



# Women in a Poisoned Arena: Hate Speech, Online Gender Violence and Elections in Nigeria

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## Acronyms And Abbreviations

API	Africa Polling Institute
CITAD	Centre for Information Technology and Development
GBHS	Gender-Based Hate Speech
NDI	National Democratic Institute
UNCERD	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
UN	United Nations
WIPF	Women in Politics Forum
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions



## Executive Summary

This report documents the results and findings of the study on hindrances and challenges of women who participate in governance and political processes and the use of gendered hate speech on them as a result of their participation in governance and political processes in Nigeria. The research was conducted by the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) Kano, with support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The survey was conducted in 2019 and it forms part of CITAD's contribution towards creating awareness on the issue of Gender-Based Hate Speech; particularly how it hampers women participation in politics and also generate a glossary of terms, phrases or words that are offensive or hateful to women and girls in Nigeria.

This study builds upon existing research, policy brief on Hate Speech by CITAD, narratives and media reports; with new information collected through a mix of quantitative and qualitative data from FDGs.

### KEY OBJECTIVES

An earlier finding from a policy brief on Hate Speech in Nigeria by CITAD revealed that women in Nigeria (Irrespective of their status) have been targeted with Hate Speech. Consequently, this study seeks to gather data from respondents in order to gain deeper understanding on: (1) the issue of Gender-Based Hate Speech (GBHS), (2) Public perception on women in politics, and (3) to generate a glossary of words, terms and phrases that are offensive or hateful on women and girls in Nigeria; most especially as it concerns those who are brave enough to participate in politics.

Furthermore, this study offers new insight to strengthen the campaign and advocacy to increase the percentage of women in the political space of Nigeria, as well as proffers some recommendations which may be critical to the development, involvement and advancement of women in Nigeria's democratic process.

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methodology involving quantitative and qualitative data was used to capture the required information on this survey. The quantitative method utilized a standardized, well-structured questionnaire collect data through both online and offline means from respondents in the following states; Bayelsa, Bauchi, Borno, Jos, Kano, Lagos and the F.C.T Abuja.

For the qualitative method, a series Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted and used to gather qualitative data from views of four categories of people from the following states: Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Enugu, Kano, Kogi, Lagos and the F.C.T, Abuja. The four categories of people are: Journalist/Civil Society Organisations, female youth students, male youth students and women group representative/community leaders.

### KEY FINDINGS

Below are the main findings from the study:

#### **PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF SOCIETAL ROLE OF WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The initial stage of the study sought to measure perception on the role Nigerian women should play in the society. In general, the study's findings affirm the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, which is strongly supported by culture and religion. It was apparent from the study that Nigerian women are still restricted to roles that only have to do with caring for the home and being a supportive wife.

The findings further revealed that there are still some traditional mind-sets within the society that restrict and limit women in Nigeria to certain functions, primarily as: wives, mothers, care givers and perhaps breadwinners of the family; but not to participate in politics. The study also highlight that some women who are brave enough to venture into politics still have to cross certain hurdles and stereotypes such as: intimidation, gender discrimination (hate speech inclusive), sexual harassment, marital dispute, culture and religious barrier, time and financial constraints.

### **GENDER-BASED HATE SPEECH AND ITS EFFECTS ON VICTIMS**

The findings revealed that most respondents were knowledgeable about Gender-Based Hate Speech; especially those targeted at Women in politics. Similarly, the definitions provided by respondents fall within those identified from literature, particularly from earlier work by CITAD and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD). In addition, in terms of words, terms and phrases associated with GBHS the words “Prostitute / Ashawo” came tops; while tags of women as “the weaker vessel”, “Her office is in the kitchen”, her place in “the other room”, and “Go and Marry” were amongst common phrases used to denigrate women generally and women in politics. The study further revealed that such terms or phrases affected victims emotionally and psychologically, and had led to some women feeling humiliated and inferior, depressed, losing self-esteem and sometimes caused to political apathy.

### **VICTIMS WHO HAVE BEEN HARMED BY GENDER-BASED HATE SPEECH AND THEIR ORDEAL**

Furthermore, the study showed that some respondents had been victims of Hate Speech in the past; while many claimed to know people who had been victims. In the same vein, respondents who had been victims stated that they were attacked mainly on the grounds of their political affiliations, gender and tribe or religion. Conversely, those who claimed to know some victims of GBHS, further alluded that the victims were verbally abused with words associated with gender discrimination, prostitution and denigrating of the female gender.

### **USERS OF GENDER-BASED HATE SPEECH AND LINGUISTIC SPECIFICITIES**

Overall, the findings revealed that male youths, students, politicians and female youths were the leading perpetrators of GBHS with the aim of mainly intimidating and humiliating their victims. In addition, the study highlighted that revealed that the preferred language for perpetrators of GBHS was Nigerian Pidgin English language, as well as indigenous languages.

### **MEDIA PLATFORMS USED TO TRANSMIT & PERPETRATE GENDER-BASED HATE SPEECH**

Majority of the respondents identified Social Media platforms (88%) as the most commonly used media platform for transmitting and perpetrating of GBHS. In addition, Twitter (46%) and Facebook (38%) were the leading social media platforms for transmitting Hate Speech; simply because they are easily accessible and affordable, and people could easily hide their identity while transmitting Hate.

### **FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)**

Findings from FGDs from the four categories of respondents corroborates with findings from the quantitative survey. The summary of findings affirms women who venture into politics face a lot of intimidation, discrimination, and lack of support even from her fellow woman. Respondents also indicated the presence of gender-based hate speech in the political system and the term “Prostitute” the most common term used to denigrate women in politics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

While a larger proportion of respondents disclosed that they understand what GBHS is all about, and its harmful effects on women; nonetheless, many Nigerians are yet to come to terms with seeing women take up important roles in politics. This study highlights evidently that Nigerian women lack societal support when it comes to political participation and contesting elective positions against their male counterparts. Similarly, GBHS is a prevalent trend faced by women in politics. Hence, in order to curb GBHS and further increase the number of women in politics, the study recommends the following:

Government should show serious commitment in upholding the standards and protocols of the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation, which stressed some important recommendations in all contexts to boost the number of women in politics and leadership roles. For instance the Assembly resolved that governments should:

- (1) Strongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminates against the participation of women;
- (2) Promote the ability of women to fully participate at all levels of decision making within the political parties;
- (3) Promote awareness and recognition of the importance of women's participation in the political process, at the community, local, national and international levels;
- (4) Encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, including indigenous women, women from rural areas, and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority in decision making at all levels; and
- (5) Address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision making at all levels, amongst others. It is believed that if the government pushes for some of these recommendations, the bottlenecks (e.g. societal culture and religion) that usually hinder women political participation will be drastically reduced; and in turn women's political participation would be greatly enhanced.

Women's participation in politics is critical to the development of the country as history shows that most Nigerian women who have been given the opportunity to serve in politics and pick up leadership roles both abroad and in Nigeria have performed excellently well. Hence, it is suggested that proper orientation and public enlightenment be given to the citizenry, to strongly guide against the discrimination of women who wish to participate in politics and / or pick up leadership roles in governance. Lastly, zero tolerance should be given to offences associated with Gender-Based Hate Speeches. Legislation on such speeches should be enacted and enforced, and offenders should be duly prosecuted.



# 1.0 Introduction



## 1.0 Introduction

Nigeria is a country so dynamic and deeply heterogeneous because of its rich ethnic diversity and differences across religious lines. The 2006 census report reveals that there were approximately 250 different ethnic groups in Nigeria, with many different languages, customs, and religions. Even though nationalists have advocated for a one strong Nigeria, calling for unity in our diversity, it is sad to say that some political elites, ethnic and religious organisations have over the years exploited these different identities by making inciting comments and expressions, which has later stirred up violence or prejudicial action.

The term '**Hate Speech**' denotes any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action. British Institute of Human Rights (2012)<sup>1</sup> made us understand that hate speech covers all forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

Hate speech is regrettably a common occurrence on the Internet and in some cases end in severe threats to individuals. Hate speech has numerous components which according to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013)<sup>2</sup>, it includes:

- i. All dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means;
- ii. Incitement to hatred, contempt or discrimination against members of a group on grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin;
- iii. Threats or incitement to violence against persons or groups on the grounds in (ii) above;
- iv. Expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds in (ii) above, when it clearly amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination;
- v. Participation in organizations and activities which promote and incite racial discrimination.

