

# Women in Economic Leadership in Nigeria

REPORT, OCTOBER 2024



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# INTRODUCTION

Although the proportion of women leadership in government, business, higher education continues to increase, there are significant gaps and women remain underrepresented in top leadership positions in virtually every discipline. (Keohane (2020), Smith et al. (2018)). Moreover, women hold fewer than 6.0% of CEO positions at the S&P 500 companies in the United States. In Nigeria, only 6 out of 48 ministers (12%) are women despite constituting almost half of the population.

Gender inequality in the academic and professional field of economics negatively impacts the development of equitable and inclusive policies as well as socioeconomic development. The 35% Affirmative Action in Nigeria, which demands 35% representation of women in all governance processes, has faced significant challenges in implementation. This policy aims to promote gender equality and women's participation in decision-making roles.<sup>1</sup> Despite its noble intentions, the actual integration of women into governance processes has fallen short of the target.<sup>2</sup> Evidenced by the proportion of women who solely disproportionate bear the burden of family responsibilities, particularly childcare. This significantly limits their time and energy available for academic and professional development. Unfortunately, there are additional challenges women face reconciling their reproductive roles with their professional aspirations, exacerbated by the dearth of female role models.

The sociocultural context with patriarchal systems and cultural norms reinforce these challenges by restricting women's agency and decision-making power, making it harder for them to progress and rise through the ranks.<sup>3</sup> Without support, many women either leave the discipline or reach a career plateau in a bid to juggle their family responsibilities – this presents a challenge that

their male counterparts do not have to contend with.<sup>4</sup> Organizational barriers include biased recruitment and promotion practices, and other existing gender disparities such as poor maternity and childcare policies contributing to experiences of harassment and low self-esteem impeding women's confidence and professional advancement. -<sup>5-6</sup> lack of financial access to resources exacerbates the difficulties experienced by women, constraining their capacity to pursue career development opportunities, especially during the early stages of their careers.

## 1.2 Overview of Women in Nigeria

Women have made modest gains in the political, economic and social spaces of the African continent. They are however, still widely marginalised within the corridors of power (Amina et al., 2019). They are under-represented in educational advancement and disadvantaged in career agency and progression, particularly in the domains of economics and finance (Kukreja et al., 2022). This dismal gender disparity is in tandem with global patterns. For instance, as recent as in 2021, only 15 central banks were headed by women globally; and, one in five such banks had no women in senior management. Of the first 100 top authors in economics, only six were women, and only 21.0% of faculty in top economics departments. Twenty-two (22) of the world's 172 finance ministers were female, they constituted only about 24.0% of those who sat on boards of financial institutions, just 5.0% of CEOs and 16.0% of CFOs. In the same year, 2021, women held only 10.0% of management positions and only 5.0% of CEO positions in the Indian corporate sector, and only 29.7% of the board directorship of Nigeria's top 20 financial service companies. This scoping assessment provides a situation analysis of women in economic sectors in Nigeria and explores strategies for increasing women's leadership in economics in Nigeria.

# 15

Central Banks were headed by women globally



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Twenty-two (22) of the world's 172 finance ministers were female.

<https://alliancesforafrica.org/full-implementation-of-35-affirmative-action-of-women-in-public-governance/#:~:text=The%20national%20Gender%20Policy%20%28NGP%29%20has%20formulated%20a,ands%20processes%20to%20use%20are%20not%20in%20place.>

Iloka, C. P. (2022). Affirmative Action and the Role of the Legislature in Promoting Women Participation in Election Processes in Nigeria. *International Journal of Comparative Law and Legal Philosophy*, 4. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein/journals/inljocv4&id=181&div=&collection=>

Sougou, N., Ndiaye, O., Nabil, F., Folyan, M., Sarr, S., Mbaye, E., & Martínez-Pérez, G. (2022). Barriers of West African women scientists in their research and academic careers: A qualitative research. *PLoS ONE*, 17(4), e0265413. (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0265413>)

<https://www.insight.org/project/the-status-of-women-in-leadership-in-economics-and-financial-services-in-kenya-ethiopia-nigeria-and-india/>

Mbukamba, I., & Strydom, K. (2022). Challenges to and Enablers of Women's Advancement in Academic Careers at a Selected South African University. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*. Advance online publication. (<https://doi.org/10.26803/inter.21.12.3>)

PAUL, G. (2005). "A Lot of Them Thought I Wouldn't Last There": African Women and Career Advancement in Academic Scientific Careers. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, 30(4), 371-381. (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10961-005-2584-2>)

Márton, N., Meki-Kombe

### 1.3.1 Aim

This scoping aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of women in economics in Nigeria by reviewing literature, conducting a survey and interviews to document the barriers and enablers of women's leadership in economics in Nigeria.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this scoping include:

1. Conducting a desk review/secondary analysis of key data sources for a better understanding of the workplace ecosystem of women in economics in Nigeria.
2. Developing a stakeholder database that identifies individuals and initiatives within the economic sector in Nigeria.
3. Developing a veritable report to serve as a valuable knowledge product for evidence-based decision-making and strategic planning to improve women's leadership in economics in Nigeria



ABA WOMEN'S RIOTS | CREDIT: BLACKPAST



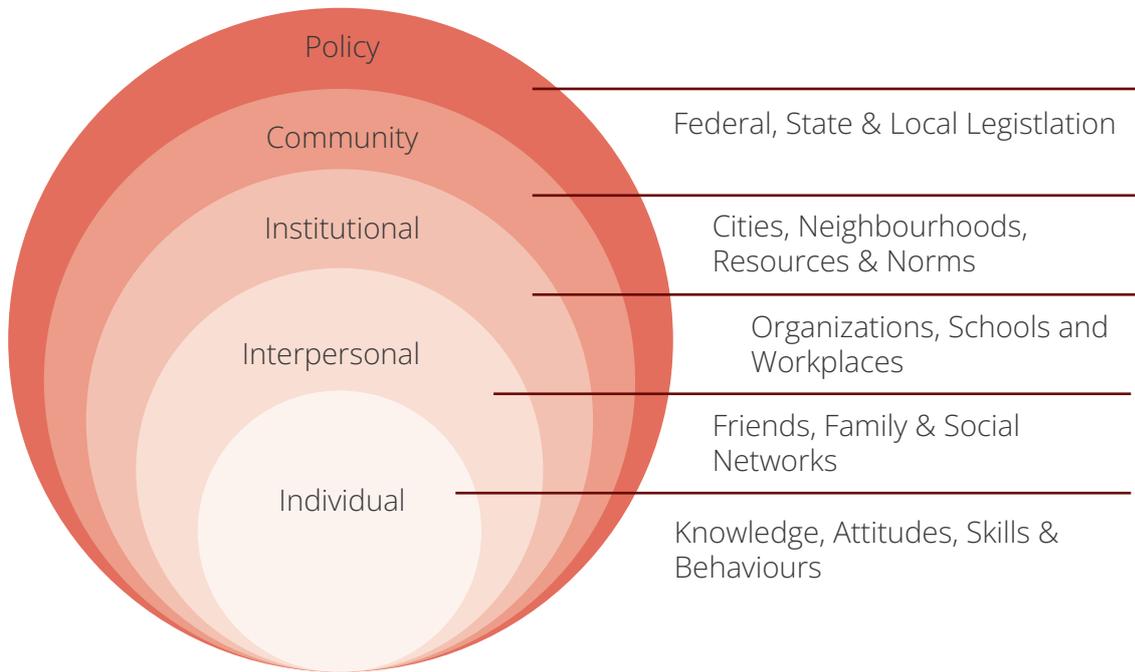
# METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

