, the umbrella character of NCWS and how it affects the operations of the society in combating subalternism was identified as a problem.

### **Propositional Statements**

This study is guided by two interrelated propositional statements, namely a research question and hypothesis. The anchor research question is: how does the umbrella character of NCWS-Nigeria affect subaltern practice and the operations of the society in Nigeria? On the other hand, the study hypothesizes that the umbrella character of NCWS-Nigeria has significant effect on subaltern practice and the operations of the society in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Radical Feminist Theory** Feminist theory supports equality of men and women in all spheres of human endeavour. Although all feminists strive for gender equality, there are various ways to approach this theory including Liberal feminism, Socialist feminism and Radical feminism. Liberal feminism as advocated by Betty Friedan sees gender inequalities

as rooted in the attitudes of our social and cultural institutions; and do not see women's equality as requiring a re-organization of society but seek to expand the rights and opportunities of women. Socialist feminism as advocated by Alison Jaggar challenge the ideology of capitalism hence believe that there is a direct link between class structure and the oppression of women. Much like the views of Radical feminists, Socialist feminists believe that the way to end the oppression of women is to put an end to class and gender. This research was advanced on Radical Feminist Theory as the theoretical framework. Radical feminism is a perspective within feminism. The theory became popular in the late 1960s through the 1970s and up to the recent times. Some of the proponents of the theory are Wittig (1969), Chesler (1972), Johnston (1973), Daly (1978), Adedotu (2017), and Zaadaway (2018). Radical Feminist theory is relevant to this work in the areas of recent Radical Feminists' canvassing that it is not enough to achieve gender equality/equity but rather fundamental to restructure the society through the activities of women interest groups which the NCWS-Nigeria identifies with. The exploitative behaviours (like domestic unpaid labour of women) frowned at by radical feminism are also not deemed good for women by NCWS, Nigeria. Therefore, the theory is related to the mission and aspirations of NCWS, Nigeria and in tandem with the goals and mission she sets out to achieve through her programmes.

Radical feminists locate the root cause of women's oppression in patriarchal gender relations of Western countries, and emerging economies of Asian and Latin America whose structures and values tends to favour patriarchal system. According to them, under patriarchal relations, women have come to be viewed as the 'other' to the male and the latter have dictated the former's norm and as such women have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. This is historically rooted considering that male dominance has a long history attached to feudalism and early capitalism in which men preferred to have male children who will succeed them rather than females so as to insure their lineage and investments. They further noted that men as a class benefit from the oppression of women through patriarchy which maintains relationship of dominance- where one party is dominant and exploits the other party for the benefit of the former. In other words, that men use social systems and other methods of control to keep women under perpetual dominance ([www.radfemcollective.org/what-is-radical...](http://www.radfemcollective.org/what-is-radical...)). Although years of constitutional and political changes in the West have tried to create better opportunities for women; however, Kemp and Simpson (2017) argued that the structures that ensure male dominance in the Western world remains as strong as ever and that even where women are doing well, there still exist in-built bias to suppress their aspirations and growth.

In Africa, the oppression of women remained even more challenging and daunting because of: African traditional values that promote and sustain male dominance; the misconception that women are inferior to men; and the strongly held opinion that women

relevance lies in the domestic sphere, and that biologically, they are meant to be child-bearers rather than partners in development. These and other factors have re-enforced the intense marginalization, subjugation and exploitation of women in all spheres of life. It also accounts for few radical feminists coming from the continent- all of whom have distinguished themselves in terms of women equality but the role ahead remains difficult simply because the African leadership cadre doesn't see the need for gender equality because it serves their interests and help perpetuate the male dominated hierarchy in the society.

Although the theory had been generally criticized for attaching primary importance to patriarchy and downgraded the importance of concepts like social class and ethnicity, Radical Feminists still seek the abolition of patriarchy and believe that the way to address the underlying causes of oppression is through revolution. According to them, revolution will bring to an end all forms of oppression based on race, social class, perceived attractiveness sexual orientation and ability against women ([https://en.m.wikipedia.org/.../Radical\\_...](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/.../Radical_...)).

### **Methodology**

This research is qualitative in nature. The instrument for the research were interviews, government gazettes, published and unpublished materials, internet extracts from electronic media, newsletters, newspapers and magazines- all constitute secondary source of our information. Oral interview was used to solicit for direct answers from the National Executive Council (NEC) membership of NCWS, Nigeria. The reason for conducting the oral interview was to improve the 'open and 'frank' exchange of information which engenders objectivity.