In addition, CITAD<sup>3</sup> operationalised Hate Speech as any speech act that:

- Insults people on the basis of their religion.
- Abuses people for their ethnic or linguistic affiliation.
- Expresses contempt for people because of their place of origin.
- Disparages or intimidates women or girls because of their gender.
- Condone discriminatory assertions against people living with disabilities.
- Abuses or desecrates symbols of cultural or religious practices.
- Denigrates or otherwise ridicules traditional and cultural institutions of other people.
- Deliberately spread false rumours that demean or malign or ostracizes other people on the basis of religion, ethnicity, gender or place of origin, or for the accident of one form of disability or the other.

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<sup>1</sup> British Institute of Human Rights: Mapping study on projects against hate speech

<sup>2</sup> United Nations: International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

<sup>3</sup> A Policy Brief on Gender-Based Hate Speech, By CITAD. December 2018

Over the years, there have been various international laws and local legislation against free speech. They include; slander, libel or different forms of hate speech. Unfortunately, hate speech still abounds today due to awareness in the freedom of expression from the internet most especially through the use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). Findings reveal that these forms of hate speech through social media range from insulting utterances, anti-Semitism, xenophobic statements and injurious speech, religious and political forms of propaganda and provocation. There is also a rapidly growing problem of cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment, we are confronted with a wide variety of symbolic and medial forms of violence in our everyday lives that have to be acknowledged and properly taken care of. This report covers gender-based hate speech in Nigeria and its significance to women's participation in politics, an over of terms related to gender-based hate speech, victims of this occurrence and possible regional differences of this issue.

## 1.2 Gender-Based Hate Speech

There is a multifaceted relationship between language use and the stimulation of hatred resulting in violence. Gender-based hate speech is not only attributed to women as most studies suggest. Hate speech is directed to men, women, and transgender. Maggie Astor<sup>4</sup> from the New York Times says; Women are faced with all forms of harassment and threats every day and can be amplified in political races. Sometimes, these experiences have become so normalized at the other end of the spectrum where the harassment is so vicious and frequent that it overwhelms the ability to react.

Coming down to Nigeria, the root of women related gender-based hate speech can be traced to patriarchy. Though there are variations in culture and tradition in Nigeria, one thing found in all of them is sexism. It is so perfectly entrenched in every culture and religion in Nigeria; where women are viewed as “innately” or “naturally” inferior to men. Nigeria as a society runs on this concept by placing the man above the woman thus creating the subordination of women by continuously suggesting that being a woman means being “second best”.

Nigerian women are mostly recipients of gender-related hate speech when it concerns politics in Nigeria. In the run-up to the 2015 election, the National Democratic Institute<sup>5</sup> surveyed hate speech against women across Nigeria. They used 900 observers across Nigeria's 774 local government areas, finding higher levels of gender-based hate speech in the North East and South East. Researches have shown that, invariably, Nigerian women are targeted in both the private and public spheres to prevent them from participating in rallies, voting and/or running as candidates. Studies also reveal that in some instances, gangs have been hired by politicians to stop female candidates.

## 1.3 How Hate Speech is Obstructing Women in Political Participation in Nigeria

There are several characteristics of Nigerian Politics and it is unfortunate to mention that gender stereotype is one of them. In 2016, Senator Abiodun Olujimi<sup>6</sup> proposed the Gender Equality Bill, but this was stopped at its second reading as opponents rejected it and saw it as an attack on religious beliefs as well as the Nigerian constitution. According to Premium Times, Senator Eyinnaya Abaribe stated:

*“The bill was defeated at the second reading when its details were highlighted to the senators. Some lawmakers started expressing deep worries about some parts of the bill that they think could give women too much freedom and lead them to prostitution, lesbianism and other social vices.”*

4 The New York Times- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/24/us/politics/women-harassment-elections.html>

5 National Democratic Institute: Global Campaign to Address Violence Against Women in Elections

6 Premium Times Newspaper

Hate speech is common to the female gender in politics consequently it can rouse physical and psychological violence against a range of female electoral stakeholders including voters, activists, election officials, journalists, candidates, and party leaders. This causes women to be more vulnerable when they partake in politics or have affiliations with political parties, alongside, simply because they are women in a male-dominated political arena<sup>7</sup>.

There is a traditional mind-set that women in Nigeria have certain functions in society which is primarily as wives, mothers, family care-givers and perhaps breadwinners of the family. However, some women are able to break that stereotype; the women who are brave enough to participate in politics face psychological intimidation through hate speech, character assassination and threats that pressure them to withdraw from the race.

An analysis of various elections in Nigeria has attested the reality of women participation in politics in the country. Apparently, from the table below, there is a very low participation of women in politics in Nigeria for various reasons, which researches have discovered to be majorly due to patriarchy.

Table 1: Elective positions held by women since 1999 - 2019

Position	No. of seats	No. of Women in 1999	No. of Women in 2003	No. of Women in 2007	No. of Women in 2011	No. of Women in 2015	No. of Women in 2019
Presidency	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senate	109	3	4	8	7	8	6
House of Reps	360	12	23	26	26	14	12
Governorship	36	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deputy Governorship	36	1	2	6	3	4	4
36 States House of Assembly	990	12	38	54	62	55	42
Total	1533	28	67	94	98	26	64

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) <sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Bardall, G., *Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence (2011)*, IFES White Paper Series  
<sup>8</sup> Independent National Electoral Commission <https://www.inecnigeria.org/>

#### 1.4 Major Victims of Gender-Based Hate Speech

In Nigeria's 2011 presidential election, there were three presidential candidates in the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primary election; two males and a female. The only female amongst the three presidential candidates had a single vote cast which reaffirms the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian political system. What was more intriguing being the discourse surrounding this situation, was the gender biased statement 'Just why does she bother?'<sup>9</sup> tagged to her predicament by a writer, knowing fully well that she wasn't the only one that contested.

The above case corroborates with the statement of one of the leaders of Women in Politics Forum (WIPF) that the reason women did not do well in the 2015 general elections was not because they didn't come out to participate but because the system is still not smooth enough for them. She observed further that because there is no internal democracy in political parties; women were not able to come out as candidates.

#### 1.5 Key Objectives

Findings from the policy brief on Hate Speech in Nigeria by CITAD revealed that women in Nigeria (Irrespective of their status), have been targeted with hate speech, including misogyny or a sexism form of hate speech. For this reason, this study seeks to gather data from respondents in order to gain thorough understanding around gender-based hate speech, public's perception about women in politics and also generate from variety of respondent, terms, phrases or words that are offensive or hateful on women and girls in Nigeria most especially as it concerns those who are brave enough to participate in politics.

Furthermore, this study offers new insight to strengthen the campaign and advocacy efforts to increase the percentage of women in the political space of Nigeria as well as proffering some recommendations which may be critical to the development, involvement of women and advancement of the democratic process of Nigeria.

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<sup>9</sup> Akor, O. (2015). *How women performed in the 2015 general elections*. Daily Trust: 24 April, p.3.

NOT PRETTY ENOUGH SO STUPID  
HATED ALONE NOT GOOD ENOUGH  
WORTHLESS ALONE WRETCHED DIE  
GIVE UP GO AWAY JUST GO KILL YOURSELF  
UNWANTED PIECES HURT YOU  
YOU ARENT NEEDED HATED GO CRY  
UGLY  
YOU SLUT  
SO UNLOVED  
RUN AWAY

# 2.0 Methodology

## 2.0 Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methodology involving quantitative and qualitative research techniques to capture required data and information. Data collection adopted both face-to-face (offline) and online data collection across some selected states; as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in some selected states.

The quantitative method utilized a standardized, well-structured questionnaire collect data through both online and offline means from respondents in the following states: Bayelsa, Bauchi, Borno, Jos, Kano, Lagos and the F.C.T Abuja. For the qualitative method, a series Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted and used to gather qualitative data from views of four categories of people from the following states: Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Enugu, Kano, Kogi, Lagos and the F.C.T, Abuja. The four categories of people for the FGDs include: Journalist / Civil Society Organisations, Female Youth Students, Male Youth Students and Women Group Representative / Community Leaders.