## 2.1 Conceptual Framework – The Social Ecological Model

First proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the social ecological model is used to interrogate the dynamic interplay between personal and environmental factors geared towards human development (Serra et al., 2022). Schoon (2023) conceptualises the course of life as a complex normative structure that is reflected in interrelated and institutionalised sequences of social positions and roles. This perspective views life as a socio-cultural environment where human development is crucial. Developmental processes occur in multilevel contexts shaped by social institutions through interactions with significant others, such as parents, teachers and peers. Thus, it becomes critical to understand the conceptualisation of the gendered patterns of behaviour relevant for knowing what part of an individual's perception is awoken when faced with choices (Schoon, 2023).

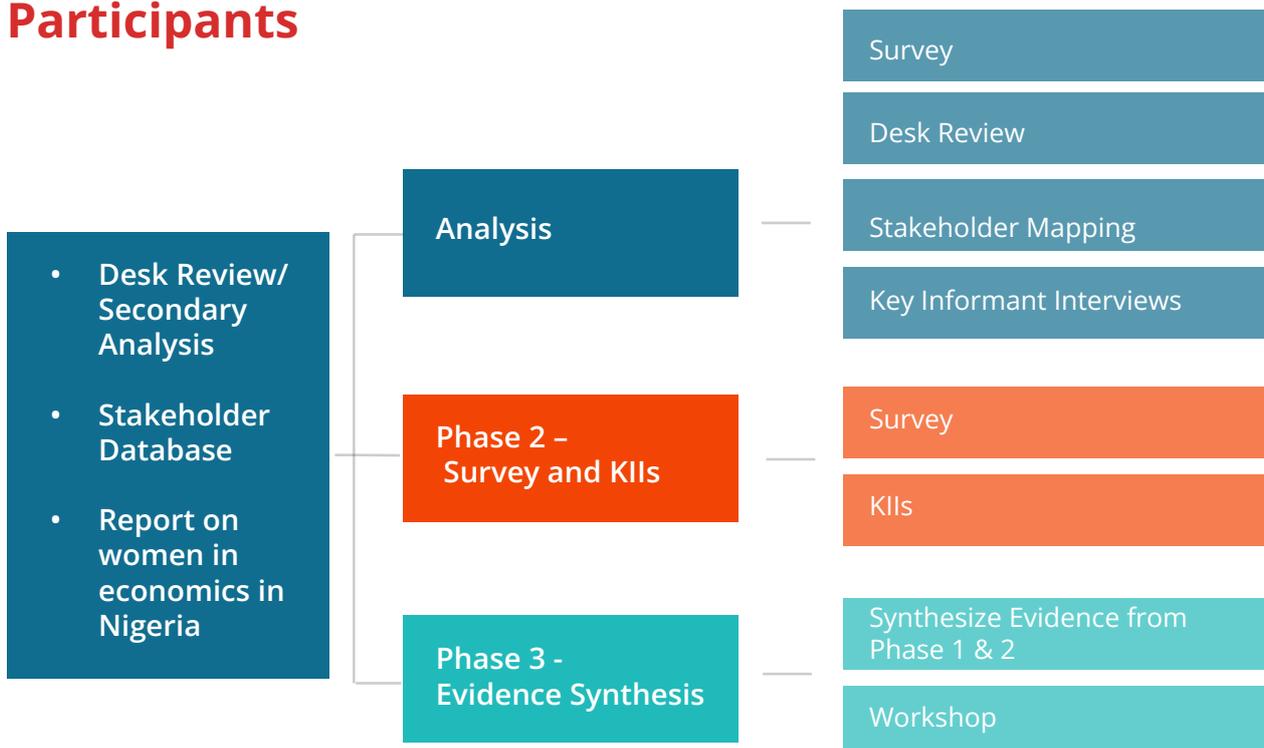
Mc-Ginty-Minister et al. (2024) asserts that women's experiences, and their perceptions of experiences, may be due to a plethora of variables resulting from personal experience of the environment and culture they reside in. They note that ecological models prevent mono-dimensional views and recognise the interaction of individuals with their environments and societies, as part of this viewership. We acknowledge that one can view these interactions from different levels. Hence, the intrapersonal or individual level will encompass personal and psychological factors, such as cognition, emotion, value and belief. The interpersonal level will acknowledge social relationships, that include colleagues, significant others, friends and family. The organisational will represent policies, professional practices and opportunities within organisations. Finally, the socio-cultural level will involve the norms that impact individuals, interpersonal relationships

and organisational composition. Thus, the socio-ecological perspective of human development provides a heuristic for understanding how multiple factors, ranging from micro- to macro-level influence affect individual development. This is shown in Fig. 1:



**Figure 1** Applying the Social Ecological Model on Health to Loneliness: and Recognising the Power of Community Action (Adapted from (Killiam, 2020))

## 2.2 Scoping Methodology and Participants



**PHASE ONE**

An extensive literature review to document the landscape and context of women in economic leadership in Nigeria. A mapping to identify and document the stakeholders and experts involved in women's leadership across Nigeria.

**PHASE TWO**

Key informant interviews and a survey to identify the barriers, enablers and opportunities for advancing women in economic leadership.

**PHASE THREE**

Evidence synthesis from phases one and two, to gain incisive insights and make recommendations for women's economic leadership in Nigeria.

