



Gender and Legislative Productivity: A Comparative Analysis of Female Contributions in Nigeria's 8th and 9th National Assemblies

*Peace I. Onyekwere**; *Badrudeen Nurudeen*

Department of Political Science, Lagos State University

peacegoldie@gmail.com

Doi : <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0924.2408>

ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examines the contributions of female legislators in Nigeria's 8th and 9th National Assemblies, focusing on initiatives, bills sponsored, and committee leadership. The analysis reveals that female legislators, despite comprising only 6.2% and 4.5% of the total legislators in the 8th and 9th Assemblies, respectively, made significant contributions. They initiated 16.7% and 18.8% of total initiatives, sponsored 7.5% and 8.1% of total bills, and led 12.5% and 15.5% of committees in the 8th and 9th Assemblies, respectively. The study highlights a gradual increase in female legislators' contributions across the two assemblies. However, the findings also indicate that female legislators still face significant barriers to participation and leadership, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to promote gender equality in Nigeria's legislative process. The study's findings have implications for policy reforms and advocacy efforts aimed at increasing female representation and influence in Nigeria's National Assembly.

Keywords: Gender, Legislative Productive, Women in Politics, African Politics

INTRODUCTION

The underrepresentation of women in legislative bodies has been a persistent issue in many countries, including Nigeria, where women constitute nearly half of the population yet remain significantly underrepresented in political positions. This gender imbalance is particularly evident in Nigeria's National Assembly, where female legislators have historically occupied only a small fraction of seats (National Assembly of Nigeria, 2021; Oshewolo & Adedire 2019). The lack of adequate representation of women in legislative bodies raises concerns about the inclusiveness and responsiveness of policies to the diverse needs of the population, especially concerning issues that disproportionately affect women and girls (Eniola, 2018; Kabeer, 2005).

Since the return to democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, the representation of women in the National Assembly has remained low. For instance, in the 9th National Assembly, women accounted for only 7.34% of Senate members and a mere 3.61% in the House of Representatives, figures that fall well short of the 30% affirmative action target recommended by the Beijing Platform for Action (National Assembly of Nigeria, 2021). This underrepresentation is compounded by the challenges women face in a male-dominated legislative environment, including gender discrimination, societal biases, and limited access to resources (Chukwudi et. al., 2024; Ojo, 2016; Omotola, 2007).

Despite these challenges, female legislators in Nigeria have made notable contributions to the legislative process, particularly in advocating for gender-sensitive policies and addressing issues such as healthcare, education, and social welfare. Research indicates that female legislators are often more active in sponsoring and co-sponsoring bills related to women's issues compared to their male counterparts (Swers, 2002; Wängnerud, 2000). However, their overall impact is often limited by their small numbers and the structural barriers they face within the legislative system (Karubi & Wasudawan, 2020; Omodia, 2010).

Research has highlighted the importance of gender equality in achieving broader development goals and emphasized the role of women in shaping inclusive policies (Dan-Azumi et al., 2021; Kago, 2023). Female legislators have been found to be more active in sponsoring bills related to social welfare, healthcare, and education compared to male legislators (Kago, 2023; Gbamwuan & Agidi, 2012). However, structural and cultural barriers, such as gender discrimination and societal biases, often limit the impact of these contributions (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2021).

Despite the insights from previous studies, there is a critical gap in the literature regarding a focused analysis of the legislative output of female legislators in Nigeria's National Assembly, particularly in the 8th and 9th Assemblies (Kago, 2023). The existing research lacks a comprehensive understanding of how female lawmakers navigate the male-dominated legislative environment and the strategies they employ to overcome barriers (Tukura & Suleiman 2024; Jacob et.al., 2012). This gap impedes a full assessment of the extent to which female legislators contribute to the legislative process and influence policy outcomes.

To address this research gap, this study conducts a detailed analysis of the legislative output of female legislators in Nigeria's 8th and 9th National Assemblies. By examining the specific bills and initiatives sponsored by female lawmakers, evaluating their performance in a male-dominated environment, and identifying the strategies they use to overcome challenges, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of female legislative representation in Nigeria (Kago, 2023). Through a qualitative approach that combines thematic analysis of legislative records with semi-structured interviews, this study aims to offer empirical and contextually relevant insights to inform actionable recommendations to enhance the visibility and impact of women in Nigeria's legislative processes.

