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MEDIATED TOKENISM: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA PORTRAYAL AND COVERAGE OF WOMEN IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

For decades, feminist scholars and activists have focused attention on the cultural dimension of power, the media's role in reproducing particular patterns of gender inequality and women's exclusion in the news media (GMMP, 2010). As a contribution to the discourse, it becomes necessary also to examine how news media in developing regions frame or construct gender in the news media and the possible effect of these constructions to women participation in politics. The study, a critical discourse analysis of existing literature, found similarities in literature from developed countries to what is tenable in Nigeria regarding media coverage of women in the news. From the study, it becomes very obvious that news in Nigeria seems to be undemocratic and non-inclusive. The study therefore, advocates for Nigerian journalists' increase use of Gender Aware Reporting principles and the concept of reframing of news stories as possible approaches that will increase women's visibility in the news media and their consequent participation in politics in Nigeria.

Keywords: Media Framing, Gender Perspective, Political Communication, Mediated Tokenism

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Introduction

The just concluded 2015 Nigerian election results reflect the continuous contentious issue of women marginalization in politics. This result indicates that

despite the recognition and the agitation for the participation of women in political and public decision making, gender discrimination remains a formidable barrier to women's participation in elective offices in the country. The election results, further demonstrate that political institutions seem to perpetuate an exclusionary attitude in the culture of politics towards women.

Table 1: Women Participation in Nigeria Politics from 1999-2015

	Position	No. of Seats	No. of Women Elected in 1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
1.	Presidency	2	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Senate	109	3	4	8	7	8
3.	House of Reps	360	12	23	26	26	14
4.	Governorship	36	0	0	0	0	0
5.	Deputy Governorship	36	1	2	6	3	4
6.	36 State Houses of Assembly	990	12	38	54	62	-
	Total	1533	28	67	94	98	26

Source: Lance-Onyiewu, Maureen (2011), Akpan (2016)

The statics above are indicative of the near absence of female politicians in elective offices in Nigeria. Of particular concern is the sharp drop in number of women in the House of Representatives, which perhaps may indicate further decline in women participation in Nigerian politics. Unlike other Western countries where there is a significant increase in the number of women in appointive and elective positions, the Nigerian situation is still inundated with female tokenism. It is obvious from these statics that women have continued to be 'voiceless' at policy-making levels since they cannot influence key decisions in social, economic and political areas of the society with their continued marginal representations in politics. The consequence of this low representation impedes the development of democratic principles in public life and inhibits the economic

development of a society. Several studies (see, Omojola, 2014; Nwabukneye, 2014; Oyinade & Daramola, 2013; Popoola, 2004; Ikpe, 2000; Ogwezzy, 2004) have hypothesized the media interconnectedness to that effect. Based on evidence from literature, we argue, that media continued marginalized coverage of the female politician in Nigeria affects and reinforces women's sparse political participation and this is as a result of three principal related issues – The definition of the female politician by her gender; the nature of Nigerian politics and the low media consumption pattern of the Nigerian women. These have resulted in a media pattern of coverage that can be likened to 'mediated tokenism' which persists because of Nigerian media perception of gender mainstreaming principles as a form of media token and not an obligation.

STUDY PURPOSE

This study was informed by the layers of evidence of persistent women invisibility in news media. It presents an overview of female politician's representations in Nigerian media from previous research and the interconnectedness with their participation in Nigerian politics. For as Gallagher (2001) argued more than a decade ago, the paucity of women in decision-making roles, for instance, is connected to the deficiencies in women's, in particular 'female politicians', representation in media content. Since the media, and television in particular, currently constitute the real public space through which citizens understand the "political" (e.g. Corner & Pels 2003), part of the concern of this study is to look at what part gender plays in the representation of politicians in the media. Using extant literature, we examine media coverage of female politicians in Nigeria to ascertain the degree of space and voice given to them by the media. If the media as documented, articulate the political, then the ways in which women and men are portrayed, their access to media, and their visibility as political agents in the media certainly matter. So, we interrogate how the Nigerian media has generally represented women.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA: ANY GAPS?