## Scoping Participants



SURVEY

**155**

Participants

KEY INFORMANT  
INTERVIEWS

**25**

Participants

CO-CREATION  
WORKSHOPS

**35-50**

Participants

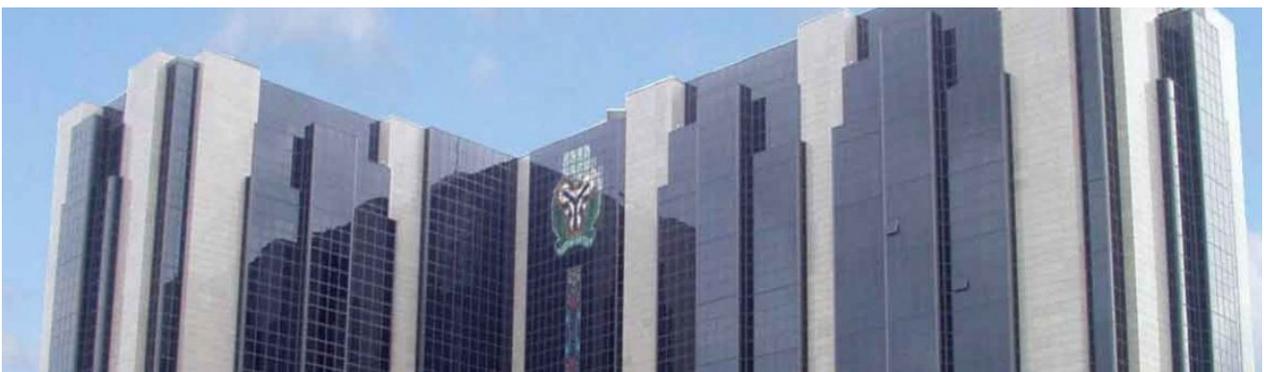
Participants were drawn from different economic sectors:  
**Government, Academia, Finance and Banking and Women  
Entrepreneurs**

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## 3.1 Policy Analysis

### 3.1.1. Description of Sector-Specific Instruments

Several sector-specific instruments have been introduced to advance gender equality in Nigeria's economic sector. In 2019, a policy aimed at increasing women's access to financial services set targets for 30% female representation on banking boards and 40% in top management roles. The 2014 Pension Reform Act also requires equal opportunities for women within the Contributory Pension Scheme, while the 2020 PENCOM data privacy policy takes a gender-neutral approach to managing pensions. The 2023 policy framework supports women entrepreneurs, promotes equal pay, and encourages skill development to address gender disparities. Additionally, the 2010 Gender Equality Bill, still under review, seeks to ensure equal opportunities for women in work, education, land ownership, and marriage rights.



CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA | CREDIT: WIKIPEDIA

**Table 1***Describing Economic-related Sector-Specific Instruments*

S/N	Title	Year Adopted	Description	Status
1	Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) Gender Policy <sup>8</sup>	2019	Provides for increased access to financial services for women and promotes women in leadership roles within the banking sector. It sets a 30% target for female representation on boards and 40% in top management, to create a more gender-balanced banking industry.	Serves as a framework for advancing women's financial inclusion, within the banking system in Nigeria.
2	The Pension Reform Act (PRA) <sup>9</sup>	2014	PENCOM regulates this act and ensures gender balance. Women have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).	The Act currently in effect is the Pension Reform Act 2014, which repealed and replaced the original Pension Reform Act of 2004.
3	National Pension Commission's (PENCOM) Gender Neutrality <sup>10</sup>	2020	PENCOM operates a data privacy policy that focuses on collecting and storing information based on individual identity rather than gender. This indicates a gender-neutral approach to managing pensions.	This act establishes a contributory pension scheme applicable to all employees regardless of gender.
4	National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy <sup>11</sup>	2023	It addresses limited access to finance and unequal opportunities by supporting women entrepreneurs, promoting equal pay, and encouraging education and skill development.	It is a significant policy framework which aims to address gender disparity in the economic sphere.
5	Gender and Equal Opportunity Policy Bill <sup>12</sup>	2010	The Bill promotes gender equality by ensuring that women have equal opportunities for work and education; fair ownership and inheritance rights for land and property for females and males; equal rights within marriage and during divorce.	Still undergoing the legislative process.

8 [https://www.cbn.gov.ng/out/2020/dfd/framework%20for%20advancing%20women's%20financial%20inclusion%20in%20nigeria\\_final\\_5mb.pdf](https://www.cbn.gov.ng/out/2020/dfd/framework%20for%20advancing%20women's%20financial%20inclusion%20in%20nigeria_final_5mb.pdf), "Framework for Advancing Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria\_final\_5mb.pdf," 2018, [https://www.cbn.gov.ng/out/2020/dfd/framework%20for%20advancing%20women's%20financial%20inclusion%20in%20nigeria\\_final\\_5mb.pdf](https://www.cbn.gov.ng/out/2020/dfd/framework%20for%20advancing%20women's%20financial%20inclusion%20in%20nigeria_final_5mb.pdf).

9 [https://www.pencom.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PRA\\_2014.pdf](https://www.pencom.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PRA_2014.pdf), "PRA\_2014.Pdf," 2014, [https://www.pencom.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PRA\\_2014.pdf](https://www.pencom.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PRA_2014.pdf).

10 <https://www.pencom.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/REVISED-RSA-REGISTRATION-GUIDELINES.pdf>, "REVISED-RSA-REGISTRATION-GUIDELINES.Pdf," 2023, <https://www.pencom.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/REVISED-RSA-REGISTRATION-GUIDELINES.pdf>.

11 [https://nigeria.ion.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11856/files/documents/2024-02/nigeria-national-wee-policy-and-action-plan-may\\_230519\\_133503.pdf](https://nigeria.ion.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11856/files/documents/2024-02/nigeria-national-wee-policy-and-action-plan-may_230519_133503.pdf), "Nigeria-National-Wee-Policy-and-Action-Plan-May\_230519\_133503.Pdf," 2023, [https://nigeria.ion.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11856/files/documents/2024-02/nigeria-national-wee-policy-and-action-plan-may\\_230519\\_133503.pdf](https://nigeria.ion.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11856/files/documents/2024-02/nigeria-national-wee-policy-and-action-plan-may_230519_133503.pdf).

12 "Full Text of the GENDER AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BILL - CIRDDOC," accessed May 29, 2024, <https://cirddoc.org/full-text-of-the-gender-and-equal-opportunities-bill/>.

## Analysis of Sector-Specific Instruments in Nigeria

A few existing laws and policies relevant to women in leadership lack clear definitions of the term, leading to ambiguity in implementation and limiting the ability to set measurable goals and track progress. This lack of clarity also weakens accountability, making it challenging to hold institutions responsible for achieving gender parity in leadership roles where it is lacking.