Complementing the secondary sources of data collection with direct oral interview (survey) helps the researcher to build and maintain close relationship with the object/subject of study which essentially mitigates some of the bias and validity threats inherent in qualitative research (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). Hence, oral interview was posed to the NEC members of NCWS, Nigeria so as to reduce the subjectivity inherent from a qualitative research; and increase objectivity in the research.

This research work covered the area of gender-related issues with focus on women as the subaltern group. The NCWS and her activities towards women empowerment in Nigeria constituted the main focus of this study. On the study population, the population of this study comprised of all the entire registered members of NCWS who were seven thousand (7,000) in number; from which the sample size was drawn. This NCWS membership is a reflective of representation of women across the country.

As it relates to this research work, the sampling size was drawn from the NEC of the NCWS, Nigeria who were 15 in number. NEC assumes the highest executive position in NCWS, Nigeria, thus, occupied the best position to attest to the effectiveness/achievements

of the Council in the quest for women empowerment. To get the sample size, **non-probability** sampling technique was applied by which ‘purposive sampling’ was used to select the NEC members who were disposed for the oral interview- a quality that qualifies any member to be sampled. Out of the sample size of fifteen (15), five (5) respondents were selected (as the sampling size) from NEC members (those who granted the oral interview posed to them) for the purpose of generating an objective finding.

The researcher predominantly used documentation (secondary data source), and primary source (interview) for the research. The primary source was the pre-planned unstructured in-depth oral interview, which was conducted by the researcher in a quarterly meeting of NCWS’ National Executive Council (NEC) members. Secondary sources of data were sourced through the examination of books related to Civil Societies and Women Organizations, Publications and Documents of NCWS, Ministry of Women Affairs, National and State Women Development Centres. Relevant materials such as Mother’s Summit, International Rural Women/Family Day Celebration, NCWS Annual Conference and Award of Honours, NCWS Newsletters, UNDP/UNWOMEN National Guidelines and Referral Standards on Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria, NCWS Constitution, Journals, Newspapers and Magazines.

Analytical inductive technique that involved triangulation was used in the analysis of the interview and documentary sources of data employed. For the analysis of the data collected for this research, non-statistical descriptive tools were employed such as the use of tables and illustrations, and texts from published and unpublished materials. The data generated from the responses extracted from the interviewees/respondents of the unstructured in-depth interview was interpreted by the researcher to capture the respondents’ experiences, beliefs and attitudes as it relates to the research problem for the qualitative analysis employed by the researcher.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS TO UNSTRUCTURED IN-DEPTH/ORAL INTERVIEW.

S/N	RESPONDENTS
1	Respondent 1
2	Respondent 2
3	Respondent 3
4	Respondent 4
5	Respondent 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5 RESPONDENTS</b>

**Source:** Field Work at NCWS-Nigeria’s National Secretariat, Abuja, 18 July, 2017.

In a bid to give credence to this work, the researcher attended the Quarterly National Executive Council (NEC) Meeting of the NCWS held at Abuja Headquarters, so as to orally interview the executive members. All the fifteen (15) National Executive Council members

of the NCWS were present in the meeting. Out of the 15 executive members, only five (5) were willing to co-operate with us; and granted the interview. Most of the answers offered by the interviewees /respondents partly formed the basis upon which our analyses were made.

### **Subaltern Theory and the Organizational Structure of NCWS in Nigeria.**

The term 'subaltern' literally means someone of 'inferior rank'. This arose from the societal ranking of some people been superior to others deemed inferior. It becomes a problem when supposedly equal citizens by legal-formal sense are treated as superior and inferior in actual practice. The concept of 'Subaltern' was first introduced in social theory by an Italian Marxist- Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) in his analysis of capitalist system ([www.csudh.edu/.../theory mp 02.ht](http://www.csudh.edu/.../theory mp 02.ht)). This stemmed from the fact that under the capitalist system, equal rights were granted to all citizens by the constitution; but in practice, the capitalists are the ruling class who dictates the fate of others. Capitalists used their hegemonic powers to convince the subject classes that their interests are representative of the common interests.