Several studies- global and regional, have continued to show media insufficient and negative portrayal of women (for examples, Noris, 1997; Ross, 1996; Lemish, 2004; Gallagher, 2001; Anyanwu, 2001; Oyinade & Damaola, 2013; Ogunleye, 2005; Omojola, 2014). However beyond the critical issues of representations is also the issue of how women are framed within the news media. Dominant discourses in this area revolve around the following concerns:

- Insufficient coverage that results in reducing women's visibility;
- Missing women's perspectives/views that render them voiceless and insignificant;
- Stereotyping that results in negative perceptions of women;
- Gendered frame work that continues to dichotomously place women in the private sphere of family resulting in disempowerment and subordination.

Looking at media's coverage of women in Nigeria, we contend with an added challenge that has become almost taken as the norm, 'symbolic annihilation' of women and women's perspectives in the news media. Coined by Tuchman (1978) to describe the media's condemnation, trivialization and omission of women, 'symbolic annihilation' of women in Nigeria by the media implies media almost near absence or omission of women and women's perspective through gendered reporting and coverage. The dominant attitude among Nigerian journalists is that women's issues rarely make marketable news. Controversy is what sells. As most women shy away from controversial issues, they remain out of the scope of hard news. Their struggles and triumphs are part of the social landscape, which ought to be reflected in the national media are therefore ignored. The definition of news, what makes real marketable news in Nigeria inevitably excludes a sizeable chunk of the population, especially women. By the recent population count, women make up to 49.92 percent of the population; that is .8 percent less than the men. But from politics to economy, technology,

commerce and industry to crime, very few women's voices are heard in the mainstream media.

The prevalent trend in Nigerian news media is a news sequence replete with female portrayal merely as a token to silence the voice of gender activists and scholars. Tokenism here, refers to a situation where only a few members of the disadvantaged group (women) gain access to advantaged position while the majority of the group remains in a disadvantaged position. We observe an age long practice of deliberate policy of exclusion of women from news media, at the heart of this practice is traditional beliefs which have continued to be used in defining the female gender. Take for instance the Nigerian print media coverage of women; what we see as documented by various scholars (Anyanwu, 2001; Okunna, 2001; Ogwezzy, 2004; Oso & Adenle, 2014) is a case where Nigerian women's faces are used to adorn the pages of newspapers for commercial purposes without any news story attached. Anyanwu (2001) illustrates a striking example as she recounts:

The Punch, the widest circulating daily in Nigeria, did something savvy in October 20th, on the cover, Stella the gorgeous wife of the president, was stepping out for an occasion with two equally gorgeously dressed women. There was no detail on where they went; no words heard from them. No stories just pictures.

'No words heard', 'no stories', 'no details on where they went' aptly capture the selective communicative pattern which dominates Nigerian media coverage of women. What do we have? 'Silenced Visibility'- a situation where Nigerian women are rendered 'voiceless'. They are 'seen' but not 'heard'. However, evidence reveals the few 'token women' that are seen – the few women that make news in Nigeria. These are: those few women in politics that are occasionally heard; wives of public officers or prominent men who enjoy the best press in Nigeria on account of the public profiles of their husbands. Women in

government also make news because they speak on the portfolios they control. Unlike their male colleagues, they rarely comment on issues of national importance unless mandated by higher authority to do so, a clear case of mediated tokenism.

While in other Western countries we observe some improvement in media coverage of women, in Nigeria women's visibility in news media is almost annihilated and connected to their husbands and offices which are used to define them. A glance at Nigerian news media as documented will show that women are mostly:

- ❖ Given prominence in events such as church services, weddings, burial ceremonies and social events.
- ❖ Given importance when in the company of their husbands or sons (Politicians or Executives)
- ❖ Covered largely on weekend editions or issues
- ❖ Hugely photographed without an adjourning story or comments
- ❖ Largely absent as news subjects, sources, experts, news focus, unless in the capacity as 'wife of the President', 'wife of the Vice president', 'wife of the Governor, or representative of an Executive.