### 2.1 Summary of Demographic Distribution

#### **Age-Group:**

The distribution of age-groups of the respondents in the survey include: 26-35 years (46 percent) with the highest frequency, followed by 18-25 years (35 percent), 36-45 years (16 percent) and 46-55 years (3 percent) with the lowest frequency.

#### **Gender:**

More males (78 percent) than female (22 percent) completed the interview.

#### **Current Background and Experience:**

The majority of the respondents are Educators (28 percent), followed by 26 percent who are community/youth activist, 14 percent are peace activist, 11 percent are members of civil society organisations, 9 percent are Journalists / media experts, religious / community leaders (6 percent), and 6 percent are women / gender rights activist.

#### **Employment Status:**

Majority of the respondents are students (43 percent), followed by 23 percent who are employed, 17 percent are part-time/informally employed and another 17 percent who are currently unemployed.

#### **Location:**

Respondents was captured from 8 states in the survey. Bayelsa, Kano, Lagos states each had the highest representation (21 percent) and Borno state had the lowest representation (3 percent).

## 2.2 Summary of Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Variable Name	Variable Label	%=100
Age-Group	18-25	35%
	26-35	46%
	36-45	16%
	46-55	3%
Gender	Male	78%
	Female	22%
Current Background and Experience	Academic/educator	28%
	Civil society member	11%
	Community/youth activist	26%
	Journalist/media expert or manager	9%
	Peace activist	14%
	Religious or community leader	6%
	Women's/gender rights activist	6%
Employment current status	Employed	23%
	Part-time/informally employed	17%
	Unemployed	17%
	Student	43%
State of Interview	Bayelsa	21%
	Jos	6%
	Bauchi	15%
	Kano	21%
	Lagos	21%
	Abuja	13%
	Borno	3%

Table 2: Demographic Distribution of Respondents



# 3.0 Survey Results

image credit: von.gov.ng

## 3.0 Survey Results

In order to achieve the objectives of the survey, respondents were polled on some specific questions. This section of the report presents findings from the survey.

### 3.1 Public Perception of Societal Roles of Women

#### 3.1.1 Roles women should play in the society

From the findings, majority of respondents (53%) believe women should take care of their family and the society. This was followed by 42% who believe women should play leadership roles and engage in politics, and 23% who believe women should pick up roles in peace-keeping and policy-making. In addition, a further 17% suggested that women should play supportive roles to men. This result clearly highlights the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, and the role it expects women to play in the society. Nonetheless, it also shows that women are still considered an important part of the society. See Figure 2 below.

#### What are the major roles you think women should play in the society? **by Total**

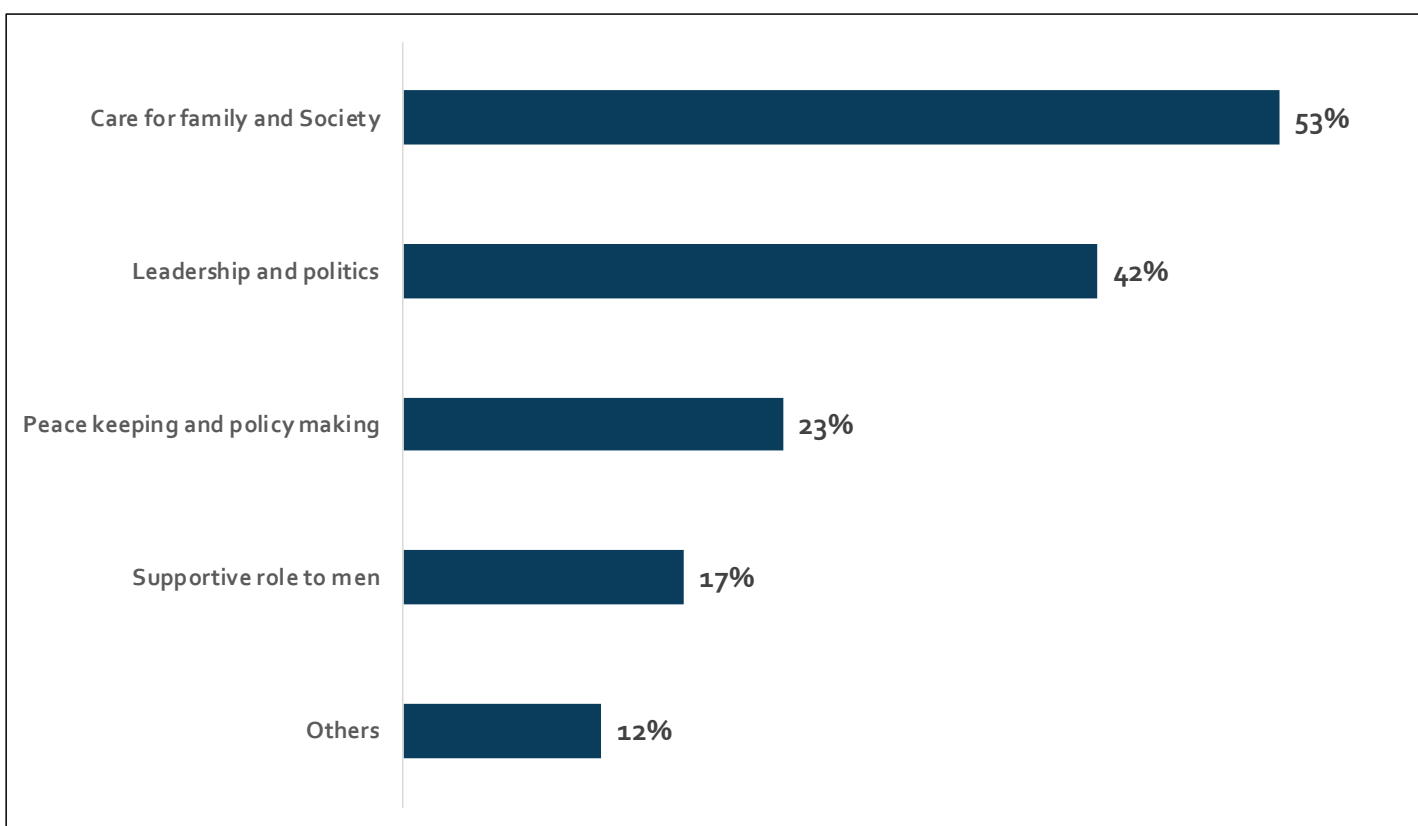


Figure 1: Roles women should play in the society

In addition, most of participants in the FDGs were of the opinion that women play vital roles in raising up the family and shapening the society; because they are the first teachers that children know when they come to this world. Some participants with the Civil Society, were of the opinion that women are too important to be left out of policy making and governance. Here are some quotes from participants of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

*“I think women should be involved in policy making decisions. Women should not be left out when it comes to policy making. And they should also be involved in governance; because women are majority in different areas, in the market place, in church, and at work. In general, anywhere you want to gather crowd, women are majority. So because of their number, they should be involved in decision making”* **FGD Participant, Abuja**

*“[Women] have role to play in the upbringing of children and incorporating good moral values of their wards because they are closer to the children. ... They should be engaged in all policy formulation.”* **FGD Participant, Bauchi**

### 3.1.2 Women and their contribution toward issues affecting them

When respondents were asked if women have the right to express their opinions and contribute to issues affecting them, the study revealed that the majority of respondents (88%) were of the opinion that women should be able to express themselves freely and contribute their views on issues affecting them. However, on the contrary, 12% of respondents believe that women do not have the right to express themselves.