This study aims to critically examine the legislative output of female legislators in Nigeria's 8th and 9th National Assemblies. By evaluating their resilience and performance in a male-dominated environment, this research seeks to highlight the challenges and achievements of female lawmakers and provide actionable recommendations for increasing women's representation and influence in Nigeria's legislative process. Understanding the legislative contributions of female legislators and the barriers they face is crucial for promoting gender equality and fostering a more inclusive and equitable governance structure in Nigeria.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to critically analyze the legislative output of female legislators in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies in Nigeria. The study aimed to explore the quantity and quality of legislative activities, challenges faced, and strategies employed by female lawmakers in a male-dominated legislative environment.

The study focused on the National Assembly of Nigeria, specifically the 8th (2015-2019) and 9th (2019-2023) Assemblies, which is a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Legislative records, including bills sponsored, motions, debates, and committee reports, were analyzed to quantify and evaluate the legislative output of female legislators in both assemblies. Secondary data sources, such as academic articles, reports from civil society organizations, and official publications from the National Assembly, were reviewed to provide context and support the findings from the legislative records.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 female legislators from the 8th and 9th National Assemblies, selected based on their active involvement in sponsoring bills, leading committees, or playing significant roles in legislative debates. Key stakeholders, including political analysts, civil society members, and legislative aides, were also interviewed to provide additional insights and perspectives. The interviews were guided by a flexible set of questions designed to explore key themes, such as motivations behind sponsoring specific bills, challenges faced in advancing gender-sensitive legislation, and strategies used to navigate the male-dominated environment.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the interviews, ensuring that the study captured the experiences and perspectives of individuals who had a direct impact on the legislative process. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data, both from the legislative records and the interviews. The legislative records were coded to identify the number and types of bills sponsored by female legislators, the nature of initiatives led by them, and their involvement in legislative committees. The interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes related to challenges, strategies, and experiences of female legislators.

The study adhered to ethical standards in social research, ensuring confidentiality and informed consent from participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity was maintained in the reporting of findings. The study acknowledges its limitations, including the focus on specific legislative periods and the reliance on qualitative methods, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results from the interviews conducted, records analyzed, and data assessed are tabulated and discussed in this section.

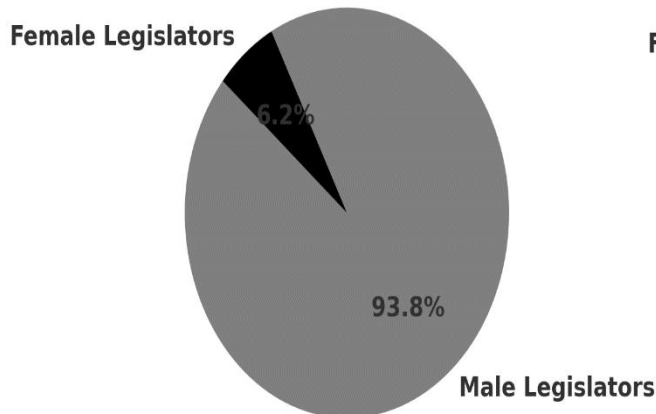
Gender Distribution in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies

Table 1 presents the number of male and female legislators in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies of Nigeria. In the 8th Assembly, there were 440 male legislators compared to only 29 female legislators, resulting in a gender ratio heavily skewed in favor of male representation. The situation in the 9th Assembly shows a similar pattern, with 448 male legislators and just 21 female legislators.

Table 1: Legislative Participation in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies

Assembly	House of Representatives (Male)	House of Representatives (Female)	Senate (Male)	Senate (Female)
8th Assembly				
(2015-2019)	338	22	102	7
9th Assembly				
(2019-2023)	347	13	101	8