To underscore the reality of media tokenism we turn to previous studies and research to detail how the Nigerian media have represented and covered women. To ascertain the type of coverage we looked at news coverage of women generally in three principal categories; women as subject of news; as news sources and experts and women as reporters in news stories. We turn to the most comprehensive global research on women in the news media to ascertain how Nigerian women have been represented in the news media, since Nigeria has been among the countries used in this global study since inception from 1995 in the three media (newspaper, television and radio) and across 108 countries. According to Gallagher (2010):

Since 1995 the Global Media Monitoring Project has been documenting the deep denial of women's voices in the world's news media. The project has its roots in one of the central and enduring preoccupations of the women's movement world-wide: the politics of representation. For decades, feminist scholars and activists have focused attention on the cultural dimensions of power, and the media's role in reproducing particular patterns of gender inequality. However, until the advent of the GMMP there was no comprehensive global overview capable of charting the *systematic* nature of women's exclusion in the news media.

Now, we present the Nigerian result from the 2010 GMMP findings the latest research finding to detail women representation in news:

Subject of News

Data representing sex of news subject show that men are selected in all the news media as news subjects more than women. The male sex appeared 96 (82%) times in the print, 19(83%) times in the radio, and 34(94%) times in the television as against the female sex which featured 15(18%) times, 4(17%) times and 2(6%) times in the print, radio and television respectively. An analysis of female and male news subjects in relation to position/occupation show gender imbalance in the news media concerning the portrayal of female and male news subjects. In the "government official, politician..." category, male news subjects had 86% (52) appearances as against female news subjects at 14% (9). Also, in the "government employee, public servant..." category, men equally had 87 % (17) appearances as news subjects as against women news subjects at 13% (3). In all, the overall result shows that the number of males portrayed as news subjects is greater than the number of females, except in the category of "business person, executive, manager..." where women had 67% (2) appearances as against men at 33% .

News Sources

As news sources, available data similarly show that men are mostly sourced for news on all issues ranging from local, national to international rather than women. The data further reveal that the male gender featured on 122 (86%) occasions in news as news sources against the female gender that featured only 21 times (14%).

Media Gatekeepers

We also needed to determine those who report these news stories in Nigeria, which are the Nigerian news gatekeepers. The Gate keeping concept of the media permits the media selection and exclusion process, therefore, those who deliver the news (Gatekeepers) exert a huge influence on voices heard and faces seen in the news media. In Nigeria, research evidence indicates that an overwhelming number of media gatekeepers are men. Evidence from the GMMP (2010) report, confirms that in Nigeria, male reporters were 81% while female reporters took the back seat at 19% in the print media, while the gender difference in radio was not much, though male reporters were still more in number than female reporters at 56% and 44% respectively. The GMMP result correlates with other similar studies (for, eg. Ukozor, 2005; IWMMF, Global Report, 2011; Omojola, 2014). The (2010) GMMP research summarizes the Nigerian situation this way:

Gender inequality still persists in Nigeria mass media. Women's participation in the news is relatively low compared with men's participation. Majority of the news subject for all news media studied were men. In 2005, 17 % were female news subjects, while 83% were male news subjects. While in 2010, 14 % were female news subjects, while 86% were male news subjects (p. 5).

- According to the GMMP 2015 findings, women make up only 24% of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, exactly as they did in 2010.

- Women are three percent less visible in political news stories now than five years ago.
- They comprise 38% of people interviewed on the basis of personal experience compared to 31% in 2005. The Nigerian regional report though not yet available will reflect the global trend.

From 1995 – 2015, we have a picture in which unequal gender power relations are entrenched and validated, and in which gender stereotypes are replicated and reinforced by the world's news media. The worrying trend however is that the patterns of underrepresentation, misrepresentation and invisibilization of women have continued into the digital news world , which show that the problem is deeply entrenched in the mainstream news media system irrespective of the platform through which news are channeled (GMPP,2015).

This imbalance in news has been linked to the ownership structure of most media globally. Available data demonstrate that the Nigerian media is an industry that is largely funded and run by men as in other countries (Dunu, 2015). The implication is that the power to define media agenda is a male privilege. Unless women gain financial empowerment needed to own and control part of the media news industry the pattern of news media coverage will unfortunately continue as we have it for a long time to come.

What is the overall implication of the available records with regards to the country? Nigerian media coverage of women continues to reinforce rather than challenge the dominant culture and thereby contribute to the marginalization of women in the public domain. The outcome is that voices of people heard and reported in Nigerian news media are overwhelmingly male. Scholars have suggested various reasons for this continued marginalization. We here highlight a summary of these suggestions.