**Table 2**
*Analysis of Sector-Specific Instruments in Nigeria*

S/N	Components of Laws Relevant to Women in Leadership	Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) Gender Policy	The Pension Reform Act (PRA)	National Pension Commission's (PENCOM) Gender Neutrality	National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy	Gender and Equal Opportunity Policy Bill	PWD ACT
1.	Clear Definition of Women in Leadership: This includes the presence of women in positions of power and decision-making, collaboration, communication, empathy, inclusive, and the absence of stereotyping.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Addressing Gender Equality: This includes the advancement of women; acknowledgement of the specific challenges of women in attaining leadership positions; particular goals or targets for increasing the number of women in leadership.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Promotion of Opportunities: This includes encouraging or mandating leadership development programmes for women; providing mentorship or sponsorship opportunities specifically for women aspiring to leadership, and addressing unconscious biases in leadership selection processes.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

4	Addressing Barriers: This includes issue of parental leave or childcare that can disproportionately impact women's leadership opportunities. Are there preventive measures for gender-based harassment or discrimination in the workplace?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Monitoring and Evaluation: These include mechanisms for monitoring progress toward gender equality in leadership and concrete measures for ensuring the effective implementation of the policy.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

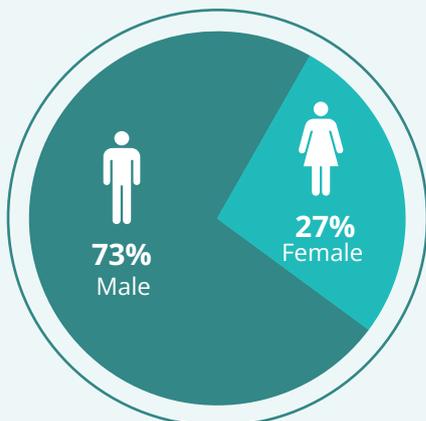
## 3.2. Findings from Literature Review

### 3.2.2. Sectors of the Nigerian Economy

The Nigerian economy is diverse and tiered. Hence, this review focuses on women in four key economic sectors of the Nigerian economy. The sectors are not exhaustive but were purposively chosen based on being strategic drivers within the Nigerian economy. These sectors are government, finance, academia and entrepreneurship.

### 3.2.3. Government

Nigeria currently has 46 Government Ministries and 542 government agencies that serve the Federation across different sectors. The Central Bank of Nigeria has been instrumental in pushing the 35.0% affirmative action for women in the banking sector. Currently, this apex bank has three out of eleven board members. As seen in Fig. 2, there are nine out of twenty-nine directorates within headed by women.

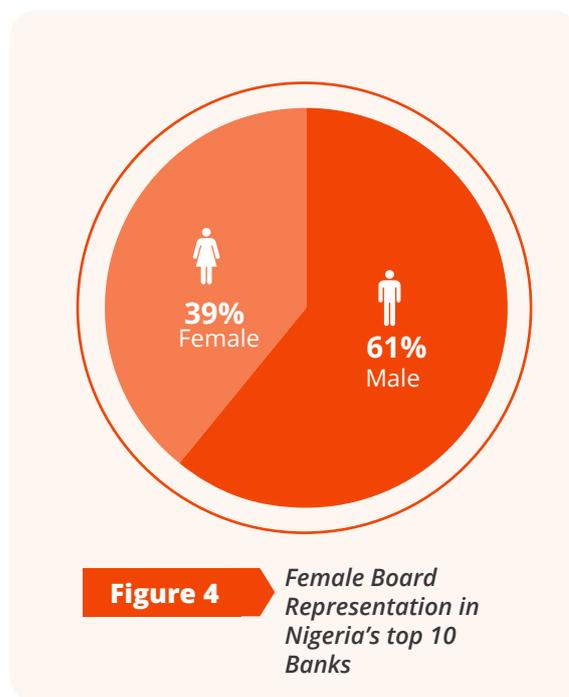


**Figure 3**

*Central Bank of Nigeria Board Membership According to Gender (2024)*

### 3.2.3. Banking and Finance

The 2012 CBN mandate stands the apex bank out among Nigeria’s regulatory bodies. In spite of the rise of female CEOs to about 39%, Eleje and Wale-Oshinowo (2017) assert that the financial industry still evokes tiers of gender segregation laced with inequalities. Although the CBN mandate prompted the creation of internal programmes for female advancement within its ranks, this has scarcely been replicated in the insurance, pensions or fintech sectors. This is in spite of the wide accent with which women professionals welcome such initiatives across the sectors (Iwueze and Baumann, 2022).



### 3.2.4. Academia

According to Ogbogu (2011), the global picture is one in which men outnumber women in research and publication as female academics are in the minority in higher educational institutions. Female professors and deans are rare, while female vice-chancellors are the exception to the rule. In over 75 years of the Nigerian university system, women are still under-represented in institutional management and governance (Ogbogu, 2011). This gender disparity is one of the pressing concerns taunting the Nigerian higher education sector (Odey, Ekpang and Asuquo, 2023). We drew up a gender scorecard for 10 of the top economics departments in Nigerian universities. We reviewed both private and public universities as seen in table 8 below:

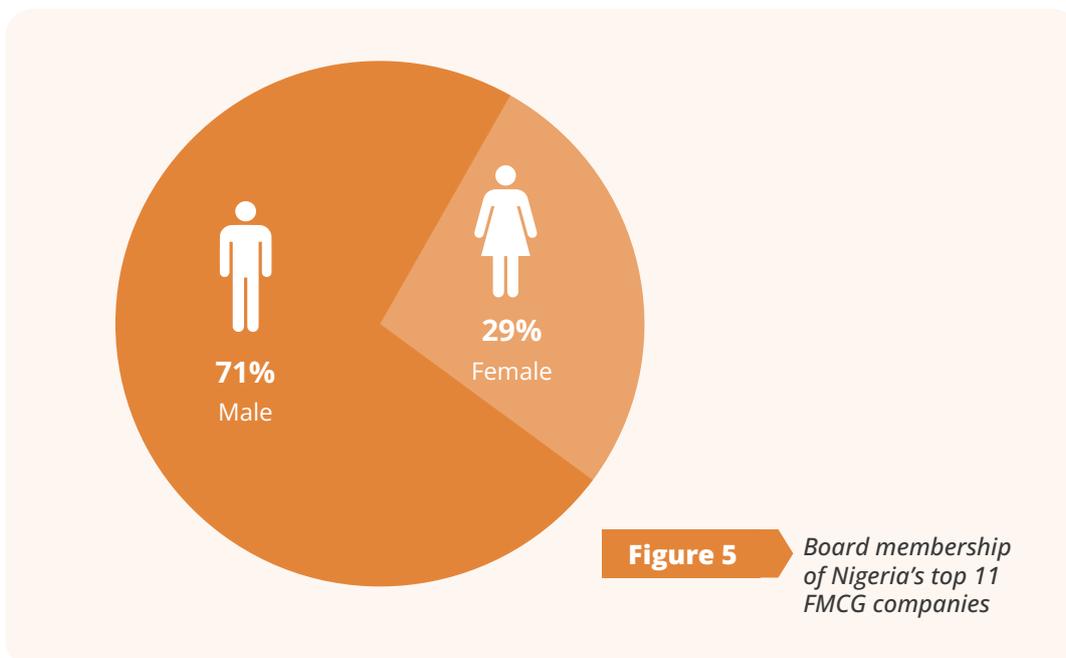
**Table 3** Female Faculty Representation of Economics Departments in Top 10 Nigerian Universities

