

Breaking Barriers of Male Chauvinism: A Case of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala

Inyang Etim Bassey

Department of History and International Studies,
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

Email: Inyangbassey18@gmail.com

Amiye Ruth

Department of History and International Studies,
University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

Email: ruthgaigbe@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Nigerian society still abounds with antiquated and anti-humanist beliefs that portray women as a weaker group and relegate them to inferior positions without regard to their mental capacity and educational competencies. Evidently, Nigerian women are not only increasingly marginalised from advancing in their career lives, but recent studies have shown that they are also excluded from having a political and economic career, which has significant importance to their economic advancement and sustainability, with the sole notion that the women are incapable of initiating any meaningful development. Although there are no constitutional barriers to women's increased participation in social, political, and economic advancement, there are societal and cultural barriers that stymie women's political and economic advancement. Some of these barriers include, but are not limited to, traditions, religious practice, work-life imbalance, and discriminatory organisational structures, among others. The paper employs both secondary and tertiary sources of data and adopts the historical research method in assembling and interrogating the data sourced for this research. The study argued that despite the general antiquated and anti-humanist belief that women are incapable of initiating any meaningful development in Nigerian society, findings from this study indicate that few Nigerian women have distinguished themselves both nationally and internationally, and one of such individuals is Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, who has not only broken barriers of male chauvinism in the global landscape but has also redefined the status quo of women.

Keywords: Gender inequality; male chauvinism, career advancement, gender stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of women's lives. The social interactions and activities of men and women in Nigeria are governed, as in other male-dominated nations, by patriarchal cultural norms and socialization systems that prioritize the interests of males above those of women. The gender roles of men and women impose barriers on women's access to leadership positions (Olojede, 2004). 76% of public servants in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service, which is the country's largest single employer, are men, while 24% are women (Olojede,

2004). Also, in spite of the appointment of women to the position of Permanent Secretaries, they hold less than 14% of the total management level positions in the Nigerian public sector.

Studies on women's participation in the formal sector of the economy were conducted by scholars including Anker (1997), among others, and they attested to the fact that not only is women's participation in the formal sector low, but that women also face discrimination in terms of occupational segregation. Vertical segregation, in which women hold non-strategic roles in the workplace, or horizontal segregation, in which women have lower-paying and lower-status employment, are two possible explanations. In organizations, they seldom ever hold the highest positions, and females don't seem to advance as quickly as men do (Eno 48). In spite of making up 40% of the global labor force, they still hold an unacceptably small percentage of managerial positions, with only a small minority breaching the glass ceiling to land the top jobs.

In recent years, evidence abounds to the fact that many African countries have geared their efforts towards improving women's representation in all spheres of governance in both the public and private sectors by adopting certain measures such as quota systems, capacity building, and representations set by political parties (Lewu, 2015). Sub-Saharan countries have tried to introduce more women at leadership and decision-making levels, particularly in their public sectors. In order to prevent gender-based discrimination and other unfair practices, as well as to promote diversity in leadership and management positions within the public sector, governments have also passed laws and national regulations. Yet, in comparison to their male colleagues, women continue to be largely excluded in the halls of power and in positions of decision-making (Ibekwe, 2018). Although the number of women joining the workforce in the public sector has been continuously increasing, only a small number of them manage to advance their careers as leaders and decision-makers. Rather, they are concentrated in larger numbers at lower levels of leadership/management in the workplace (Ebo, 2015). For instance, between 2019 to 2022, of all the forty-nine Federal Universities in Nigeria, only five (5) women occupy the position of Vice Chancellors Prof. Lilian Imuetinyan Salami VC, University of Benin, Prof. Florence Banku Obi, VC University of Calabar, Prof. Nnannaya Oti, VC Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Prof. Adenike Temidayo Oladiji, VC Federal University of Technology, Akure, and Prof. Folasade Tolulope Ogunsola, VC University of Lagos, the remaining forty-four Federal Universities in Nigeria are headed by male Vice Chancellors. Similarly, most of the senior professional and administrative positions in Nigeria's public sector are held by men which show the lopsided nature of Nigeria administrative system.