Do you think women have the right to express their opinion and contribute their views on issues affecting. **Total**

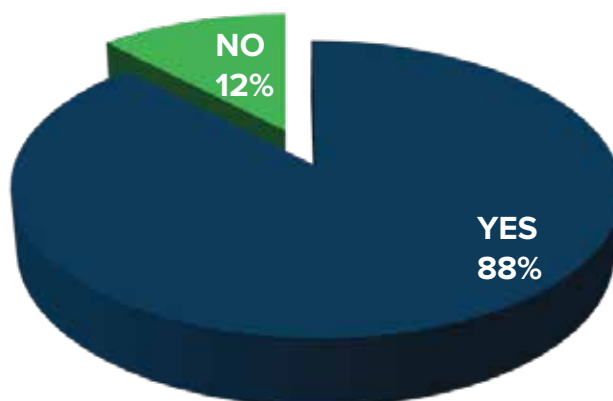


Figure 2: Respondents in support of women to express their views

Respondents were further probed on why they believe women should or should not speak on issues affecting them. Interestingly, the majority of the 88% of those who were of the opinion that times have changed and women should be able to speak on issues because freedom of speech is a fundamental human right of every individual irrespective of gender. However, some participants expressed concerns regarding societal laws and norms, which tend to be skewed in favour of men. These points were further buttressed qualitatively in the FGDs:

*“Years ago, women didn’t have the chance to express themselves, but things have improved; even though there’s still a challenge. Many women still struggle to express their opinions for fear of suppression or being challenged.”* **FGD Participant, Enugu**

*“Yes they have the right to speak, because it’s one of their fundamental human rights. But their capacity needs to be built, especially in the area of speaking up against domestic violence and abuse.”* **FGD Participant, Bayelsa**

*“Our society has been structured in such a way that it favours the men, so most of the laws favour the men too... therefore most decisions they may do not favour the women. Women don’t even have a voice to speak up in some families; so there’s a need to begin with changing some of these laws, in order to bring out new laws that will involve women and have more women as participants.”* **FGD Participant, Abuja**

*“In the urban areas, women express themselves, but hardly do they do that in the rural areas for lack of enlightenment and exposure.”* **FGD Participant, Enugu**

### 3.2 Public Perception of Women in Politics

From the analysis, more respondents (47%) were of the opinion that if given the opportunity, women would perform better administratively than their male counterparts in governance. They go ahead to cite examples of some women who have been given the opportunity to serve and have done excellently well, such as former Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; current United Nations Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Amina Mohammed; and former Director General of NAFDAC, Late Dr. Dora Akunyili to mention a few. In addition, while 32% of respondents were of the opinion that women have the right and civic responsibility to participate in politics, 16% opined that women should participate in politics in order to bridge the gender gap. However, on the contrary, 22% of respondents stated that they do not support women participation in politics.

What is your opinion about women that participate in politics? **By Total**

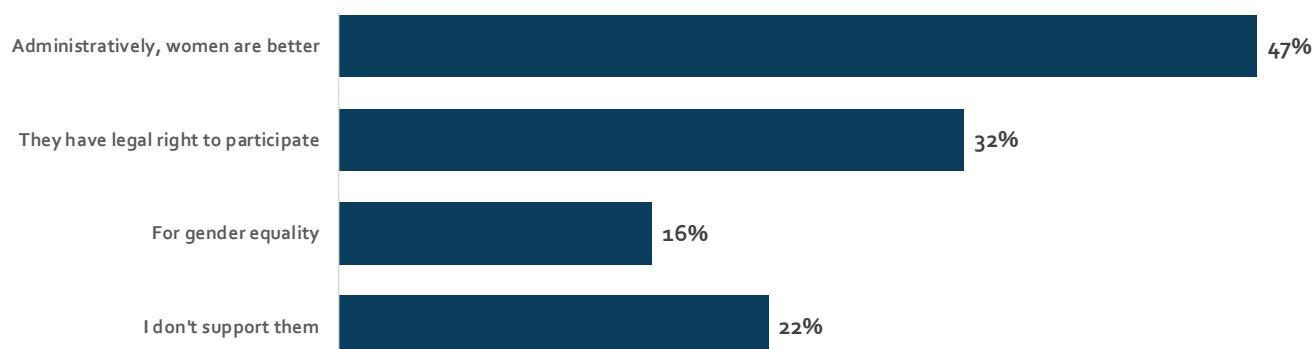


Figure 3: Perceptions about women in politics

Furthermore, when the data was cross tabulated by some socio-demographics, certain interesting findings were made. For instance, respondents who thought women performed administratively better than men were found mainly in Jos (100%), Lagos (80%) and Abuja (75%); while those who would not support women in politics were based in Bauchi (25%) and Kano (20%).

	Total	Age-Group					Gender		State						
		18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+	Male	Female	Bayelsa	Jos	Bauchi	Kano	Lagos	Abuja	Borno
Administratively, women are better	47%	50%	83%	50%	0%	0%	62%	80%	50%	100%	50%	60%	80%	75%	0%
They have legal right to participate	32%	20%	25%	25%	0%	0%	29%	0%	33%	0%	0%	20%	20%	50%	0%
For gender equality	16%	10%	8%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	25%	0%
I don't support them	22%	20%	0%	25%	0%	0%	10%	20%	17%	0%	25%	20%	0%	0%	0%

Table 3: Perceptions on Women in Politics by Total, Age-Group and State

### 3.3 Challenges Faced by Women in Politics

Respondents were further asked to identify some of the challenges faced by women in politics. In response, about half of the respondents (50%) stated that women in politics tend to be faced with intimidation and discrimination based on their gender. This was followed by almost a third of the respondents (31%) who highlighted that some women in politics face sexual harassment from male counterparts. In addition, other challenges facing women in politics are: marital dispute (18%), socio-cultural and religious (13%), and time & financial constraints (11%). These challenges were further highlighted by participants from the FGDs across the states; as expressed by the following quotes:

*“I have an aunt who got divorced for 10 years just for contesting for councillorship. Anyone who wants to marry her, they would be told that she’s a politician and therefore may not be able to be submissive to a man because she lacks moral; and her children are being mocked, insulted for having a politician mother”* **FGD Participant, Kano**

*“Intimidation, family pressure, the fear of African voodoo and brutality in politics scare women away from politics. Lack of support from other women, religion and cultural barriers.”* **FGD Participant, Kogi**

*“Lack of support from women and men, financial challenge, lack of God father, sexual harassment, family pressures, late night political meets and religious restrictions are part of the challenges women face”* **FGD Participant, Lagos**

What are the challenges a woman involved in political and governance processes likely to face as a result of her involvement? by Total

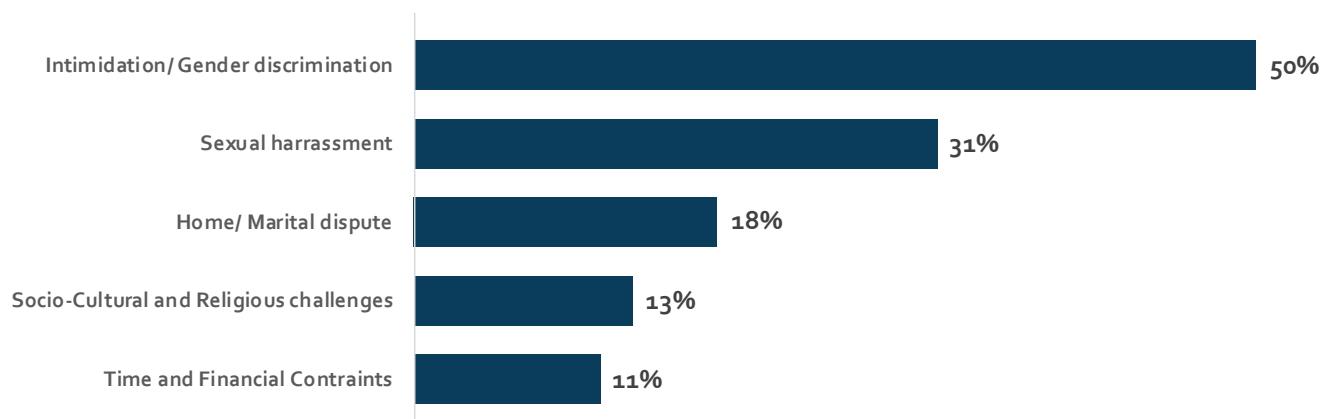


Figure 4: Challenges faced by women in politics

### 3.4 Defining Hate Speech

To begin on the concept of “Hate Speech”, respondents were first asked if they’d heard about the word “Hate Speech”. Interestingly, 94% of claimed they’d heard about the concept. However, when asked what they considered to be “Hate Speech”, 4 in 10 respondents (41%) considered it to be “A speech that denigrates people for their gender, religion and tribe”; while 24% considered it as “A speech that targets the personality of a person.” This was followed by 15% who described Hate Speech as “A speech that urges discrimination against others”. And 11% who described it as “A speech that urges people to engage in violence against others.” Finally, 9% described it as “A speech that insults other people’s values and place of worship”.