No	University	Total Number of Female Faculty	Total Number of Male Faculty	Total Number of Faculty
1.	Covenant University <sup>26</sup>	9	22	31
2.	University of Lagos <sup>27</sup>	4	13	17
3.	University of Ibadan <sup>28</sup>	4	18	22
4.	Obafemi Awolowo University <sup>29</sup>	3	25	28

5.	University of Nsukka <sup>30</sup>	No data	No data	No data
6.	University of Benin <sup>31</sup>	No data	No Data	No data
7.	University of Ilorin <sup>32</sup>	1	19	20
8.	Nmadi Azikiwe University <sup>33</sup>	22	34	56
9.	Bayero University <sup>34</sup>	0	7	7
10.	Ahamadu Bello University <sup>10</sup>	3	30	33

### 3.2.5 Women Entrepreneurship

Data shows that the total participation of women in the labour force declined by 2.5% from 45.5% in 2019 to 43.0% in 2020. However, this may be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, there is a significant gender gap in the workspace with men being more visible than women. Simba et al. (2022) state that the Nigerian entrepreneurship ecosystem is vulnerable. Thus, women entrepreneurs in Nigeria, manage political risks and regulatory uncertainty in the absence of formal institutions.



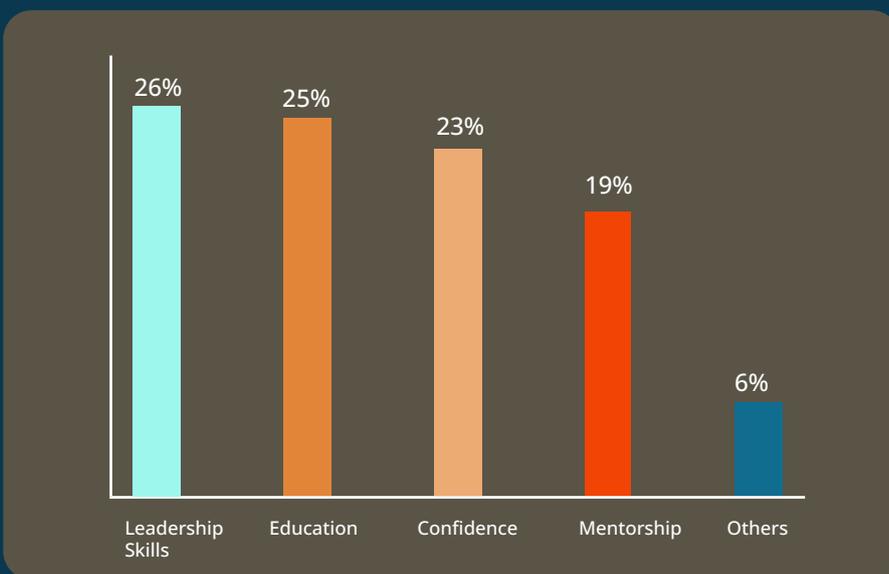
### 3.3. Findings from Survey

#### 3.3.1 Barriers and Enablers of Women in Economic Leadership

##### 3.3.1.1 Personal and Interpersonal

###### 3.3.1.1.1 Women’s Leadership Abilities

Regarding the factors that most significantly impact women’s leadership attainment, leadership skills (26.0%) ranked first, followed closely by education (25.0%) and confidence (23.0%). Mentorship (19.0%) ranked fourth followed distantly by others (6.0%). In the other category, respondents mentioned additional challenges, including self-awareness and determination, family pressure, social norms, outdated perceptions and ideologies, limited opportunities, politics and nepotism (Fig. 6).

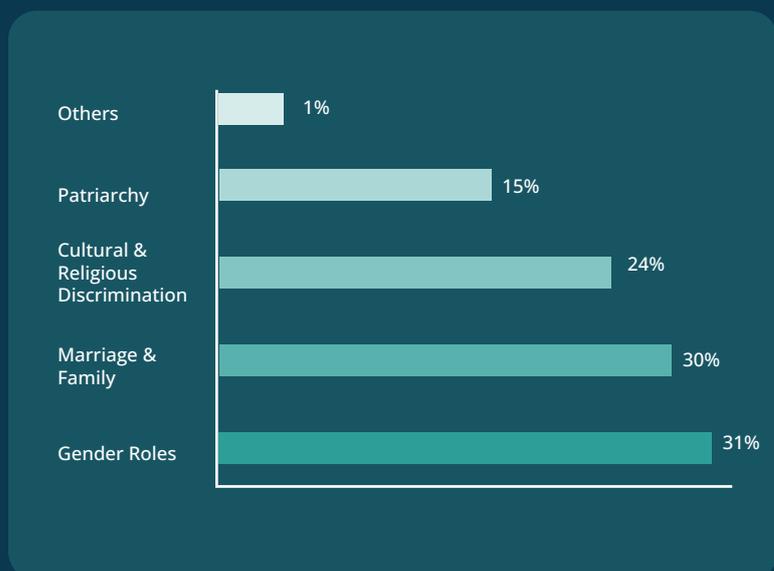


**Figure 6**

*Factors impacting women’s leadership attainment*

###### 3.3.1.1.2 Ultimate Leadership Goals

Respondents asserted that family responsibilities significantly impacted women’s leadership attainment (47.0%); likewise, cultural norms and gender roles (31.0%), and marital demands (30.0%). Cultural and religious discrimination, as well as patriarchy were flagged as significant by 15.0% of respondents. Other factors attracted just 1.0% - inadequate financing, society and lack of support from other women.



**Figure 7**

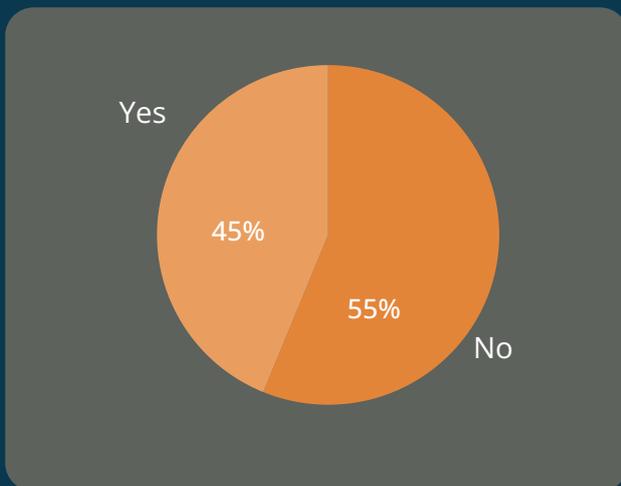
*Impact of cultural norms on women’s leadership attainment*

### 3.3.1.2 Community and Organisational

#### 3.3.1.2.1 Mentorship and Networking

The study sought to know if respondents were aware of and keyed into mentorship and networking in their communities, if they were cognizant of support groups for women aspiring to leadership. Fifty-six percent noted that they were unaware of mentorship and networking, while 44.0% were aware. The acknowledged networking and support groups included WIMBIZ, AAWE, Access Women Network, WISCAR, SWIT, Women Economic Foundation and Nigerian Women Foundation.