In Nigeria, there are numerous obstacles and difficulties that prevent women from reaching the highest levels of leadership in the public sector. As a result, a number of studies have discovered certain obstacles that exist within the society, the system, and the organizations that have contributed to the underrepresentation of women at the decision-making level. Even if women are capable and qualified, a number of obstacles prevent them from taking on leadership and decision-making positions, including sociocultural attitudes, gendered organizational structures, structural hurdles, restrictive laws, and gender conventions and stereotypes. There is ample evidence that the majority of society looks to women to fulfill conventional gender responsibilities like caring for the home, raising children, and caring for the elderly (Ojo, 2016). Because they are expected to continuously fulfill the endless tasks of these core positions. Such

historically defined societal roles have deprived African women of opportunity for advancement (Ojo, 2016). For this and other reasons, the few women who even succeed in assuming better roles and positions in their respective organizations do not survive for a long period of time. Though suffice it to say therefore that in spite of all these cultural and societal challenges, some Nigeria women like Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala have broken male chauvinism by attaining some certain positions exclusively assumed as reserved for only men and therefore present the Nigeria women a golden image in international arena.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this paper is to examine breaking barriers of male chauvinism-a case of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

In line with the main objective, the research aims to:

1. assess the patriarchal nature of Nigeria society and the current status of Nigeria and African women in their engagement in the public sector in Nigeria;
2. examine personal, religious, cultural norms, and structural barriers to women's advancement in the public sector in Nigeria;
3. indicate the way forward in order to overcome barriers to the advancement of women leaders in the public sector in Nigeria

RESEARCH METHOD

In order to achieve stated objectives in research, meticulous approach in terms of methodology becomes necessary. In other words, it is an evidence of scholarship should the researcher utilize a wide range of sources. In the course of this research, both private and public libraries were consulted. Also, historical methodology was adopted in this research where the researcher utilized available sources of information. These include primary and tertiary sources. The reason behind the adoption of this source was to clarify the areas unexplained by written sources which were unclear and difficult to understand. Interviews and other information obtained from field work were utilized to validate and authenticate information gathered from other sources. Some of sources include text books, magazines, journals, articles, newspapers, and online sources which complemented the other sources in shading more light on the subject matter.

BRIEF BACKGROUND OF DR. NGOZI OKONJO IWEALA

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was born on the 13th of June 1954 at Ogwashi-Uku in Delta State, Nigeria to the family of Prof. Chukuka Okonjo. Okonjo-Iweala was educated at Queen's School Enugu, St. Anne's School Molete Ibadan, Oyo State; and the International School Ibadan, she arrived in the US in 1973 to study at Harvard University and graduated at magna cum laude with an AB in Economics in 1976. Okonjo-Iweala received an A.B. degree in economics (1976) from Harvard University and a Master in City Planning degree (1978) and a Ph.D. in regional economics and development (1981) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

She held two positions at the World Bank: the first as managing director of operations from 2007 to 2011 after serving as managing director of operations and vice president and corporate secretary of the World Bank Group from 1982 to 2003. She oversaw an operating portfolio of \$81 billion spread over Africa, South Asia, Europe, and Central Asia in the latter post. During the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 and the global food-price crisis of 2008–2009, she also served as the project manager for many World Bank initiatives to help developing nations. As Nigeria's finance minister in 2003–06 and again in 2011–15, Okonjo-Iweala introduced reforms to reduce corruption and increase transparency in public finances (Oluwole, 2022). In addition, she was briefly the country's foreign minister in 2006. In 2012 she ran unsuccessfully for the presidency of the World Bank in the first contested election for that position, which is traditionally held by an American.