Historically, both the ruling and the subject classes contribute in the role of building up human civilization. But history as a discipline focus mainly on the role of the ruling classes, whereas that of the subject (subaltern) classes are ignored and relegated to the background. The roles performed by the subordinate (subaltern) classes are recognized only when they have relationship with that of the ruling classes; thus, cannot be told exclusive of the hegemonic influence of the ruling classes.

The scope of the 'Subaltern Theory' has been expanded in the contemporary social analysis to include all the groups who suffer from irrelevant discrimination and disregard to their human status. These groups are treated as inferior or subordinate on the grounds of gender, age, is closely linked with the question of 'human rights'. The subaltern groups are full-fledged citizens but are looked down upon by the dominant groups because of deep-rooted hatred, prejudices or superstitions. In the contemporary analysis of Feminist theorists, women as a group have been categorized as the subaltern group. This status usually deprives them the opportunities to have education and other sources of enlightenment, to enter into modern professions, to participate in common cultural heritage, to lack the means of soliciting for legal protection, of building their organizations and raising their voice against the prevailing injustice.

Nigerian women had their toll of subaltern practices instituted in age-long praxis which had been a cog in the wheel of getting their voices heard in making decisions that affect their lives. The foregoing were the reasons why the NCWS-Nigeria came into existence. The Council which mothers all women interest groups had been a leading combatant of the subaltern practices meted out against Nigeria.

Before 1958 brought single voice women (with the formation of NCWS) in Nigeria, the existing organizations had to approach feminine issues on different platforms. They usually approached the Ministry of Social Welfare separately on virtually the same needs for virtually the same projects. Until the Western Region Minister in charge of social welfare, Oba C. D. Akran suggested a common platform (umbrella) for representation of women's voice (in 1957), most women from all other regions other than the Northern Nigeria had made bold initiatives to turn around the fall back plight of women. Thus, the popular Aba women riot/protest of 1929 which encompassed women from six (6) ethnic groups (Ibibio, Andoni, Ogoni, Bonny, Opobo, and Igbo) and was organized and led by rural women of Owerri and Calabar provinces. This market women anti-taxation riots were remarkable because it led to the attack of sixteen Native Courts (most of which were eventually destroyed) and the forceful resignation of many Warrant Chiefs. This resulted in the appointment of women to serve on the Native Courts ([https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s\\_War](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_War); retrieved on 9/8/2014). The deposition of Oba Eshugbayi Eleko (Eleko of Eko) - the Oba of Lagos in the twenties by the activities of organized women groups is also worth-reckoning. (<https://guardian.ng/politics/modern-a...>).

Upon her institution in 1958, the NCWS-Nigeria otherwise known as 'The Council' had remained a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) which had maintained a succession of office till date. The preamble of the NCWS Nigeria 2005 Constitution showcased the resolution of the Nigerian women to form a united front in order to champion their cause; thus, the adoption of the motto- "SERVICE IN UNITY". Hence, the NCWS' constitution read in part 'we (Nigerian women) have resolved to come together, under one umbrella, irrespective of our profession, religion, trade, place of origin, age, class or creed, social standing or other inclination...'. And because of her umbrella status, she is the only women organization in Nigeria recognized in the International Council of Women (ICW), New York. The Article 2, section 6 of the NCWS-Nigeria's constitution stated clearly the aims and objectives of the organization which is mainly to promote the economic and social welfare and progress of women, youth, disabled and children laying special emphasis on education and training. This will help to awaken and encourage in women the realization of their responsibilities to the community and the nation in general; to ensure by every means that women are given every opportunity to play their part as full responsible members of the community and nation; to mobilize women and facilitate their political and economic empowerment towards self-reliance; to encourage membership of all non-political women's organization in Nigeria; to foster co-operation with other national and international bodies with similar aims: and to promote women's participation in politics/governance.

On the page 4 of the NCWS' constitution, it is stated unequivocally what the council shall do to achieve its objectives. The Council shall provide a platform for formulating and disseminating women's opinions and ideas; deal with requests and petitions from member

societies for reform or other request by making representation to the government or other appropriate bodies; send delegates and/or representatives from National and International Organizations for meetings and conferences; receive delegates and/representatives from National and International Organizations for meetings and conferences; publish magazines and any other materials which the Council may deem fit; and hold congress and/or conventions at which all member societies will be represented and election of officers conducted.