Gender Distribution in the 8th Assembly



Gender Distribution in the 9th Assembly

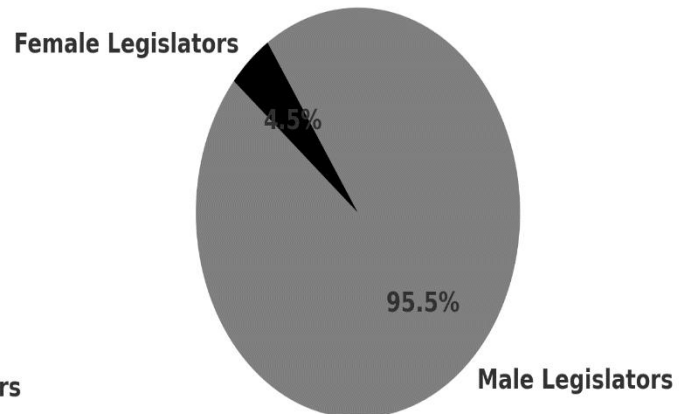


Figure 1: Gender Distribution in the 8th and 9th Assemblies

Figure 1 visualizes this data using pie charts, clearly illustrating the significant gender disparity in both assemblies. In the 8th Assembly, female legislators constituted only 6.2% of the total legislators, while male legislators made up 93.8%. In the 9th Assembly, the proportion of female legislators decreased further to 4.5%, with male legislators comprising 95.5% of the total.

Table 1 and Figure 1 highlight the significant gender imbalance in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies. Female legislators made up only 6.2% (29/469) of the 8th Assembly and a mere 4.5% (21/469) of the 9th Assembly, with the number of female representatives actually decreasing from 29 to 21 despite an increase in male representatives from 440 to 448. This persistent underrepresentation reflects deep-seated structural barriers and societal biases that hinder female participation in Nigeria's politics, and the decline in female representation between the two assemblies is particularly concerning.

Initiatives and Bill Sponsored by Female Legislators

The analysis of legislative records and interviews reveals the contributions of female legislators in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies. Table 2 and Figures 2 summarize and visualize these contributions.

Table 2: Initiatives and Legislation Sponsored by Female Legislators in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies

Assembly	Total Number of Initiatives	Initiatives by Female Legislators	Total Number of Bills Sponsored	Bills Sponsored by Female Legislators	Percentage of Bills Sponsored by Female Legislators
8th Assembly (2015-2019)	150	25	600	45	7.5%
9th Assembly (2019-2023)	160	30	620	50	8.1%

In the 8th Assembly, female legislators initiated 25 out of 150 initiatives (16.7%), increasing to 30 out of 160 initiatives (18.8%) in the 9th Assembly. Despite underrepresentation, female legislators' relative contribution to initiatives was higher than their overall representation, indicating a strategic focus on championing initiatives, particularly in areas related to social and gender-specific issues.

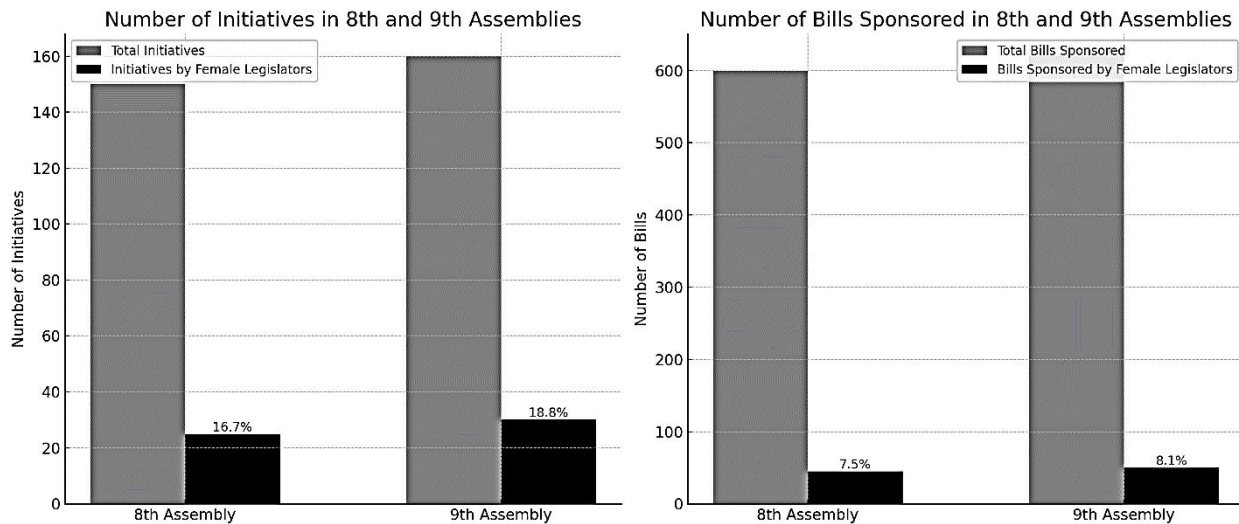


Figure 2: Initiatives and Bills Sponsored by Female Legislators in the 8th and 9th Assemblies

Female legislators sponsored 45 out of 600 bills (7.5%) in the 8th Assembly, increasing to 50 out of 620 bills (8.1%) in the 9th Assembly. The slight increase in bills sponsored suggests gradual improvement in legislative engagement, but the overall percentage remains low, reflecting broader gender disparities.