The news making capacity of women in Nigeria is defined by the patriarchal nature of the society which the media reinforces. Nigerian media patterned communicative geography of the public sphere aligns to the global media binary division of gender that results in media representation of men and women in different ways. The Nigerian media, by their uneven representations of men and women, still represent gender in a way that continues to uphold a patriarchal privilege. They are still representing men and women in traditional ways which send subtle messages of dominant traditional perspective that women's pretty faces are more marketable than their voices.

In this way, the media produce gender differences along the public-private divide which means that women are seen to belong to family life and men are seen as political agents in the social world (Sreberny & van Zoonen 2000, 17). Journalists and other media professionals may not necessarily be conscious of using such gendered measures in their practices. However the dominant gender-based division in relation to public and private sphere that places men at the centre of public activity still dominates Nigerian media practice. Also the use of gendered frames, that is, "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (Gitlin 1979, 12) by the media continues to perpetuate this gender-based division. To change this current gender-based division in relation to public and private spheres is to change media definitions that place men at the center of political activity and marginalize women's perspectives and agenda (Gallagher, 2001, p.83-85).

MEDIA COVERAGE OF NIGERIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS

In this section we interrogate Nigerian News Media coverage of politics. This will provide an insight on how female and male politicians were covered during political periods in Nigeria and perhaps indicate the relationship between media coverage and female political participation and success. As before, we here again refer to available research to do our analysis.

We, here, use the 2011 study by Institute for Media and Society (IMS) of media coverage of women politicians in the 2011 elections in Nigeria to interrogate the way Nigerian media covers women politicians, as it details media reportage of electoral issues before, during and after the 2011 general elections. The table below depicts media frequency of use of different stakeholders as news sources in the 2011 election period as reported by the IMS (2011) study.

Table: 2
Frequency of Use of the Different Stakeholders as News Sources in 2011 Election Period

S/N	Stakeholders	Print	Radio	Television
1	Female Politicians	328	40	18
2	Government Officials	2336	545	121
3	Male Politicians	6551	452	105
4	Socio-cultural groups	900	54	10
5	Others	10791	794	235
6	Ethnic Militias	33	24	1
7	Political Parties	2258	154	97
8	INEC	1948	309	65
9	The Courts	622	34	81
10	Civil Society	1198	161	81

Source: IMS Study, 2011

From the table, we observe that during the 2011 election period, among all the stakeholders, male politicians represented an overwhelming number of news source for the Nigerian media, followed by government officials and political

parties. While Female politicians and ethnic militias were the lowest source of news.

Table: 3
Percentage of Use of the Different Stakeholders as Subjects of Electoral News Items

S/N	Stakeholders	Print	Radio	Television
1	Female Politicians	2%	2%	4%
	Male Politicians	30%	25%	34%
	Others	31%	50%	16%
	Political Parties	28%	7%	14%
	INEC	9%	16%	32%

Source: IMS Study, 2011

The data in this table also show similarity to what we had in the previous table. While others, representing a variety in news subjects that are not stakeholders had the highest percentage across the media as news subject; male politicians represented the highest percentage of news subject among the stakeholders, this is followed by political parties, whereas female politicians were the least used in this category.

Table: 4
Publication of Relevant Items Favourable to the Genders, either in the Front Page or the Back Page

S/N	Stakeholders	Print Total
	Male Politicians on front page (MPFP)	934
	Male Politicians on back page (MPBP)	284
	Female Politicians on front page (FPFP)	33
	Female Politicians on Back page (FPBP)	25

Source: IMS STUDY, 2011

In area of prominence, the print media demonstrates a preference for male politicians to the female going by the data in the above table. As illustrated in the table above, male politicians appeared on front pages of Nigerian newspapers 934 times while female politicians appeared only 33 times. This disparity was also noted in the use of both sexes on back page. Male politicians appeared 284 times

on pack page stories while female politicians appeared a mere 25 times. The data from the study is clearly indicative of the Nigerian media marginalization of the female politicians, demonstrating similarity with what obtains from other countries we have seen and support the hypothesis from different scholars of the low media coverage of women in politics which some have argued has serious implication for women participation and success in the political process and for democracy in general.