Okonjo-Iweala held leadership and advisory positions in scores of international, nongovernmental, and charitable organizations, including the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI); the African Union, as chair of the African Risk Capacity Group—an agency established to help African countries prepare for and respond to extreme weather events and other natural disasters and as a special envoy to negotiate international financial assistance for combating the COVID-19 pandemic; the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate; the International Commission on Financing Global Education; the Rockefeller Foundation; and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Oluwole, 2022). She also served as a senior adviser to Lazard Ltd. and as a board member of Standard Chartered PLC and Twitter. She was the recipient of a great many awards and honours from international organizations, national governments, charities, and universities around the world. In 2019 she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Okonjo-Iweala was put forth by Muhammadu Buhari, the president of Nigeria, for the job of WTO Director General in 2020. Despite the fact that WTO members from all areas overwhelmingly supported her candidacy, it was effectively blocked by the past administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, who favoured the South Korean nominee, Yoo Myung-Hee (Steve-Overly, 2021). The required level of agreement among WTO members was ultimately reached in February 2021, when the incoming Joe Biden administration of the United States declared its support for Okonjo-Iweala. She is Nigerian-American economist who served as the seventh Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) from 2021. She is the first woman and the first African to head the WTO.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study on breaking barriers of male chauvinism a study of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala is anchored on the theory of person-centered perspective and feminist theory. In understanding the position, experience, and progress of African women in leadership roles and advancement in the public sector, scholars (e.g., Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009) argue that there is a need to examine cultural, historical, political, and economic contexts depending on the theoretical frameworks and paradigms developed, this is because the study of women in Western countries might not be appropriate enough to understand gender issues in Africa. The dominant theoretical frameworks of this study relied on the person-centered perspective, and scholars began to question whether this approach can be applied in contexts such as Africa. Critics of such an approach argue that scholars

should start seeing gender as a system, an identity, and power relations between men and women (Ely & Padavic 18). Accordingly, these critiques suggested that a meso-level approach connecting organizational structures and practices (macro-level) with gender identity (microlevel) is appropriate. Thus, in order to study gender and leadership/management in African organizations, the expanded meso-level approach, which includes the unique socio-historical, political, economic, and cultural context of Africa, is imperative. This is because this approach incorporates the individual level, the organizational level, and the societal level

On the other hand, according to Joyce Mbaebie (2018), "gender" and "patriarchy" are the two essential terms that are at the heart of the feminist discussion and form the foundation of feminist theory. According to her, the term "gender" does not serve as a substitute for "sex" or the biological distinction between a man and a woman in the feminist context. Rather, it merely refers to the power relationships between men and women, how those relationships have been societally and customarily enforced, and how the power is used. On the other side, a patriarchal system is one in which the male is in charge of the female (in power and status terms). The term "feminism" was first used in France in 1872 and in the United States in 1910, and it was coined by a French socialist named Charles Fourier in 1837 (Bassow, 1999). Feminism covers a wide range of political, economic, social, and cultural topics, but its main message is still gender equality, equal opportunities for women, and the abolition of the oppressive practices connected to patriarchy. It also calls for greater access to education, be it public or private.

Feminist theory, according to Izugbara (2013), may be defined as a normative and intellectual discourse that shines a spotlight on social phenomena, situations, and experiences that pertain to women but have long been ignored due to dominant male perception. The feminist theory attempts to clarify the ambiguous boundaries between men and women within a social construct as well as the complexities surrounding the topics of gender inequality and gender roles. According to Keller (1996), the feminist theory was initially developed to explain and solve the increasing level of oppression experienced by women worldwide, without reference to tribe, nation, rank, or age. Feminism as a theory has developed into two main shifts over the years, one of which is the particularization and contextualization of the many experiences as they affect women, as opposed to the previous approach, which universalized the battle and lost some key components. The second dimension involves the shift from seeing women as categories to be focused on, to getting into such categorization, while exploring what makes up oppressive gender practices.

According to Soetan (2014), the feminist theory, despite being an old theory, started to gain traction after Susan Anthony's speech following her arrest for casting an illegal ballot in 1872. It then gained more traction in the early 1900s, a time marked by a rise in calls for the protection of women's rights and the protection of their right to vote. Since this period feminist campaigns have recorded remarkable success over the years, and has been identified as a major force in the process that has recorded historical changes in the establishment of women's rights especially in the west where issues that affect the wellbeing of women, for example, women's suffrage, freedom to make decisions as it affects her reproductive rights, education, equal employment and pay, and freedom to enter into contracts without the approval of the men in her lives. Since the last two decade, this theory have been greatly champion by the women all over the world

and Nigeria in particular as a means in which women all over the world express their fundamental God given right and also enjoy equal rights with the men (Ehirim, et al., 2022).