In the view the respondents and in congruence with the NCWS' Constitution, the Governing bodies of the Council are composed of The 'Convention' which shall be the highest authority; The 'Board of Trustees'; The National Executive Council (shall conduct the affairs of the council between convention); The 'National Working Committee'; The 'State Executive Committee' (shall make up the Council's administrative machinery at the State level); and The 'Local Government Executive Committee'. The Nigerian Federal First Ladies and States First Ladies assume the post of Grand Patrons and Patrons respectively by the virtue of the position/office held by their husbands as Presidents and/or Governors. This position is deemed automatic and expires at the expiration of any First Lady's husband's office. The Convention of the NCWS, Nigeria comprised of registered members of the Council accredited as delegates and representing states and member organization. All members of the National Executive Council are automatic delegates of conventions.

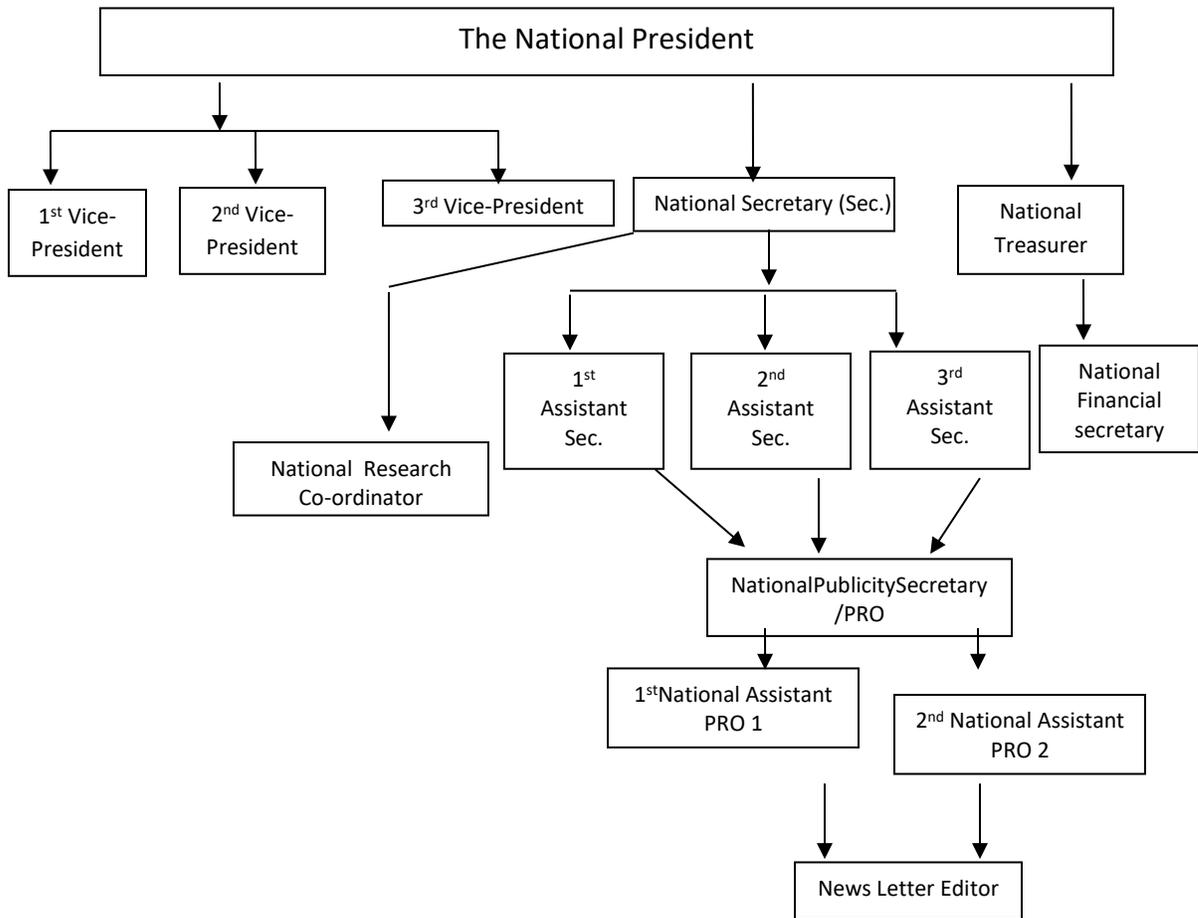
The Board of Trustees of the NCWS, Nigeria is comprised of persons of proven integrity, transparent, honest and not exceeding seven (7) persons in number. The Board of Trustees consists of Chairperson (appointed by the National president) and six (6) other members. The six (6) other members, one from each of the 6 geo-political zones are appointed by two-third (2/3) majority of the States in the National Executive Council for ratifications at the Convention. The Trustees so appointed may hold office for five (5) years subject to "the conditions affecting the loss of membership of the Board" stated in the NCWS' Constitution.