What are the challenges a woman involved in political and governance processes likely to face as a result of her involvement? by Total

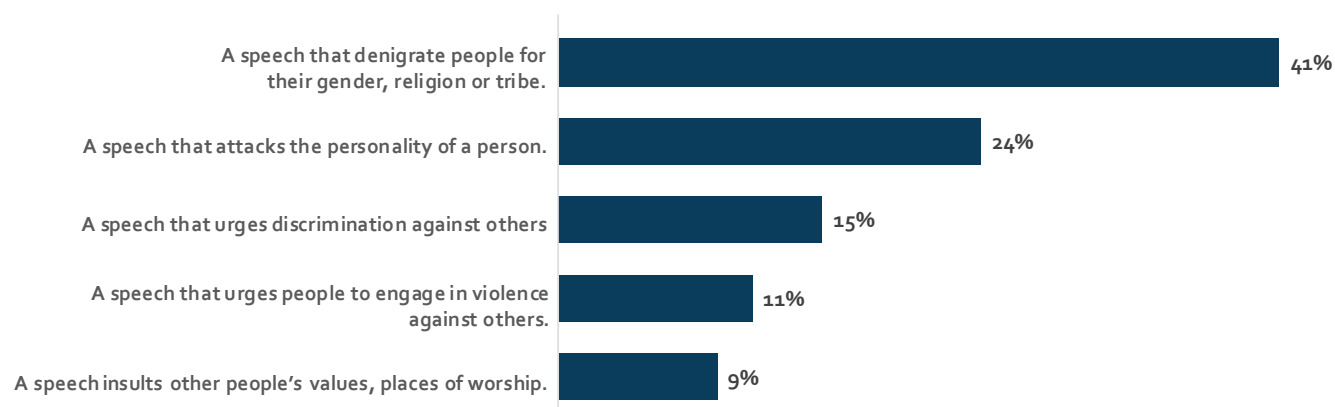


Figure 5: Description of Hate Speech

The definitions presented above indicate that a significant proportion of respondents have a fair idea of what Hate Speech is about; and all the responses appear to fall within the context of the areas considered as Hate Speech United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

### 3.5 Understanding Gender-Based Hate Speech

In order to move the conversation on Hate Speech forward, respondents were further probed on their awareness and knowledge of Gender-Based Hate Speech (GBHS). Firstly, in terms of awareness, majority of respondents (80%) affirmed that they were aware of the concept of Gender-Based Hate Speech. Similarly, respondents who said they were aware of the concept of GBHS were asked to describe what it means in their own words. In response, the majority (52%) defined GBHS as an “Attack or Abuse on a particular gender”; followed by 31% who defined the concept as “Gender discrimination or intimidation”, and 17% who described it as the act of “Downgrading a particular sex below another”.

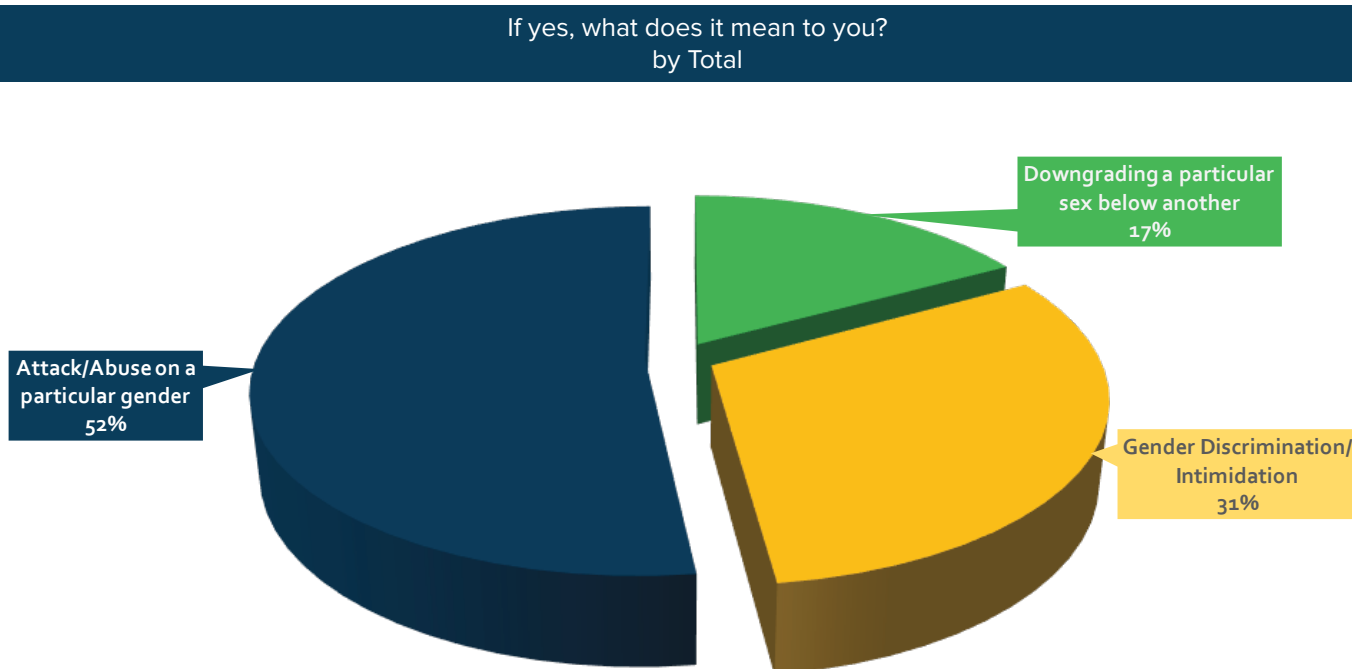


Figure 6: What gender-based hate speech means to respondents

### 3.6 Awareness of Terms Used Online & Offline to Denigrate Women

Respondents were further asked to list words, phrase and terms used to denigrate women in the society and political space. Based on the findings, 89% of respondents said they were aware of such words, phrases and terms used to denigrate women. And the most common of such words and phrases are: Prostitute or Ashawo (35%); You belong to the Kitchen (23%); Women are the “Weaker Vessels” (12%); and Go and Get Married (8%).

What are the examples of these terms, phrases, and words?  
By Total

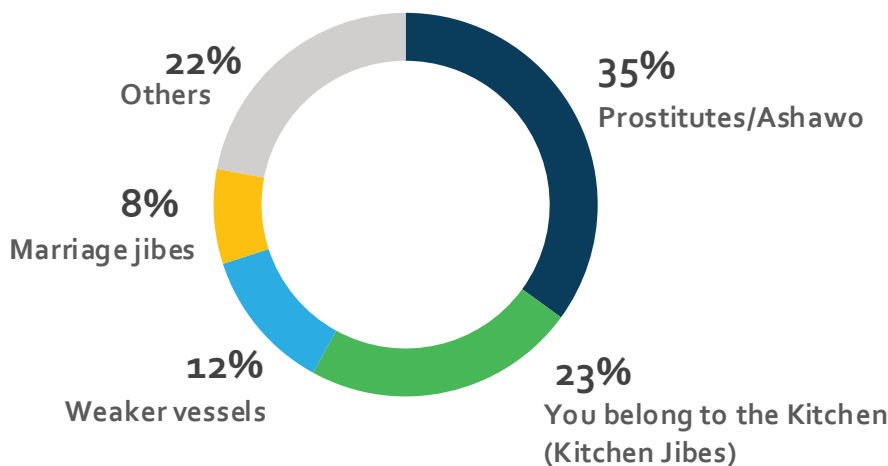


Figure 7: Examples of terms used to denigrate women

In addition to these term extracted from the survey, the FGDs further elicited a number of other terms and described how they are used to denigrate women in politics. Figure 11 below present a word cloud of some of the words and terms used to denigrate Women:

“Ashawo, Olosho, Loose woman... Animashaun (Cheerful Donor)... Akuna Kuna.. Amusu Nwanyi, Iya Aje (Witch), Oti fi Ori oko Gba paro (She has used her husband’s head for juju)” **FGD Participant, Lagos**

“Karuwa, Yar Siyasa Ce (Irresponsible), Yar Jagaliya, Fanka, Yar Hannu, Bata da Mafada, Mai Bilicin, Sanata, Yar Kwalta” **FGD Participant, Kano**

“Akpara (Prostitute in Ibibio), Ino (Thief in Ibibio), Ndi Sime (Stupid / Foolish in Ibibio), Idad (Mad in Ibibio)” **FGD Participant, Akwa-Ibom**

“If a woman is married and in politics, people think she has done juju for her husband, that’s why he cannot talk or control her. For those who are divorced, people feel they have left their husbands, so that they can have the liberty to prostitute. They are also termed greedy, not contented, and busy bodied” **FGD Participant, Abuja**



Figure 8: Word Map of names, terms and phrases used to denigrate women

Table 4: Glossary of some hate terms, phrases used in Nigerian Languages and their meaning

Terms/Phrases	Language	Meaning/Context
Ashawo	Yoruba	Prostitute
Olosho	Yoruba	Prostitute
Oniranu	Yoruba	Useless woman
Odoko	Yoruba	Adulteress
Alaigboran	Yoruba	Stubborn woman
Animasaun	Yoruba	Free Donor
Alanikasanse	Yoruba	Jobless
Iya-aje	Yoruba	Witch
Olojukokoro	Yoruba	discontent person
Onigberaga	Yoruba	Covetous woman
Oniyeye	Yoruba	Proud woman
Amusu	Yoruba	Useless woman
Amusu Nwanyi	Igbo	witch
Akwuna	Igbo	Prostitute
Efulefu	Igbo	Useless person
Ogbanje	Igbo	Possessed being
Ohu/Oru	Igbo	Slave
Onye iberibe	Igbo	Worthless person
Onye nzuzu	Igbo	Useless/stupid person
Onye onyinye	Igbo	Free giver
Onye nkwughari	Igbo	Someone that Walks about without direction
Okponku	Igbo	Empty Person
Osu/Orsu	Igbo	Outcast
Ballagaza	Hausa	Useless
Barbadaddiya	Hausa	Useless
Bata da kamun kai	Hausa	Lacking self-respect
Gagarariya	Hausa	Hard to control
Kilaki	Hausa	Prostitute
Tsohuwar kwaruwa	Hausa	Old Prostitute
Yar jagaliya	Hausa	Woman thug
Yar siyasa ce	Hausa	Irresponsible
Yar iska	Hausa	Wayward
Yar tasha	Hausa	Irresponsible
Yar hunnu	Hausa	Slut
Yar kwalta	Hausa	Prostitute
Fanka	Hausa	Prostitute
Mara Kunya	Hausa	She is everywhere
Mai yawon taskbar	Hausa	Useless
Marar tarbiyya	Hausa	Irresponsible

Terms/Phrases	Language	Meaning/Context
Mai kafar kare	Hausa	Always out
Mai bilicin	Hausa	The one who bleaches
Yar kwalta	Hausa	Prostitute
Achodwu	Hausa	Shameless
Ajoko	Hausa	Someone that jumps around
Enabutabu	Hausa	A prostitute
Osereka	Igala	Fetish woman
Oneiku	Igala	Prostitute
Ndisimme nkpo	Igala	Useless woman
Akpara	Egbira	Prostitute
Ino	Egbira	Covetous
Ifot	Ibibio	Prostitute
Ino ebe owo	Ibibio	Thief
Idad	Ibibio	Mad
Ino ebe owo	Ibibio	Husband snatcher
Waka-waka	Pidgin	One that loiters about
Runs girl	pidgin	Prostitute
Boss girl	Pidgin	One who sleeps with her boss
Born- throway	Pidgin	Worthless
Na dem	Pidgin	They can't be worthwhile
I.T.K	Pidgin	I too know
Una get fish brain	Pidgin	One with low mentality
Barbing saloon	Pidgin	loose woman
Peugeot	Pidgin	Loose woman
Toyota Camry	Pidgin	Beauty without brain
Busy body	Pidgin	Nosy person
Osho	Pidgin	Free show
Free plate	English	Someone who is easy to get
Na goat head you carry	Pidgin	One who is senseless
She belongs to the kitchen	English	She belongs to the kitchen
Weaker sex	English	Weaker Sex
Bitch	English	Prostitute
Slut	English	Prostitute
Shawarma girl	English	Can easily be bought with the gift of Shawarma
Cheap article	Pidgin	Someone who is very cheap
Free to air	English	Someone who is easy to get
Keziah	Igbo	Someone that is available to everyone for sex

Respondents further revealed that the users of these terms are mainly: Male Youths (39%), Students (23%), Politicians (20%), Elites (9%), Illiterates (6%) and Female Youths (3%).

Who are the users of these terms/words?  
by Total

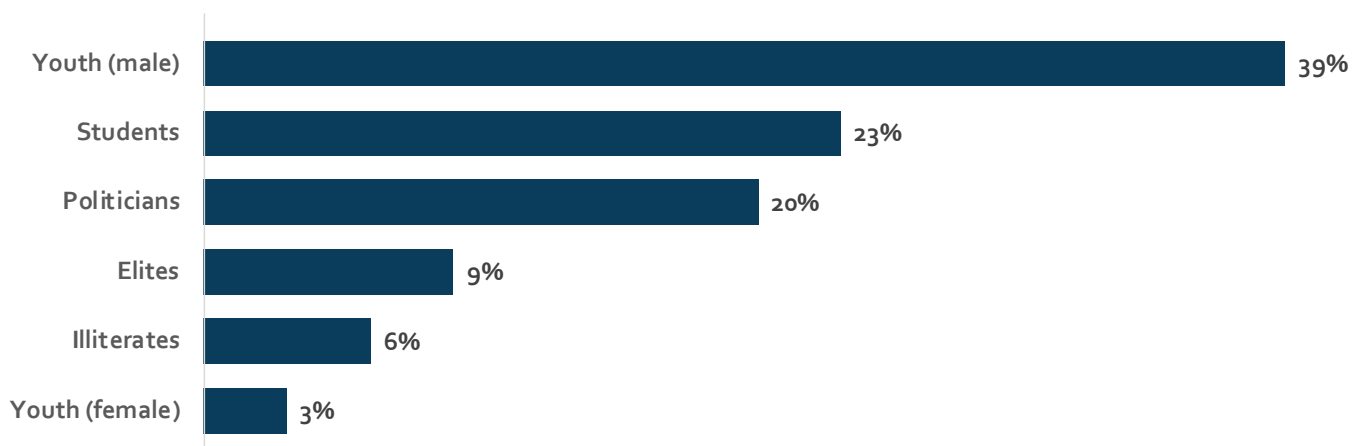


Figure 9: Users of Denigrating Terms

### 3.7 Effects of Gender-Based Hate Speech on Women and Girls

The study further highlighted the harmful effects of GBHS. As highlighted, majority of respondents (88%) were of the opinion that Hate Speech affects women and girls negatively as follows: (1) Emotionally and psychologically (37%); (2) It leads to humiliation and Inferiority Complex (30%); (3) It can cause Depression & Low Self Esteem (26%); and (4) It can lead to Political Apathy towards the ambition of Female Candidates in election, as Hate Speech can breed negative public perception regarding female candidates.