Regarding professional associations that support women’s academic leadership aspirations, 28.0% of the respondents were aware, while 72.0% were not. The acknowledged associations were Women in Environmental Economics and Development (WINEED), APWBN, Women in Economics Network, NESG and WIMBIZ.

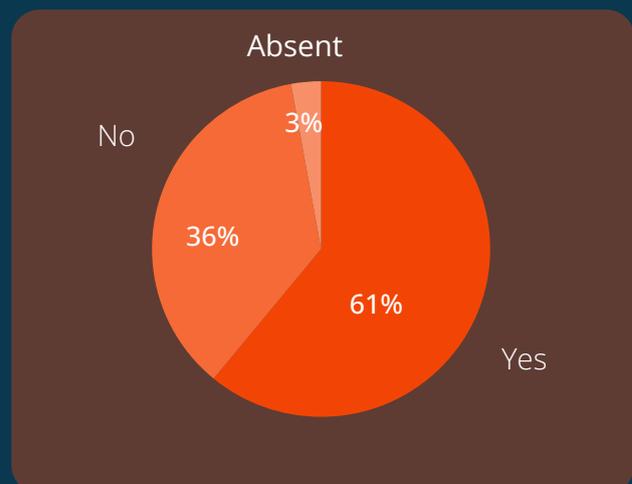


**Figure 8**

*Respondents awareness of mentorship opportunities*

#### 3.3.1.2.2 Organisational Policies

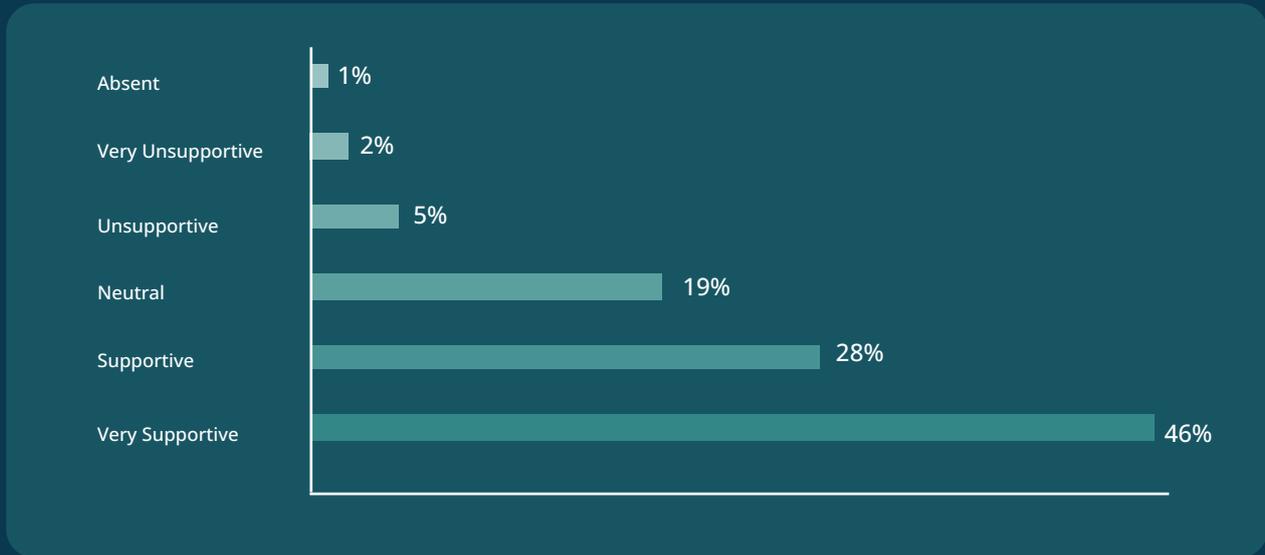
When asked if their organisations had policies to address women’s leadership matters, 61.0% of the respondents were affirmative, while 36.0% responded in the negative. Maternity leave (18.0%) topped the list of available policies. Others included sexual harassment policy (16.0%), equal pay policy (15.0%), flexible work policy (14.0%), policy on women leadership (14.0%),



**Figure 9**

*Organisational policies for women*

With respect to workspace culture in support of women in leadership, 46.0% of respondents acknowledged that their organisations were very supportive, 28.0% opted for supportive, 19.0% were neutral, 5.0% signalled unsupportive, for 2.0% their organisations were very unsupportive, and 1.0% did not respond.

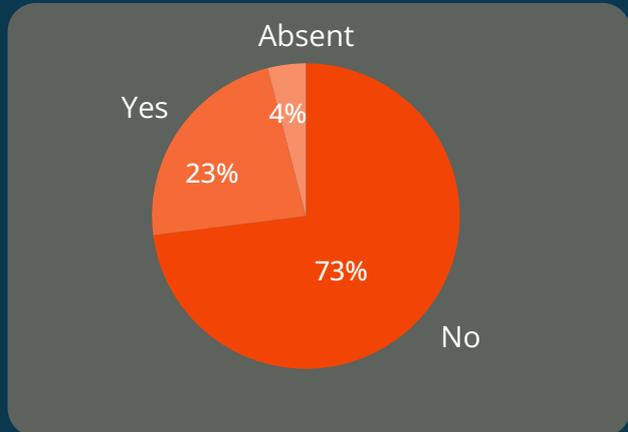


**Figure 10** Organisational support for women advancement policies

Seventy-three percent of respondents were unaware of organisational programmes in support of women in economic leadership outside their workplace. Twenty-three percent were aware of such support groups as the Lagos Business School Women in Leadership Programme, WIMBIZ, Business and Professional Women. Four percent abstained from answering the question.