According to the responses given by the respondents which were in tandem with the 2005 NCWS Constitution, the National Executive Council (NEC) of the Organization is the highest executive decision-making body. The NEC is comprised of the fifteen (15) memberships. They are, The National President; The 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; The 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; The 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President; The National Secretary; The 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Secretary; The 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Secretary; The 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant Secretary; The National Treasurer; The National Financial Secretary; The National Publicity Secretary (PRO); The 1<sup>st</sup> National Assistant Publicity Secretary (PRO 1); The 2<sup>nd</sup> National Assistant Publicity Secretary (PRO 2); The National Research Coordinator; and The Newsletter Editor.

All the above-mentioned NEC members are all drawn from various states' membership of NCWS, Nigeria. This is to make sure that every section of the country feels the impact and effects of the activities of the NCWS, Nigeria. Because of the NEC's

important position of executing all the activities of the NCWS, it is entrusted with some duties, such as implementing the decisions of the convention and carrying out the policies of the Council; filling in any vacancy /vacancies occurring in the Council between the convention; considering and approving applications for membership; collecting annual dues from State and member societies; presenting accounts at the convention; and setting up standing and ad-hoc committee when necessary.

Figure 1: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, NCWS-NIGERIA.

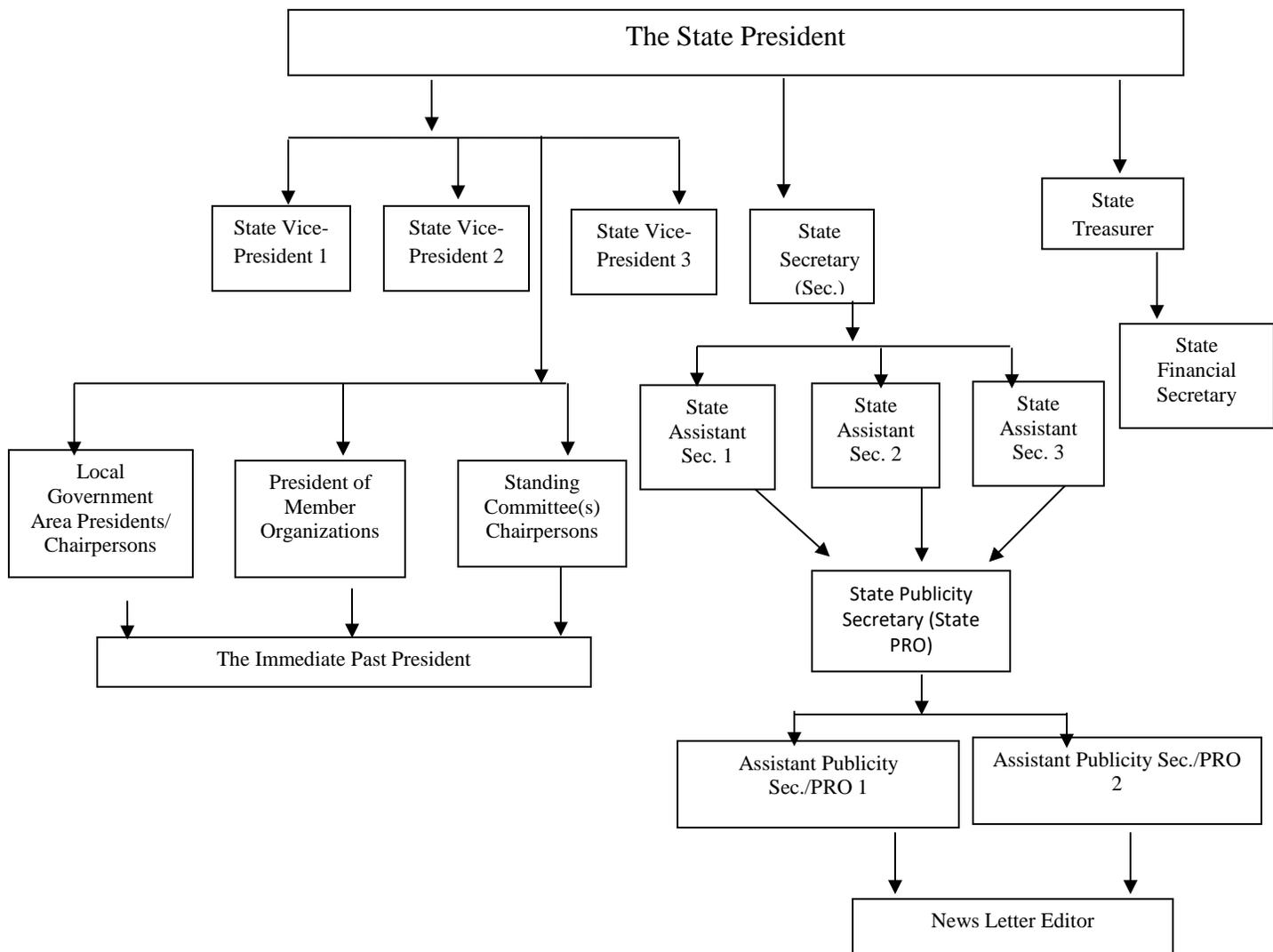


Source: NCWS Constitution, 2005.

The NEC members also perform the functions of coordinating the work of the State Council and Member Organizations and selecting delegates to other National and