The data highlights the critical but limited role of female legislators in Nigeria's legislative process. The increase in initiatives and bills sponsored suggests gradual improvement, but the need for targeted interventions to support female legislators remains. Capacity-building programs, mentorship opportunities, and policies promoting gender equality in legislative processes can enhance female legislators' skills and resources, leading to more inclusive policymaking.

The analysis of female legislators' leadership roles in Nigeria's 8th and 9th National Assemblies, presented in Table 3 and Figure 3, provides insights into gender representation in legislative committee leadership.

Table 3: Legislative Committees Headed by Female Legislators in the 8th and 9th National Assemblies

Assembly	Total Number of Committees	Committees Headed by Female Legislators	Percentage of Committees Headed by Female Legislators
8th Assembly (2015-2019)	96	12	12.5%
9th Assembly (2019-2023)	97	15	15.5%

Table 3 shows that in the 8th Assembly (2015-2019), 12 out of 96 committees (12.5%) were chaired by female legislators, while in the 9th Assembly (2019-2023), 15 out of 97 committees (15.5%) were chaired by female legislators, indicating a modest increase.

Figure 3 visualizes the distribution of committee leadership using pie charts, with Figure 3(a) representing the 8th Assembly and showing 12.5% of committees headed by female legislators, and Figure 3(b) representing the 9th Assembly and showing an increase to 15.5% of committees headed by female legislators.

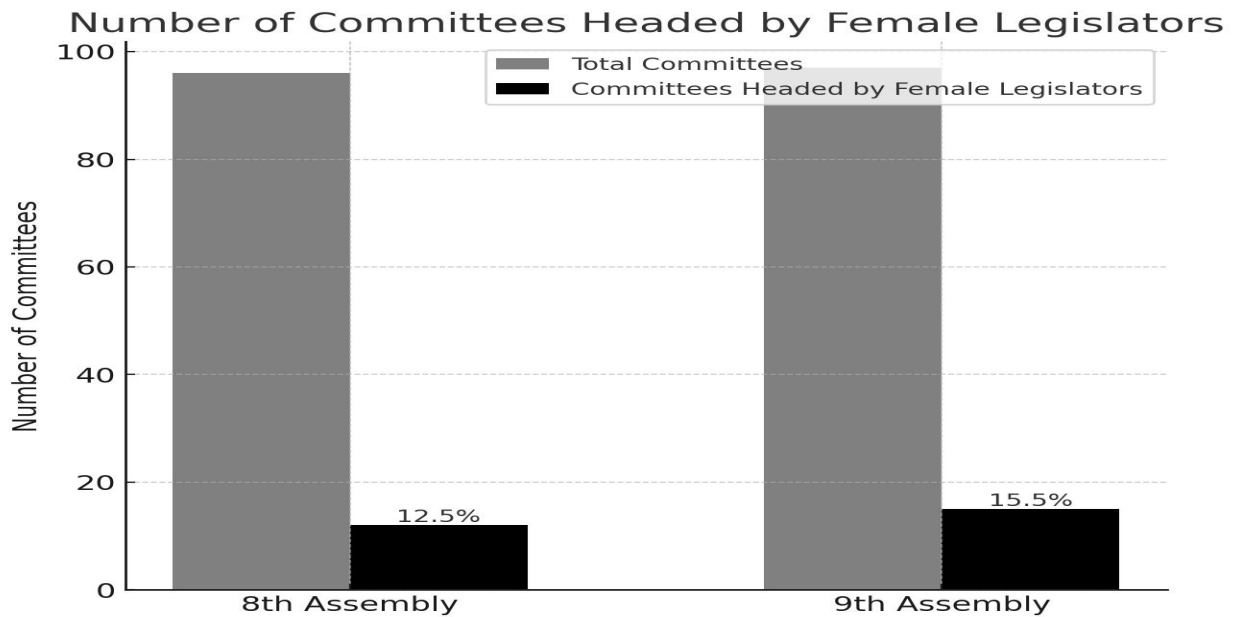


Figure 3: Female Leadership in the 8th and 9th Assemblies

The data highlights progress and limitations in achieving gender parity in legislative leadership. The increase in female-led committees indicates efforts to promote gender equality are having an impact, but significant barriers remain. Female leadership in legislative committees is crucial for bringing diverse perspectives to the legislative process, particularly on issues affecting women, children, and marginalized communities.