MALE CHAUVINISM AND NIGERIA WOMEN IN POLITICS

Historically, political discrimination of Nigerian women has a colonial history. Available historical record points to the fact that before the advent of colonialism, in the different communities which were eventually amalgamated as “Nigeria” women played significant political roles. The pre-colonial Hausa society paraded such influential and prominent women political leaders as Queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Daura and several others titled women as the *Magajiya*, *Iya* and *Mardanni*, who occupied very prominent political positions and wielded great influence in the daily administration of their cities (Amah 204). They need to mention here that this level of participation was recorded mainly before the introduction of Islamic reforms through the jihad of 1804. The reforms introduced the purdah system which imposed certain restriction on the socio-political activities of women. The pre-colonial Yoruba society in the other hand had palace ladies (wives of the kings or priestesses) who were addressed as the *Iyamode*, *Iyemole*, *Iyemonari* and *Iyale-ori* on high note. The Queen mother (Iya Oba) had a lot of influence and respect. It is interesting to note here that about five women had at one time or another been Oba out of more than thirty-eight predecessors to the present Oba (Amah 205). Uchendu (2008) using the Igbo experience observed that *Umuada* (a group of married women) were politically strong and influential in the pre-colonial Igbo society. However, women’s political influence started dwindling in the colonial period. It will justifiable to admit that African women prior to this period lost political as well as economic status under the colonial administration. The colonial administrators fail to see that Nigeria women have political roles and institution in their societies. Some of this development led the women to revolt against stringent colonial rules in 1929 popularly call the Aba women riot (Chuku, 2009).

The return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999 beacon some hope for the Nigeria women, Nigeria like other countries in the world began to respond to the clarion calls made variously by the United Nations to rid societies of all forms of discriminations especially gender-based discriminations. Nigeria took a bold step in the year 2000 when it adopted and passed into Law National Policy on Women guided by the Global Instrument on the Convention of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Federal Government of Nigeria in an attempt to implement the policy captured it in Nigeria Gender Parity (NGP) which was launched in 2007. This document is unequivocal in its assertion that “Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of life at the expense of the women” (Olufade, 2013). One area where this assertion is aptly reflected is in women representation. In fact, it is a key area in which women’s empowerment has floundered since democratization. However, local implementation of these programmes has remained weak and this is obvious in Nigeria’s political sphere, most especially at the state level where there have been few women as State governors or Speakers State House of Assembly since the beginning of the 4th Republic on May, 1999.

Available statistics indicate that in Nigeria, women constitute a greater proportion of the total population of about 49.36% (World Bank Report, 2012). In spite of this huge number, women are not well represented in governance. As the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2015) reveals, women only have 3% representation in all contested

positions in the 1999 General Elections, 4% in 2003, 6% in 2007, and 11% in 2015 with the greater proportion of these being at the national level (Jacob, 2020). At present, as it is shown in the same statistics, out of the 109 seats available in the office of the Senate, only 7 (6.4%) are women while in the House of Representatives, only 25 (7%) are women.

The 2011 election results for instance suggest a regression from the apparent progress that followed the return to democracy in 1999. Only 9% of the candidates for the National Assembly elections in April 2011 were women. Only 13 of the 340 candidates who contested on behalf of the various political parties for the office of Governor were women. A mere 909 of the 10,037 candidates for available seats were women i.e (9.06%). With only 25 women elected to the 360 member of House of Representatives, Nigeria is now ranked 118 of 192 countries in terms of gender parity (Chuku, 2009). Women constitute half of the world's population and have contributed significantly to the well-being of the human race. In Nigeria for instance, women have always played five key roles' mother, producer, home manager, community organizer and social, cultural and political activist. Despite their large number and crucial functions, the male and female sexes as prescribed by most cultures, assign the subordinate position to women. As a consequence, women have long suffered various forms of discrimination, inequality, exclusion and violence (Agblajobi 42). Because of this, their participations and representation in political positions continue to be minimal. Women as a matter of fact are not reaping their share of benefit from the profound political, economic and social changes, transforming their world and their under representation in decision making levels in almost every country including Nigeria remains a major obstacle towards achieving the dividends of democratic governance and development.