International meetings for conferences considering nominations from those submitted by the Branches; selecting delegates to National and International transactions, calling on the State Council for cooperation; and calling and making arrangements for the convention and any other National and International meetings in collaboration with the State Council concerned. The NEC also help in deciding if possible, the venue for the convention which should rotate among all States; carrying out all the functions of as are consistent with the policies of the Council; and making such standing orders for the administration of the Council as deemed fit.

Figure 2: THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (SEC), NCWS-NIGERIA.



Source: NCWS Constitution, 2005.

The NEC is the highest Executive body of NCWS-Nigeria. Thus, members are automatic members of the Convention which is the highest governing body of The Council. The National Working Committee of the NCWS, Nigeria is comprised of all the elected National officers of the Council whose meetings is held once in three (3) months or as maybe decided by the National President or previous meeting of the Committee. The State Executive Committee is comprised of: The State President; The State Vice-presidents 1, 2 and 3; The State Secretary; The State Assistant Secretaries 1, 2 and 3; The State Treasurer; The State Financial Secretary; The Local Government Area Presidents/Chairpersons; The News Letter Editor; The State Publicity Secretary (State PRO); and The Assistant Publicity Secretaries 1 and 2 (State PRO 1 and 2). The SEC is also expected to include The Presidents of Member Organizations; The Standing Committee(s) Chairperson, and The Immediate Past President as part of their executives.

The Local Government Executive Committee is comprised of The LG President; The LG Vice-President 1 and 2; The LG Secretary; The LG Assistant Secretary 1 and 2; The LG Treasurer; The LG Financial Secretary; and Publicity Secretary (PRO). Also amongst the LG Executive Committee are The Member Organization Presidents (which constitute the presidents of the women interest groups/society affiliate of the NCWS at the grass root level); Standing Committee(s) Chairperson (s); and Immediate Past President.