**Figure 11**

Organisational support for women advancement outside the workplace

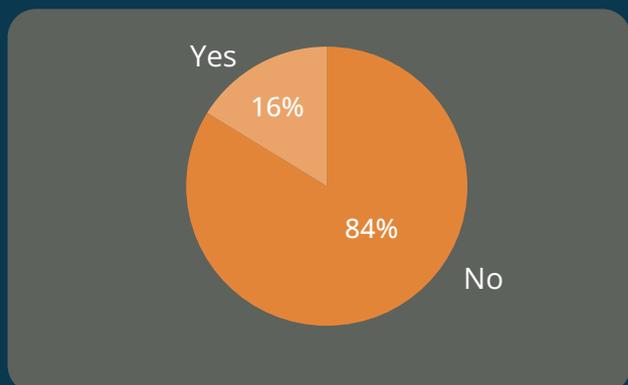


### 3.3.1.3 Policies

Majority of the respondents (84.0%) were unaware of the national policies that support women in economic leadership in Nigeria. Only 16.0% were aware of the National Gender Policy and the 35.0% affirmative action.

**Figure 12**

Awareness of national policies in support of women in economics



## 3.4 Findings from Key Informant Interviews

### 3.4.1 Barriers to Women in Economic Leadership

The Nigerian woman in economics faces myriad barriers to growth in leadership, namely personal and interpersonal, community and organisational, policy and institutional. Impostor syndrome, gender roles, societal expectations for women and sexual harassment are the key personal and interpersonal barriers, while illiteracy, low level of education, lack of mentoring and networking, workplace gender stereotypes and the negative perception of women with disabilities are prominent community and organisational barriers. Diehard policy and institutional barriers include patriarchal workplace structures, abysmal implementation of gender policies, and the glass ceiling.

**Table 4**

*Barriers to women in Economic Leadership*

#### Personal and Interpersonal Level Barriers

1	Societal Expectations Fostering Imposter Syndrome	Many women may feel they lack the power or capacity to pursue leadership roles, choosing instead to stay in their current positions and focus on family responsibilities due to the high demands of both work and home life. For some, this becomes a significant setback, while others manage to overcome the obstacle and move forward. <b>Accountant</b>
2	Gender Roles and Societal Expectations for African Women	As an African woman, you carry a lot of responsibilities. For example, while pursuing my studies, I faced challenges after having my first child, followed by another, which set me back in my academic progress. Instead of finishing my program in three years, it has taken much longer. As time goes on, it's easy to lose interest, and age can work against you. Additionally, managing household chores and financial constraints, without the ability to hire help, adds to the pressure. You find yourself juggling cooking and other tasks, which can lead to mental exhaustion. When it comes time to focus on academic work, you might not be able to perform at your best. <b>Female PhD Candidate of Economics</b>

3	Perspectives on Confidence, Competence, and Gender Roles	<p>So let me start with self-belief. I think that the society is a bit patriarchal, right? And a lot of women have been sensitised to see leadership differently. And one of the things we do at my organisation (WILAN) is shaping perception. It's one of our programme pillars. And shaping perception is ensuring that women who do not know that they could lead can lead.</p> <p><b>Women in Leadership Network Nigeria</b></p>
4	Sexual Harassment	<p>I have not experienced any gender-based violence. You could hear things happening around, but to me personally, nobody has assaulted me.</p> <p><b>Female PhD Candidate of Economics</b></p> <p>I intervened in a few cases like that. There was one particular situation where I was prepared to help a student... without concrete examples, I couldn't confront anyone. I explained to my Head of Department (HoD) that since the student wasn't forthcoming with details, there wasn't much I could do. The HoD, who is also a woman, ended up bringing it up with the man involved. Unfortunately, that made me seem like the enemy in his eyes, but I didn't let it bother me.</p> <p><b>Female Professor of Economics</b></p>
<b>Community and Organisation</b>		
5	Illiteracy and Low Level of Education	<p>Perhaps the most significant barrier is the educational or skill barrier. As a woman, if you have not embraced education up to the university level, you have already limited yourself. Even if you have the desire to succeed, not attaining the highest educational qualification is still a significant obstacle.</p> <p><b>Female Professor of Economics</b></p>
6	Mentoring and Networking	<p>No, I don't have a one-on-one mentor at the moment, but I would truly love to have one if the opportunity arises.</p> <p><b>400 Level Female Economics Student</b></p>
7	Workplace Stereotypes of Women in Leadership	<p>The respondent emphasized the urgent need to change the work culture, which often favours a masculine environment which can be challenging for women. For example, while assertiveness is often praised in the workplace, women who exhibit this trait may be perceived as aggressive.</p> <p><b>Country Manager, Non-Governmental Organisation</b></p>

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| 7 | Negative Perceptions of Women with Disability's Ability | <p>First, they see your disability. As a woman with a disability, people often question, 'What could you possibly contribute?' They've already made up their minds about your abilities, assuming you have little to offer. But disability is only physical, it doesn't define our potential.</p> <p><b><i>PWD Entrepreneur</i></b></p> |
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## Policy and Institutional Barriers

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| 9 | Cultural and Religious Discrimination | <p>One significant barrier is cultural and religious attitudes. It may surprise you that even among educated individuals, there are still beliefs that women should not be seen or heard, or that they shouldn't work at all. I encountered this mindset after I got married. In this context, I would attribute these barriers to cultural, religious, and family influences, particularly those related to marriage.</p> <p><b><i>Former Association Chairperson</i></b></p> |
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| 10 | Abysmal Implementation of Gender Policies | <p>We appreciate the government's initiative and the Central Bank of Nigeria's policy emphasizing that women's voices must be represented in bank boardrooms. This has led to the advancement of several women into top positions. However, whether we've achieved the desired percentage of representation is a question worth exploring. Many institutions still have not fully embraced this principle of ensuring fair representation of women within their ranks.</p> <p>Chairperson Women Auditors</p> <p>When women become pregnant, they often find that workplace policies become unfavourable. During this crucial time, they need the organization's support not only during their maternity leave but also afterwards. Unfortunately, many organizations fail to provide adequate support in these areas.</p> |
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## Other Factors

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| 11 | Associations and the Funding Challenge | <p>We didn't even realise the impact of just engaging the students as entrepreneurs. Even for makeup, we go to the venue and allow the students to do the makeup. And I will say to you that I have met about three or four; of course, the programme has to be funded. We stopped it because we could not get a grant for it.</p> <p>Former Association Chairperson</p> |
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### 3.4.2. Enablers of Women in Economic Leadership

Personal confidence and ambition, supportive workplace network and encouraging domestic structure. In particular, spousal support was seen as a crucial interpersonal facilitator of women's attainment and effective execution of leadership. As for community support, mentoring and networking were identified as enhancers of confidence; just as efforts should be made to achieve a shift from the dismissive societal perception of women in leadership. It was popularly held that gender-friendly government programmes, extant gender policies and supportive organisational culture were recent institutional propellers of women to leadership in Nigeria