Politically, Nigerian women are often marginalizing when it comes to political involvement. Economically, they constitute the majority of the peasant labour force in the agricultural sector, while most of the others occupy bottom of occupational ladder and continue to be channeled into service and domestic occupations. The consequence of the unequal status between men and women is high level of economics and political powerlessness among women, powerlessness in turn retard development of any level, politically, economically and socially.

PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY AND DR. NGOZI OKONJO IWEALA ELEVATION

In African society in general and Nigeria particular, the gender peculiarities and patriarchal construct remain the bane across virtually all spheres of life in the society. There is a greater level of gender sensitivity to the extent that boys are brought up to see themselves as superior sex to girls and as such, boys feel stronger, more important and indispensable, while the females are trained to see themselves as weaker sex or even as appendages to the men folk (Ojukwu 164). This is as a result of what Ibekwe (2018) describe as "natural factor" where she submits that "this natural factor of being born a man or a woman places women in a subservient position in the society and thus situates them mostly for indoor activities" (Ibekwe, 2018). It is believed that this silent but rigorous schooling into the patriarchal and matriarchal stereotype was ingrained in the traditional institution of the Nigerian society.

The female gender in Africa especially Nigeria seemed to be culturally suppressed resulting in upsurge in literature triggered by various feminist movements,

for example Women in Nigeria (WIN), National Women's Union, Federation of Ogoni Women Association, Non-governmental Women's Human Rights Organization, Federation of Nigeria Women's Society, Aba Market Women Organization, Abeokuta Women's Union, Widows Association of Nigeria among others (Madunagu, 2010). These organizations attend to different women's rights issues within the private sphere of the family and in the public arena, in such areas as sexual and reproductive health; poverty; economic empowerment; violence against women; property ownership; peace and security; leadership development and political participation, among others (Madunagu, 2010). Nigeria women encounter various forms of discrimination, physical and emotional torture that pervades all aspects of their life, from childhood till death. Women are being discriminated against in various ways. The subordination of women has actually exposed them to difficult obnoxious practices meted out to them in the name of culture and tradition. Asigbo and Ibekwe (2015) using the Igbo society experience decry thus:

In Igbo culture, due to the fact that patriarchal institution is giving prominence in the scheme of things, most of their laws or traditions are gender discriminatory, hence, there is no equity and freedom. Dialogue most times is reduced to the barest minimum in matters that concern women since they are considered to be on a lower sociopolitical scale from men (p. 236).

There are cases of African cultural practices, like widowhood rites in certain parts of Igbo land in the South East, female genital mutilation rites in Yoruba land in the West, the "Kule or Ba Shiga" system in Hausa land in the North and so on. The "Purdah" system also known as Bashiga is common amongst the Hausas of Northern Nigeria. The Purdah system for instance prevents Hausa women and young girls of puberty age from going out unescorted and getting involve in public life and activities.

This therefore implies that historically, many societies both during the ancient and modern periods support the idea of male domination over their female folks in many spheres of human endeavour. In the typical traditional African society such as Nigeria, women are not only perceived as inferior to men but are marginalized and denied equal opportunities. The general African belief is that the role of women starts and ends with running of the home and nothing more. Some are even of the opinion that women constitute the group at the bottom of the ladder in many developing countries, especially in Africa, in respect of employment, poverty, education, training and status and incapable of initiating any meaningful contribution to community development (Enemu, 1997). The literature on the subjugation of women to men's domination knowns no bound with such literature covering wide range of issues including the body, class and work, disability, the family, globalization, human rights, culture, race and vacuums, reproduction, science, sex, work, human trafficking and sexuality. In all cultures, women were rarely considered equal to their male counterparts. From the home as daughters, wife and mother, through the school, office and church, as student, employee and worshiper respectively, to the public sphere of life as in business and politics, women are known to have been discriminated, marginalized and dominated through the combination of gender based cultural norms and politics which were in favour of men (Mbaebie, 2018).