Other recent studies for example, Oso & Adenle (2014) study of Nigerian media coverage of female politicians in the build up to the 2011 election showed the following similar results: Politicians Wives had prominence more than actual female politicians. Most of the publications on female politicians are from event coverage that details personal affairs of the female politicians such as attendance to social events, weddings etc. No stories on their political mandates, upcoming elections or their manifestos. Rather, the stories concentrated on female politicians' marital life, social events attended and similar issues, thus, corroborating other scholars' empirical data on mediated silenced visibility of the Nigerian female which amounts to mediated tokenism pattern of coverage.

Overall we found a worrying trend: female politicians mediated invisibility and *voicelessness*. Their faces are 'seen' but 'not heard' aligning to the age long cultural practice that defines the Nigerian woman. She is meant to be 'seen and not heard'. Despite the advances of feminism and increases in women's descriptive representation in the corridors of power, the quantity and quality of media coverage of women remains truly insignificant.

The concern with this pattern of mediated coverage is that as documented, gender biases disseminated by the media are significant because they can have electoral consequences; at a time when politics is thoroughly mediated, voters

respond to candidates largely in accordance with information (and entertainment) received from mass media. If voters respond and act according to information from the media no wonder the only woman presidential candidate for the 2011 elections Mrs. Jubril from Jos in Plateau state northern Nigeria, did not receive any vote even from women. When the media has continually ignored and silenced her by rendering her voiceless she becomes inconsequential. Corner (2003, p. 75) is then right as he argues that, the media have become the public sphere in which the identity of the politician as a “person of qualities” is constructed, and the strength of these media-performative criteria are often such as to disqualify certain candidates either from becoming public political figures at all or at least from competing for high office.

Several studies have also shown that perceptions of female and male candidates are influenced by gender differences in media coverage, resulting in significant disadvantages for women candidates (Kahn 1994). This is also what played out in the Nigerian case, since female politicians are seldom heard, many Nigerians may not even be aware of their political ambitions and capabilities. When they are heard they appear as a token to fulfill all righteousness. No wonder many women's reluctance in venturing into politics. To further demonstrate the symbolic annihilation of female politician, in 1999, the country embarked on a contentious political issue concerning electoral bill to prepare her for the 2003 elections. The senate passed the bill in the midst of controversy thereby creating an atmosphere of noisy debate yet the female members of the house were not heard. Anyanwu (2001) captures the situation, as she recounts:

The visibility of women in elected offices remains surprisingly low despite the significant increase in their numbers in this republic. Like women in other spheres, they are seen more in pictures, and their voices continue to be muffled. In the week of October 15 to 19, for instance, the most contentious political issue in the country was the electoral bill, the law to guide the conduct of the next

election. The Senate had passed it with controversial provisions, sparking a noisy debate in the media. In that week, the voices of women in the federal legislature were barely heard. Where were they? Did they not contribute to the debates on the floors of the Senate and House of Representatives? What were their views on the points of contention? It was a mystery.

Similar situations are rife in the Nigerian polity especially at this time when the Nigerian polity is heated with important issues in politics, economy, corruption etc. How many times have we heard the voice of a female politician in these raging issues? Anecdotal evidence will show that women fade out, they rarely comment, their views are seldom sought by the media except the issue relates to women and children.

A critical look at media portrayal of women politicians indicate that women depiction by the media may possibly be influenced by the nature of Nigerian politics which is male dominated. Aluko & Ajani (2006) consent to the male dominated nature of Nigerian politics as they quote Bucknor-Akerele, a former Deputy Governor of Lagos state of Nigeria as she states:

The electorate discriminates against women believing and behaving as if women are trespassers in politics while the men in politics are regarded as being in their own turf. Worse still the men, resist our presence. They want to see us confined to the home front. They see politics as a terrain reserved for men only.