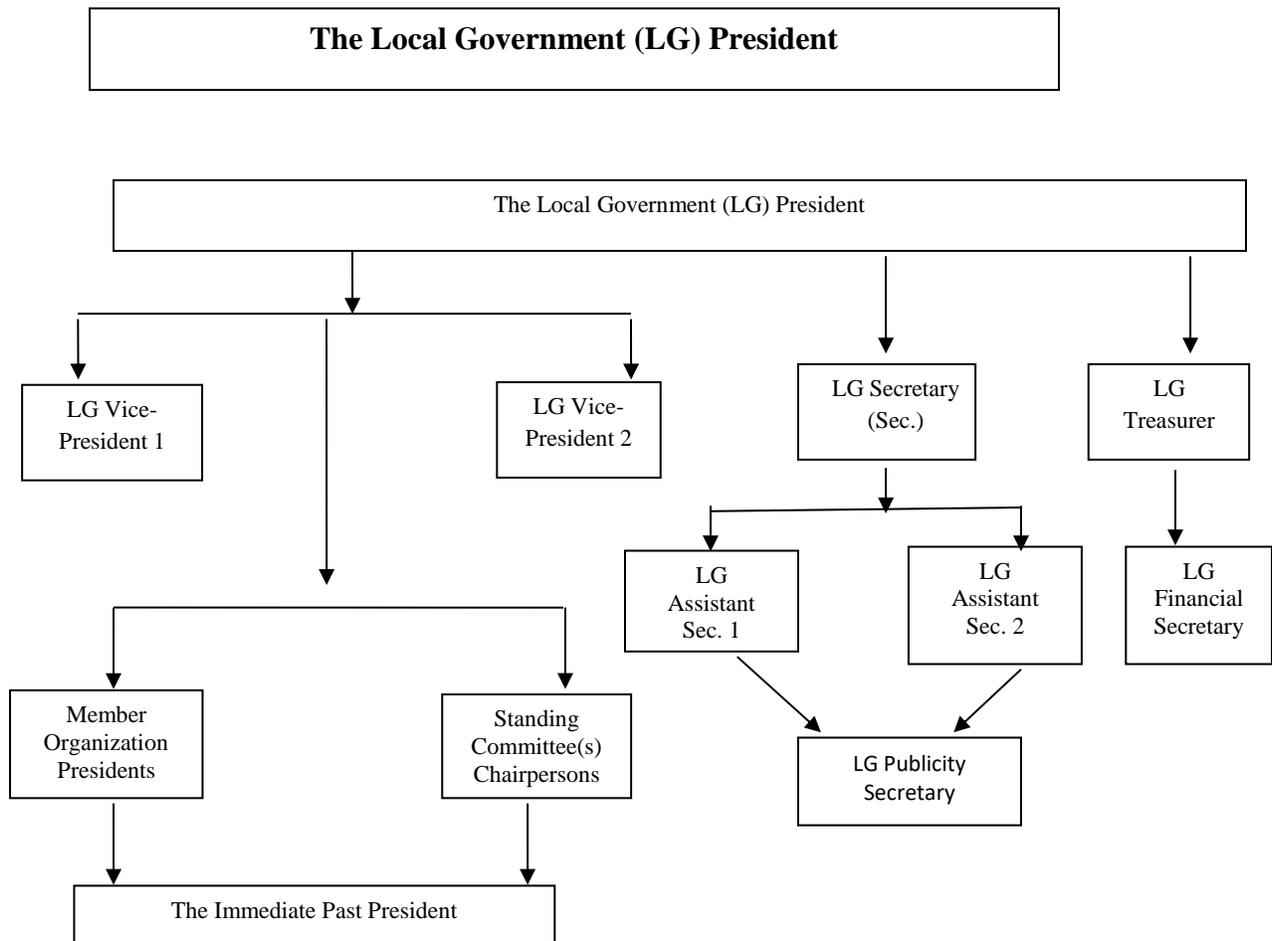
The foregoing showcased that The Council is doing its best to tackle elitism in the leadership of The Council's officials. Thus, there is a connection/link to the grassroots where lowest educational level women are mostly found. The National Executive members cannot be everywhere at the same time, hence has a need to create link to the grassroots. The existence of LG Executives Committee makes NCWS' leadership accessible to all- elite or non-elite. In other words, any woman member who vied and was elected into any of the above-mentioned positions would assume the position, her financial and academic background notwithstanding.

Moreover, the LG Executive Committee creates a greater open platform for all the existing women organizations to contribute in ideas and efforts of the mother body-NCWS, Nigeria. In fact, all the Respondents testified that most participation of the affiliate members start from the LG level. Thus, the hierarchy of the authority of The LG Executive Committee includes Member Organization Presidents (which constitute the presidents of the women interest groups/society affiliate of the NCWS at the grass root level). The grassroots inclusion of constituent memberships avails them the opportunity to impart directly on the lives of rural women which exposes the latter to the missions and aspirations of the mother body. Also, it is expected that the member societies would take to the grassroots most of the expositions/plans of the mother body towards the empowerment of all Nigerian women.

From the composition of the NCWS, the Convention which serves as the highest governing body is comprised of members mostly from the states (which were selected

from the various Local Government Areas) - both the NCWS accredited member representative/delegates, all affiliate women societies, and members of the National Executive Council (NEC). The NEC doesn't hand-pick (out of their personal inclinations) delegates for national and international meetings for Conferences; rather, considers nominations from the States and affiliate members. Similarly, all the national and international transactions of the NEC are guided by the opinions of the member societies and the State NCWS memberships (which also is a representation of the various Local Government memberships).