What are the examples of these terms, phrases, and words?  
By Total

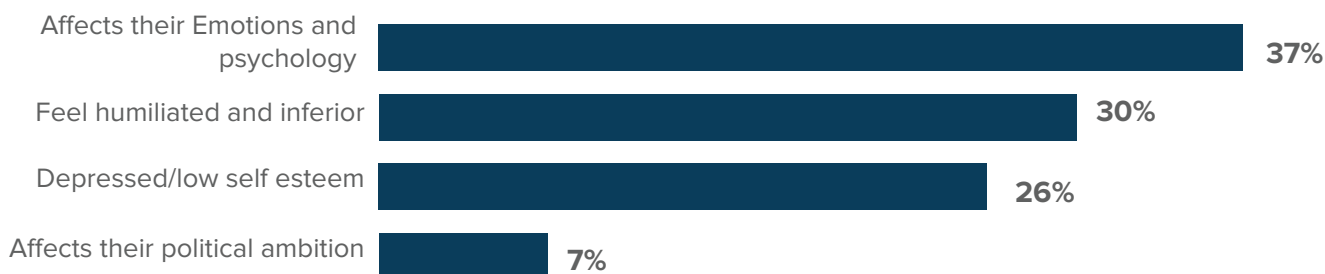


Figure 10: Effects of Gender-Based Hate Speech on Women and Girls

These points made above were further buttressed by the FGD participants, who were of the opinion that

*“Yes, it will tarnish their image, it will reduce their productivity, confidence and capacity; which would make them to feel political apathy, and undergo psychological trauma.”*

**FGD Participant, Bauchi**

*“It affects them psychologically, and it can discourage them and block support for upcoming female politicians”*

**FGD Participant, Akwa-Ibom**

*“... because of the names that women are called when they decide to go into politics, the young ones who are coming are already discouraged to go into politics. So psychologically they already have a different mindset and they don’t know how to tackle it”*

**FGD Participant, Abuja**

### 3.8 Victims of Gender-Based Hate Speech

From the findings, majority of respondents (65%) said they have not personally been victims of online or offline Hate Speech. However, 35% of respondents claimed they had directly or indirectly been victims of online or offline hate speech. Interestingly, when further analysis was conducted by age, gender and state, those within the 26-35 age bracket revealed they had been direct or indirect victims of Hate Speech. Also, Bayelsa state (57%) had the highest proportion of respondents who claimed to have suffered harm as a result of Gender-Based Hate Speech and (50%) of female respondents had one time or the other suffered more harm as a result of GBHS either directly or indirectly compared to their male counterparts (36%).

Have you ever suffered an online/offline harm as a result of usage of these terms listed earlier, directly or indirectly?  
by Total

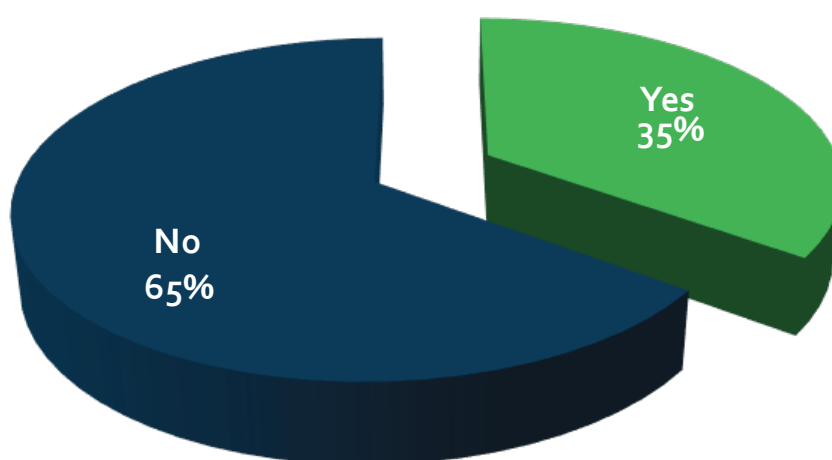


Figure 10b: Estimate of respondents who were victims

Furthermore, majority of respondents (78%) indicated that they were attacked on the grounds of their political affiliations; leaving 11% respective who were attacked on the grounds of Tribe & Religion and Gender shown in the figure below.

Give detail of the level or type of suffered as a result of usage of those terms  
by Total

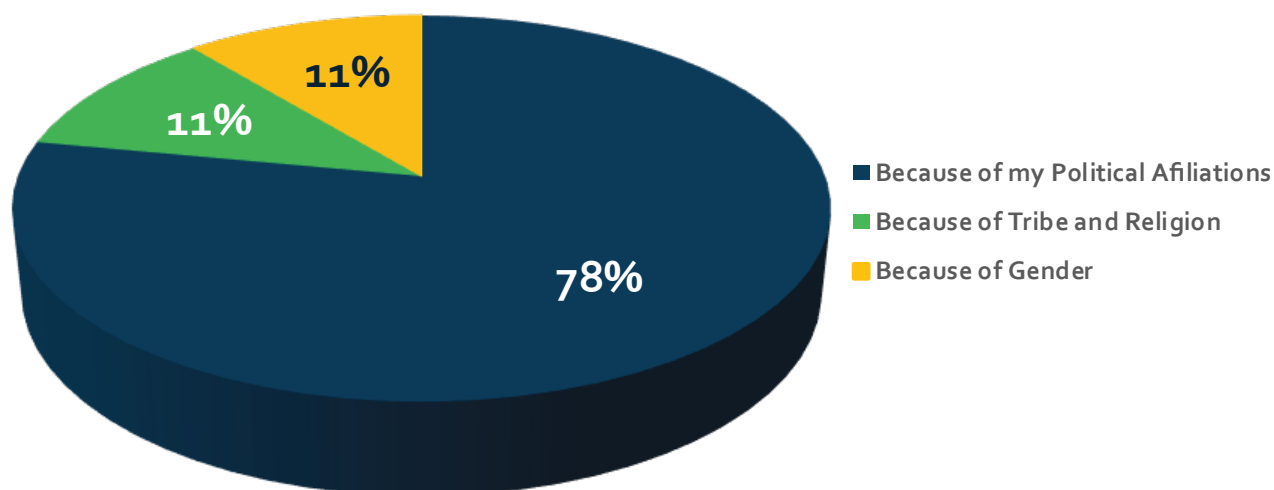


Figure 11: Reasons why they were attacked

Similarly, in order to ascertain if respondents had knowledge of anyone besides themselves who had been victims of GBHS, the study revealed that 46% of the respondents claimed to know a Woman / Girl who had been a victim of hateful terms; while 54% of the respondents claimed otherwise.

Do you know any woman/girl who has been victim of hateful or offensive terms usage online or offline?  
by Total

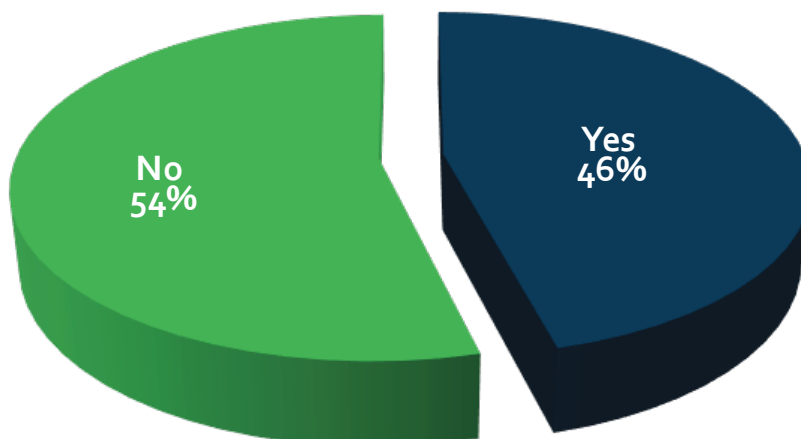


Figure 12: Estimates of respondents who know victims of hate speech

### 3.9 Reason Why These Words / Terms are Used as Gender-Based Hate Speech

In order to ascertain the motives behind GBHS, respondents gave the following reasons: societal patriarchy, illiteracy, and intimidation / humiliation. The study shows that (41%) of respondents indicated that users of these words just want to intimidate and humiliate their victims so results can go their way, (38%) of respondents are of the opinion that the presence of societal patriarchy acts as an influence and reason for them to use these words and lastly, (21%) of respondents are of the opinion that illiteracy is the reason why they use such words.