The Nigerian media gendered framework for political reporting is influenced and reinforced by the ways in which Nigerian political system and parties are structured and function, which focuses on federal/state leaders rather than on other party personnel. Because women are rarely selected for strategic and visible party positions they also receive less media exposure and attention. Political parties in Nigeria, consider female candidates a risk on the grounds that

female politicians are naturally weak and not usually keen on violence. Political violence has emerged since the second republic as a popular strategy of many politicians in Nigeria in their bid to capture power. Since most of the Nigerian political activity revolves around thuggery, violence, bribery and rigging and the "god fatherism" syndrome which most women politicians seem not to have the muscle for, they also remain in the fringes of media coverage. Curiously some believe that the reason female politicians are ignored by the media is because female politicians do not make enough noise (Alake, 1997). Other political related factors that affect media construction/coverage of women politicians in Nigeria include:

- Successful women politicians constitute a very small subgroup of candidates available for media attention.
- Women candidates have unequal access to parties' available seats and also assigned to insignificant and decorative positions in the party.
- Few women in Nigeria venture into politics due to the cultural belief that politics is a male affair. The scarcity of female contenders also works against women becoming visible in electoral campaigns and being covered by the media.

Together, these gender-linked party barriers translate into additional media selection and description biases that do not apply to male politicians. Another set of gender filters that affect female but not male, politicians arises from the unique narrative styles that the largely male dominated reporters develop towards women politicians, reflecting traditional norms about women that is conservative. In such a narrative frame, women's political contributions are neglected, downplayed and marginalized because they are portrayed as exceptions to the socially defined female norms, and the women themselves lose their credibility when they are portrayed as stepping out of the prescribed gender role. The popular narrative frames tend to construct Nigerian women politicians as 'tough'

and ' loose', 'the superwoman' and 'goal getter' who is all out to use what she has to get what she wants. The way gender is represented in the media matter and it does have an influence on how we perceive and accept gender roles.

There is a further media- specific barrier. Some argue that women's lack of financial muscle in terms of political advertising also contribute to their being ignored by the media. Recent literature (Oso & Adenle, 2014; IMS, 2011; Aluko & Ajani, 2006; Corner, 2003; Gallagher, 2001 and Anyanwu, 2001) seem to support this, arguing that, predominantly, women access to the media in terms of readership profile and advertisements ratings are very low and this still reflects with the female politicians. Majority of the media political advertisement in Nigeria are sponsored by the male politicians, they certainly are making noise. However if we consider Ross (2004) position on the issue we may have a better explanation for these. According to him, "negligence of women's views is the news room rendition of society's patriarchal practice, replicating the hierarchy of power much in the same manner as the larger culture". The context of media descriptions of women politicians is therefore inextricably linked to the broad socio-economic, political and cultural context of the Nigerian society.

Media representations are not merely passive mirrors of the Nigerian society but an active participant in the struggle for maintaining the dominant culture. Gender-blind focus tendencies of the media therefore reflect power imbalances in social structures that exist in Nigeria. It explains the political social landscape of Nigeria at the moment, one that is deeply patriarchal with women politicians' representations better explained as 'tokenism'. The inequality that women experience in media coverage derives from dominant traditional understanding of gender roles and the way women are defined within the Nigerian culture. Shoemaker & Reese (1996, p.38) assertion decades ago provide an insightful explanation for this as they write: "both news and entertainment media content

is a cultural manifestation and therefore, represents a reality that is culturally constructed, with people portrayed as they exist in that culture.

Media low coverage and misrepresentation of women may, as documented in other studies, preclude many women from participating in politics; affect public perception of women politicians as well as prevent them from advancing in politics and succeeding therein.

Adopting Gender Aware Principles in Electoral Reporting and Reframing News Stories

Although there has been some progress concerning the improvement of women's political rights in Nigeria with the 35% affirmative action for women politically, this still does not seem to be reflected in the Nigerian media. Though Nigerian media are aware of gender mainstreaming principles, what we see is hardly enough to represent the progress that should have been seen by now. The gender roles we are presented with on a regular basis are still lagging behind in terms of showing better equitable gender representation. It is therefore, important that the media intentionally and proactively take gender into account in the gathering, coverage and reporting of their stories, as well as in their interactions with other stakeholders involved in electoral processes. The Nigerian media can do much more to mainstream gender in a holistic and meaningful way within their own organizations as well as in the electoral processes and activities by adopting these two principles:

- Factoring and Adopting Gender Principles in Electoral Reporting;
- Reframing of News Stories.