Figure 3: THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (LG) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, NCWS-NIGERIA.



Furthermore, the Convention and any other National and International meetings are prepared in collaboration with the State Council concerned. This arose from the fact that the venue for Convention rotates among all the States- so as to carry all the nationwide members along. The 'Member Organization Presidents' found in the organogram of the LG Executive Committee are the Presidents of the Women Interest groups/societies registered with the NCWS at the grass root level.

The nature of NCWS as the umbrella body that housed all the women interest groups in Nigeria makes her an outstanding organization. The organization is a voluntary, non-partisan, non-religious, non-ethnic and not for profit organization. She operates at the National, State and Local Government levels. In other words, this means that no matter at whatever level of operation would any member expect payment or salary for her contribution (physical, moral and spiritual contribution) to the growth and sustenance of the organization. Every activity performed by women is purely voluntary and humanistic in nature. According to the respondent 3, NCWS serves Nigeria and her people through the various activities of its states' branches and member organizations. Like a tree that has many branches, its membership is drawn from any women organization irrespective of its numerical strength.

A critical observer would recognize the fact that the organizational objectives of the NCWS, Nigeria clearly stated the need to mobilize women for greater action towards the attainment of higher levels like their male counterpart in Nigeria. In fact, the preamble of the 2005 NCWS' Constitution read in part that "...humanity in general, women and children in particular and the people of this nation, and indeed all nations can only achieve their full spiritual, social and economic potential if women are mobilized, and coordinated in their efforts to achieve this potential". From the foregoing extract from the preamble, one is in no doubt that the organization of women on the platform of NCWS is to attack and abolish the existing praxis. But to the extent the foregoing has been achieved, the five respondents to the interview unanimously agreed that upon all the well-organized structures through which NCWS-Nigeria operates, the subaltern praxis prevalent in Nigerian society is still strong and prevalent. Therefore, the umbrella character of NCWS-Nigeria has no significant effect on subaltern practice and the operations of the society in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nigerian government has not enacted any legislation to restrict women from certain professions, to confine their mobility or limit their political involvement, yet, in all these aspects, women's lives are impeded by internalized social precepts from traditional and religious codes. In democratization and economic restructuring processes in Nigeria, the dominant-male politicians have always sought to convince women that their interests would be served, while at the same time, they deny women additional benefits which

make their empowerment stagnant. This has pushed women under the canopy of NCWS towards greater boldness in addressing the political and economic elements that determine and affect their status in the (Nigerian) society that has distinct cultural traditions and historical experiences of patriarchy. It is only when women are actively engaged in politics and/or in very active NGOs that they can positively implement progressive pro-women policies.

The conclusive contention here is that men and women need to work together for success in all fields of human endeavour for effective women empowerment. This will make women to be looked at as individuals that possess some hidden potentials for greatness and so should be encouraged to develop such to the fullest. That is why the NCWS-Nigeria rose to her heels to garner the support of all women (and men alike) to fight for the destruction of patriarchy instituted in the culture (expressed in praxis) that men had championed for years, so as to enhance the empowerment of the Nigerian women.

Over the years, the Nigerian government has committed herself towards addressing the issues of poverty, harmful culture, ignorance and diseases which summarily are bane to women empowerment through being signatory to international instruments, enacting of progressive laws, evolvement of National Policy on women, supporting and setting up of commissions and bodies such as the Ministry of Women Affairs, Women Development Centres and Pet-Projects of First Ladies. NCWS-Nigeria (and her associate/affiliate women interest groups) has on her own strove to actualize the aspirations of the Beijing Platform for Action through formation of groups that focused on women empowerment through law reform, service provision, public enlightenment, skills acquisition, micro credit/finance but to mention a few. Funding agencies have been supportive both of government and civil society efforts, and in some instances have drawn up agenda that tried to increase attention in certain directions but more still need to be done.

More openness and awareness-creation is needed on the part of NCWS-Nigeria and her affiliates which will encourage more research and preferable solutions on the feminine challenges, since as it stands, The Council cannot (effectively) do the work of women empowerment alone, her organized structures notwithstanding. Therefore, non-registered females and any person attracted to the cause of women empowerment should be encouraged through openness of The Council so as to achieve her objectives and foster the institutionalization of gender-equality/equity.

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