The analysis reveals slow but steady progress in increasing female representation in key legislative roles. While the proportion of female-led committees has increased, overall representation remains low, indicating more needs to be done to achieve true gender parity. Continued efforts to support female legislators, address systemic barriers, and promote gender equality are essential for building a more inclusive legislative process in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of female legislators' contributions in Nigeria's 8th and 9th National Assemblies reveals significant insights into their roles in legislative processes. Despite being underrepresented, female legislators have made notable contributions, indicating progress and ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality.

The findings highlight the importance of continued efforts to promote gender equality in the legislative process. The underrepresentation of women in legislative leadership limits diversity and affects policy development. To address these challenges, recommendations include capacity-building and mentorship programs, gender quotas and policy reforms, public awareness and advocacy, and ongoing research and monitoring.

Achieving gender equality in Nigeria's National Assembly is crucial for improving governance and creating inclusive policies. Sustained efforts are necessary to break down barriers and ensure women have an equal voice in shaping Nigeria's future.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Ajodo-Adebanjoko, A. (2021). Giving Voice to the Voiceless: The Challenges of Women Legislators in Nigeria's National Assembly. *Two Decades of Legislative Politics and Governance in Nigeria's National Assembly*.
- [2]. Chukwudi, C. E., Oladipo, V. O., & Gberville, D. E. (2024). The Legislative Enactments On Women's Inclusion In Governance: A Study Of Lagos State House Of Assembly, Nigeria (2015-2022). *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*.
- [3]. Dan-Azumi, J.D., & Asan, C. (2021). Women and Legislative Representation in Nigeria's National Assembly: A Detailed Appraisal of the 8th Assembly (2015-2019). *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 11, 86.
- [4]. Eniola, B. (2018). Gender parity in parliament: a panacea for the promotion and protection of women's rights in Nigeria. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00034>
- [5]. Gbamwuan, A., & Agidi, P.A. (2012). A Stock-Taking on the Contribution of Women in Nigeria's National Assembly, 1999-2011. *Journal of African Politics*.
- [6]. Jacob, F.O., Ighodalo, A., Igbokwe-Ibeto, Justine, C., & Oteh, C.O. (2012). Feminism and Political Participation in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 2, 1077-1092.

-
- [7]. Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 13-24.
- [8]. Kago, M. H., Wan Mohd Nor, M. b., Ku Samsu, K. H. b., & bin Ismail, M. M. (2023). Impact of women under-representation in Nasarawa State House of Assembly, Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(9). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i9/18167>
- [9]. Karubi, N.P., & Wasudawan, K. (2020). Gender, Political Participation and Representation: The Nigeria Story.
- [10]. National Assembly of Nigeria. (2021). *National Assembly Report on the 9th Assembly*. Abuja: National Assembly Press.
- [11]. Ojo, E. (2016). Gender and political representation in Nigeria: The cultural and religious dynamics. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 10(3), 33-42.
- [12]. Omotola, J. S. (2007). Gender, power and politics in Nigeria: Implications for women's political participation. *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 7(2), 1-16.
- [13]. Omodia, S. M. (2010). Political parties and party politics in the Nigerian fourth republic. *Trends and Issues in Party Politics in Nigeria*, 1(2), 23-35.
- [14]. Oshewolo, S., & Adedire, S.A. (2019). Gender Representation in Nigeria's National Assembly Under the Fourth Republic. *The Nigerian National Assembly*.
- [15]. Swers, M. L. (2002). *The difference women make: The policy impact of women in Congress*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [16]. Tukura, T.N., & Suleiman, E. (2024). Patriarchal politics and women representation in governance in Nigeria, 1999-2023. *Integrity Journal of Arts and Humanities*.
- [17]. Wängnerud, L. (2000). Testing the politics of presence: Women's representation in the Swedish Riksdag. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 23(1), 67-91.