In ancient Rome for instance, an adulterous wife would be killed by her husband without trial, while the reverse attracted no punishment on the man. Ancient Hebrews also considered women as legally minor and thus preferred a male child to a female child who was seen as inferior to the former (Keller, 1996; Akujobi & Awhefeada, 2021). Pre-historical culture considered women as part of men's possession such that their wives' virginity is exclusively part of the personal estate of their husbands and the absence of which attracted severe punishment (Izugbar 18). African societies including Nigeria are equally replete with several cultural practices which tend to promote male superiority over female genders. In the case of Nigeria for instance, Enemuo (1997) has rightly observed that:

Nigerian communities approve such practices as preference of male child, payment of bride price, female circumcision or female genital mutilation (FGM), negative attitude to women toward childlessness, degrading widowhood practice and inheritance practices that discriminate against women, giving away girls in marriage early and women without their consent (p. 230).

Women participation in politics has become an issue attracting much attention in Nigeria. This attention is borne out of the fact that leadership has been the bane of Nigeria's political development. According to Achebe (1983) "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. An insight into the administrative procedure in Nigeria reveals nothing other than misplacement of priorities, over inflation of contracts, political corruption, vandalism, thuggery, victimization and violation of democratic principles (Achebe 8). It is clear that in Nigeria 62 years of existence as an independent nation, men have been at the mainstream of her political activities. Nigeria since 1960 has been under two forms of government; civilian and military. In these governments, there is no record showing that a woman had been the President or Head of State (Mrabure & Awhefeada, 2020). Governor or State Administrator beside the case of Mrs. Virginia Etiaba, the Deputy Governor of Anambra State who acted as Governor for some months as a result of the kangaroo impeachment of the then Governor Mr. Peter Obi in 2007.

The above scenario is to come to terms with the fact that male chauvinism in Nigeria is as a result of cultural norms, low educational attainment as well as cultural barriers which have been acknowledged as some of the serious impediments to the economic and political advancement of women. It is a common practice among some Nigerian families to contract marriage for young girls between the age of 14-18 years. This practice has been denying most Nigerian girls the opportunity of formal secondary education and further studies. The worst aspect of this practice is that many of these girls are forced to marry men who are old enough to be their fathers. The dwindling economy of our country is a strong blow to the educational opportunity of many women. Many parents are either unemployed or out of funds. It is very difficult to have normal square meals a day. In such families and circumstance, educating the children especially the girl child takes a second place after feeding. The girls in such home are given out in marriage or sent out into the street to hawk or even worse lured into prostitution to supplement the efforts of the parents. Low educational opportunities of women deny them big opportunity in political and economic contest and appointment into political position both nationally or internationally.

In spite of all these challenges associated with women in Nigeria society, some individual women have distinguished themselves socially, economically and politically both within the Nigeria political space and also internationally. One of these few individuals is Dr, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala is one of the few Nigerian women who in spite of the patriarchal society have stood out as one of the consequential woman economists who have held numerous positions not only nationally within the country but also in Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, and Europe. Since her elevation to lime light, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala have held different position hitherto perceived as male reserved positions within Nigeria, African continent, Asia, Europe, Latin American, North American among other continents. She has chaired different board such as chairmen Board of Gavi among others. She is a perfect negotiator and has brokered numerous agreements which have produced win-win outcome in negotiation.

ACHIEVEMENT OF DR. NGOZI OKONJO IWEALA

Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala has a long list of accomplishments in a variety of fields of human endeavor. Okonjo-Iweala is a nonresident distinguished fellow with Brookings' Global Economy and Development program's Africa Growth Initiative. She has almost 30 years of experience as an economist and expert in international development. She is the World Trade Organization's Director-General (WTO). She served as the board chair of the African Risk Capacity (ARC) and the Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (2016–2020). (2014-2020). She previously served as a board member of Twitter Inc. and Standard Chartered PLC as well as co-chair of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate. From September 2015 to October 2019, she worked as a senior adviser at Lazard. Additionally, Okonjo- Iweala was selected as the COVID-19 Special Envoy Finance for the African Union and the COVID-19 Special Envoy for the World Health Organization (Steve, 2021). Okonjo Iweala served as Nigeria's Finance Minister twice, from 2003 to 2006 and again from 2011 to 2015, in addition to serving briefly as Foreign Minister. She was the first woman to hold both positions. By implementing significant reforms that enhanced the efficiency of these two ministries and the operation of the government apparatus, she spent 25 years setting herself apart. As a development economist, she worked with the World Bank for 25 years, eventually moving up to the No. 2 position of Managing Director, Operation.