**Table 5**
*Enablers to women in Economic Leadership*

#### Personal and Interpersonal Level Enablers

1	Self-confidence and Ambition	I thought I could advance to a master's degree and then pursue a PhD. My goal was to become a university lecturer, which required these qualifications. Knowing that I couldn't secure a lecturing position without them was a key motivation for me to undertake both my master's and PhD studies <b>Female PhD Candidate of Economics</b>
2	Supportive Social Networks at Work	Maybe one of the things that helped me really, I can say I know it is because my father was a professor in this university... I mean most of my lecturers knew my father. So, they wouldn't want to do anything that would make me go and report to my father. I think that was one of the things that helped me a lot, you know.... so, but I was a diligent student too. <b>Female Professor of Economics</b>
3	Supportive Social Structure at Home	I have a supportive husband who believes in my abilities and trusts my judgment. He takes care of the children while I pursue my business. With the help of volunteers and my staff, we work together to grow, and I feel that God is guiding us to where we are today <b>PWD Entrepreneur</b>

## Community and Organisation

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| 4 | Flexible Work Option                   | <p>Flexi-time is my top priority; I can't imagine working without it now. I began flexible working around 2012, possibly in 2013 or 2014. After completing my master's degree, I transitioned into a role as a research assistant for my mentor, which was when I started to embrace this flexible work style.</p> <p><b>Employee, Think-Tank</b></p>  |
| 5 | Childcare Services in Institution      | <p>Yes, it was very convenient for me to manage my work and family responsibilities. I would drop my children off at the nursery before heading to my office. When they finished school, I could pick them up and return to my office with them. The flexibility to stay at work as late as I wanted was a significant advantage. This arrangement really supported me as a woman, as it eliminated the need for me to travel outside the campus to pick up my children.</p> <p><b>Lecturer of Economics</b></p> |
| 6 | Mentorship, Sponsorship and Networking | <p>Having a good mentor can help you stay focused on your goals and ignore distractions. This guidance is particularly beneficial for women, as it plays a significant role in their success.</p> <p><b>Accountant</b></p>   |
| 7 | Engaging Men as Allies                 | <p>In the boardroom, your colleagues are often men, so promoting women's leadership cannot succeed without involving them. We need to engage men, educate them, and identify allies who support this cause. By aligning with these champions, we can make them strong advocates for advancing women's leadership in all areas.</p> <p><b>Women in Leadership Network Nigeria</b></p>   |

## Policy and Institutional Barriers

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| 8 | Existing Gender Policies | <p>We appreciate the government's and the Central Bank of Nigeria's policy that addresses the need for women's voices to be heard in the boardrooms of banks. This has helped some women reach top positions.</p> <p><b>Chairperson, Society for Women in Taxation</b></p> |
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9	Supportive Organisational Culture	<p>In my institute, I serve as the national chairperson of the women's wing. Currently, we have a woman as the acting registrar and chief executive officer, and there are women in leadership roles at all three directorate levels. Unlike some other organizations, which may not prioritize gender equality, our institute recognizes women's capabilities and does not view them as second-class members. If a woman is qualified, she is given a leadership position... based on merit. As a result, when the president calls for a meeting, it can sometimes consist solely of women leaders, which reflects our commitment to inclusivity.</p> <p><b><i>Chairperson, Society for Women in Taxation</i></b></p> <p>When women become pregnant, they often find that workplace policies become unfavourable. During this crucial time, they need the organization's support not only during their maternity leave but also afterwards. Unfortunately, many organizations fail to provide adequate support in these areas.</p> <p><b><i>Head of Trade Service Department</i></b></p>
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### 3.5 Summary

Women are essential human resources for change. Their skills and talents should be rigorously deployed to grow the Nigerian economy. We suggest three focus areas to achieve this:

1. The creation of supportive human resource policies that advocate for women's development through building crèches in institutions, championing promotional pathways, and creating gender-friendly working atmospheres that promote good work-life balance.
2. The creation of mentoring networks that build, support and train women for the attainment of leadership, thus ensuring that when in such positions, they are confident in showcasing their skills in professional and personal capacity.
3. To champion diversity, equity and investment in senior leadership roles within the different sectors of the economy, with a key drive to increase the number of women in these positions

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## Appendix 1

### Female Representation in Board Membership Across Sectors in Nigeria

S/N	Sector/Institution	Number of Females	Number of Males	Total Number of Board Members
<b>Government</b>				
1	CBN <sup>23</sup>	3	8	11
2	NBS	No data	No data	No Data
<b>FMCG</b>				
3	Dangote Group <sup>24</sup>	3	5	8
4	Flour Mills <sup>25</sup>	3	12	15
5	Guinness Nigeria <sup>26</sup>	6	4	10
6	Rite Foods Limited <sup>27</sup>	2	6	8
7	Nigerian Breweries Plc <sup>28</sup>	4	6	10
8	Friesland Campina WAMCO Nigeria PLC <sup>29</sup>	3	6	9
9	Dufil Prima Food LTD <sup>30</sup>	0	8	8
10	UAC Nigeria PLC <sup>31</sup>	2	6	8
11	Coca-Cola HBC <sup>32</sup>	5	8	13
12	Transcorp Group <sup>33</sup>	3	6	9
13	BUA Group <sup>34</sup>	1	11	12
<b>Banks</b>				
14	Access Bank <sup>35</sup>	6	11	17
15	Fidelity Bank <sup>36</sup>	4	10	14
16	Zenith Bank <sup>37</sup>	5	9	14
17	Guaranty Trust Bank Ltd <sup>38</sup>	4	3	7
18	First City Monument Bank <sup>39</sup>	4	5	9

19	Ecobank Nigeria <sup>40</sup>	5	7	12
20	First Bank <sup>41</sup>	1	11	12
21	Stanbic IBTC Bank <sup>42</sup>	5	5	10
22	UBA <sup>43</sup>	7	8	15
23	Sterling Bank <sup>44</sup>	3	7	10
<b>Universities (Public)</b>				
24	University of Lagos <sup>45</sup>	6	2 & one vacant	9
25	University of Ibadan <sup>46</sup>	3	6	9
26	Bayero University <sup>47</sup>	3	14	17
27	University of Nigeria Nsukka <sup>48</sup>	5	10	15
<b>Universities(Private)</b>				
28	Covenant University <sup>49</sup>	2	10	12
29	Nile University <sup>50</sup>	0	4	4
30	Babcock University <sup>51</sup>	0	4	4

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43. <https://www.ubagroup.com/nigeria/about-us/leadership>

44. <https://sterling.ng/about/board-of-directors>

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46. <https://ui.edu.ng/content/university-ibadan-principal-officers-1>

47. <https://www.buk.edu.ng/team-members-2>

48. <https://www.unn.edu.ng/administration/university-administration/the-principal-officers/>

49. <https://www.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/about-us/overview/management-team#administrative>

50. <https://www.nileuniversity.edu.ng/staff>

51. <https://legacy.babcock.edu.ng/about/administration>



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