Factoring and Adopting Gender Principles in news media especially electoral reporting entails deliberate and analytical reporting that goes beyond the event to raise the underlying issues. It represents the media principles of investigative reporting which is the hallmark of media professionalism. It is also reflective of the

shift in media focus as proposed by Gender and development (GAD) . GAD is an approach that advocates for gender sensitivity in the following area: choice of what to cover or report; how to cover or report; the choice of language of delivery and the images to be associated with the coverage. These principles in practical terms imply that a media news report on elections should reflect some of these questions: whether more or fewer women are standing for elections during the period of coverage; what factors have contributed to the increase or decrease? Which political parties have fielded women candidates and which ones have not and why? Do the parties' manifestos address the issues of gender equality and women's right? According to Llanos & Nina (2011), including a gender 'filter' in news reporting, implies raising the awareness of journalists and media outlets as to their importance as agents of social change for building more equitable societies, and helping them move away from visions of reality that highlight men while failing to portray the presence and contributions of women in the different areas of social life.

Reframing

Scholars agree that media frames are 'central organizing idea or story lines that provide meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue' (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In short, a frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic. Framing is concerned with the presentation of issues in a particular way. "Media frames," Gitlin (1980) writes, "largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports." Media frames identify, prioritize, events and issues to which the public eye is directed. They also select the actors in those events or issues which news reporting renders prominent or controversial. Lakoff (2004) defines frames as mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the words we

use, the way we use them, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions as journalists. What is important is to understand that media reporting of issues using different frames influence the values that shape our views and our interpretation of events and people.

The deliberate selection of frames that is gender- sensitive, gender- neutral instead of gender blind is what we refer to as “Reframing”. Reframing is the purposeful and proactive change of the texts and pictures that dominate our news stories to reflect gender balance and position men and women equitably in the public sphere. It also means a deliberate use of language to engender gender balance in our news coverage. Language activates frames, as such the language we use as journalists, the way we use them, how much we use them, must consciously be done in such a manner as to be gender sensitive and inclusive.

Reframing is changing the way the public sees the world through our words and imageries. The easy way to reframe news stories will be, using more facts and figures and `allowing the news stories to be dominated with perspectives of men and women. When telling every story we not only choose 'who' and 'what' to include inside the frame but 'who' and 'what' to leave out. Therefore to reframe, the media must choose to be gender balanced in the 'who' and 'what' to include in a news story. It is important to acknowledge as observed by different schools of thought that organizational, social, economic and cultural roots of media content, which determine available information and construction of such information may seriously impair and constrain the media from reframing.

Conclusion

What we have seen from this review substantiates evidence from literature on continued women invisibility in the Nigerian news media in general and politics in particular;Howeevr ,from the discourse we observe that while women are

marginalized in news discourse generally, in politics there are largely absent. When tokenly visible, they are silent. The analysis also reveal the connectedness of the female gender and media representation. The consistency of this discourse with previous literature points to the continued need for constant scholarly debate and analysis. It points to the need for the development of new and innovative approaches, which this work has made some contributions to. Since what we have presents an already problematic prevalent issue in media representation of women, the discourse continues. Although this paper have argued that media construction of women in politics and their invisibility in the media are significant in women's political participation in Nigeria as in other countries, it is instructive to also point out that much of what the media writes results from what they get from the society. Socio-cultural factors strongly influence media construction of women. Women politicians can help media scale up their coverage as well as engage in reframing by proactively partnering with the media in positively projecting women and women's issues in public domain. Prominent women in the society can help create 'Gender Spaces in the media' by providing the media with regular communication 'on women' 'about women' and 'for women'.

Indeed, Gender Aware Journalism, gender-balance and non-stereotypical portrayal will be greatly achieved through a socially responsible media that incorporates a common reportorial focus and point of view for all political contenders irrespective of gender. This will engender the reduction of media reportage which deals with the presence of women in reductive terms, and minimize the stereotype-based media narrations that perpetuate a vision of women (in politics) based on gender difference rather than on equality; on strangeness rather than on parallel or similar interests. This will also enrich the quality of Nigerian journalistic practice as well as promote women's active participation in governance and politics.

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