Dr. Okonjo-Iweala led the nation through numerous reforms ranging from macroeconomic to trade, financial, and real sector challenges while serving as Finance Minister and a development economist. She participated in trade negotiations with the Paris Club of Creditors while Finance Minister that resulted in the cancellation of \$30 billion of Nigeria's debt, including the outright cancellation of \$18 billion (Oluwole, 2022). Among her many accolades, Okonjo-Iweala has been named one of the 50 greatest world leaders, one of the eight female anti-corruption fighters chosen by Transparency International, one of the 25 most influential women, minister of the decade, and people's choice award by Nigeria's This Day newspaper (2020).

Additionally, she got the Aminu Kano Award for leadership and the worldwide system Award from the World Affairs Councils of America (2020).

(2020). She was recognized by Transparency International in 2010 as one of the eight female anti-corruption fighters who inspire women around the globe. She was named one of the 50 Greatest World Leaders by Fortune in 2015, one of the 100 Most Powerful Women in the World by Forbes for four years running, one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2014, and one of the Top 100 Women in the World by the U.K. Guardian in 2011.

Harvard University awarded Okonjo-Iweala a bachelor's degree in economics, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology awarded her a doctorate in regional economic and development. She holds 16 honorary degrees from institutions like Yale University, the University of Pennsylvania, Brown University, Tel Aviv University, and Trinity College, Dublin, and she is an Angelopoulos Global Public Leader at Harvard University's Kennedy School. She is also a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has written multiple books, including several on development and finance. She is the author of several books, including "Women and Leadership-Real Lives, Real Lessons" (Penguin Random House, 2020), "Fighting Corruption is Dangerous: The Story Behind the Headline" (MIT Press, 2018), "Reforming the Unreformable: Lessons from Nigeria" (MIT Press, 2012), and "The Debt Trap in Nigeria", which she co-edited with Charles Soludo and Mansour Muhtar. Most significantly, she made history as the first woman and first African to head the global trade body which hitherto was perceived as exclusive reserved position not only for men, but as position exclusive reserved for the white.

CONCLUSION

This study was intended to shed light on breaking barriers of male chauvinism using Ngozi Okonjo Iweala as a study. It examined the cultural, structural, and social barriers to women's advancement and representation in senior leadership and decision-making levels in the public sector. Nigeria is a signatory to virtually all international instruments and treaties on women emancipation and empowerment, yet the notion of male chauvinism still remain strong within Nigerian society. While the fact remains that African women in general and Nigeria women in particular are hugely excluded from the public life, study indicate that some individual like Ngozi Okonjo Iweala have made giant stride by breaking male chauvinism in certain area hitherto assumed to be exclusively reserved for the male fold. Her land mark achievements have therefore shown that there is indeed some hope and possibility to see more women in senior leadership roles in the public sector that may reduce male domination in public space.

This study has identified several complex and pervasive barriers to women's progress in senior leadership and decision-making roles in the public sector in Nigeria. Women face social and cultural barriers, structural and organizational hurdles, and systemic and institutional depriving factors. For example, in most parts of Africa, social norms and patriarchy have created discriminatory practices and beliefs that men are expected to lead in any circumstance while women are expected to follow, contributing to the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership roles. These social biases and stereotypes also exist in the organizational environment and are working against women in terms of promotion, recruitment, and support, undermining the equal representation of women in decision-making roles. It is therefore conclusive that any corrective measure adopted to address the low participation of women in public sector will only be

superficial unless the nation's socio-economic, cultural and public sector that limit women empowerment since the pre-colonial period are decisively addressed.

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