Why do they use the terms/words  
By Total

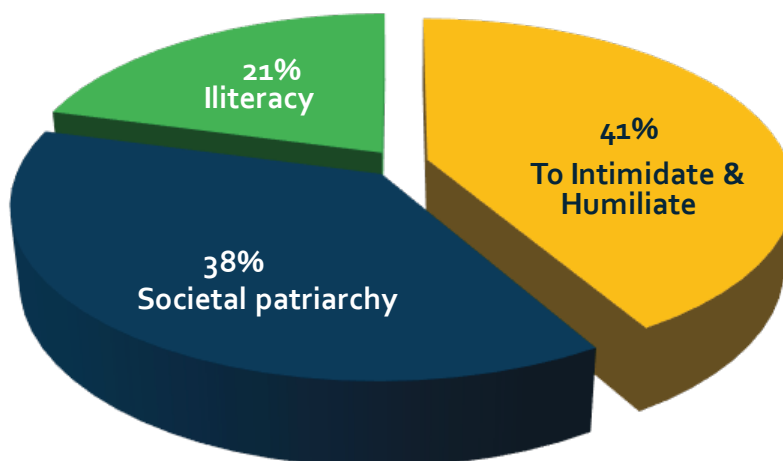


Figure 13: Reasons why gender-based hate speeches are used

### 3.10 Media Platforms Used in Transmitting Gender-Based Hate Speech

To investigate which media platforms are usually used to transmit gender-based hate speech in Nigeria, the study further probed respondents. Interestingly, majority of respondents (88%) indicated that social media is the most commonly platform used by perpetrators of Hate Speech to attack their victims; while (13%) of respondents cited that attacks are often perpetrated through conventional media.

What is the medium used for this hateful/offensive terms or words?  
by Total

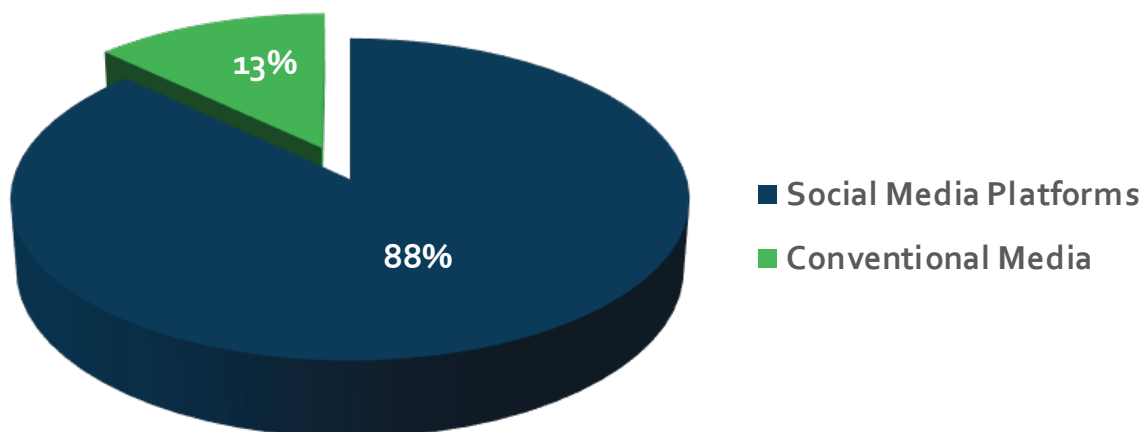


Figure 14: Media Platforms used to transmit gender-based hate speech

Of the (88%) of the respondents that chose social media as the most common platform for the perpetration of Hate Speech, further analysis revealed that (46%) of respondents identified Twitter as the leading platform where gender-based hate speeches are transmitted. This was closely followed by Facebook with 38%; while Instagram and WhatsApp had 8% each, as platforms also used to transmit Hate Speech. It was observed that perpetrators preferred social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, which give them the opportunity to sometimes anonymize their identity.

If Social media platforms, state the medium used.  
by Total



Figure 15: Platforms of Social Media used to perpetuate GBHS

On the other hand, of the 12% of respondents that identified Conventional Media as the main channel for transmitting and perpetrating Gender-Based hate Speech, Radio, Television and Newspaper were identified as the main conventional media platforms used (25% each).

If Conventional media, state the medium.  
by Total

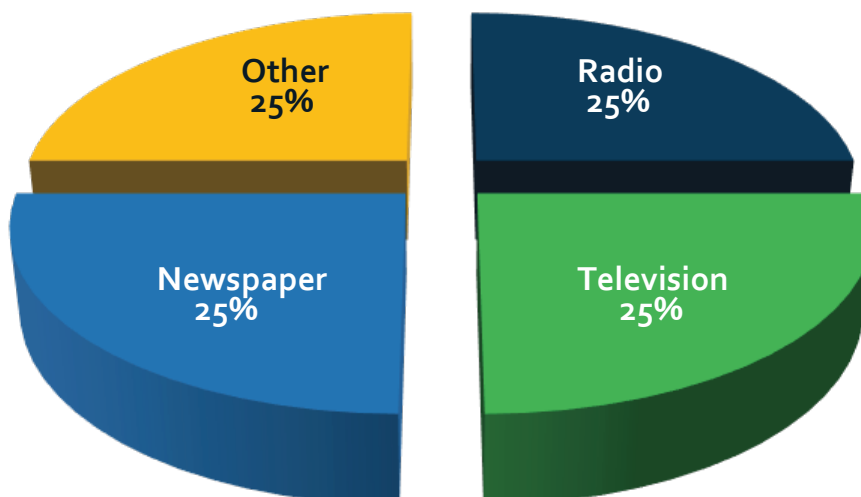


Figure 16: Platforms of Conventional Media used to perpetuate GBHS

### 3.11 Reason for Using Such Social Media versus Conventional Media Platform

In comparing Social Media versus Conventional Media in transmitting and perpetration of Gender-Based Hate Speech; respondents who identified Social Media (88%) highlighted accessibility and affordability (53%) as the main reason why perpetrators of Hate Speech prefer to use Social Media. On the other hand, those who identified Conventional Media (12%) stated that it had wider coverage (67%) and the capacity to spread information faster (33%).

Why is the usage of the medium used for the offensive terms or word

	Wider coverage	Accessibility & affordability	It has no restriction	Spreads information faster
Social Media Platforms	16%	53%	16%	16%
Conventional Media	67%	0%	0%	33%

Figure 17: List of conventional media platforms used the most

### 3.12 Suggested Recommendations to Curb Gender-Based Hate Speech

Finally, respondents were asked to make recommendations on suggestions to curb Gender-Based Hate Speech in Nigeria. Based on the findings, majority of respondents (64%) suggested that there should be public enlightenment and proper orientation on gender-based hate speech as the way forward in addressing this problem. This was followed by 24% of respondents who suggested that offenders be arrested and prosecuted in order to serve as a deterrent to others. To further curb the excess of usage of these terms on social media and conventional media, (12%) of the respondents are of the opinion that there should be strict rules to guide against these acts on all platforms and they advocated for enforcement of laws on all media platforms should anyone be found wanting carrying out these acts.

What do you think can be done to address these problems, specifically what do you think should be done to get people stop hateful and offensive terms or words against women and girls? by Total

Public Enlightenment and Proper Orientation   ■ Arrest Offenders   ■ Enforce Law and Strict Rules on all Media Platforms

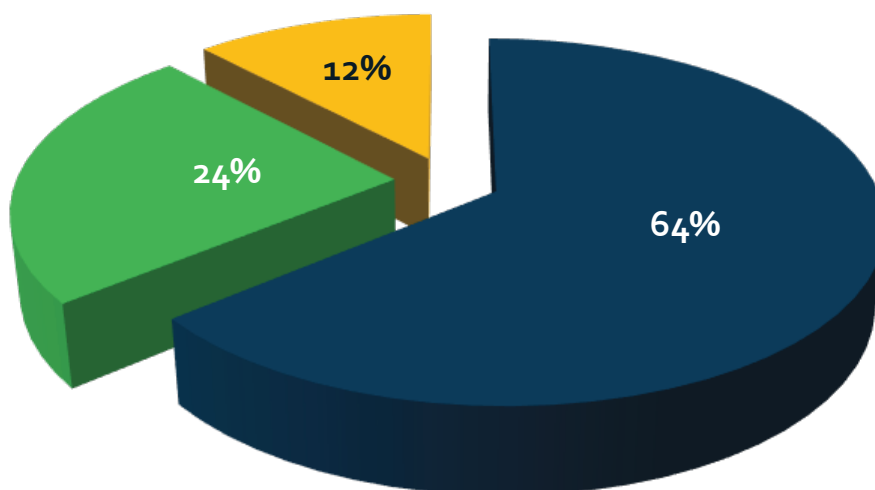
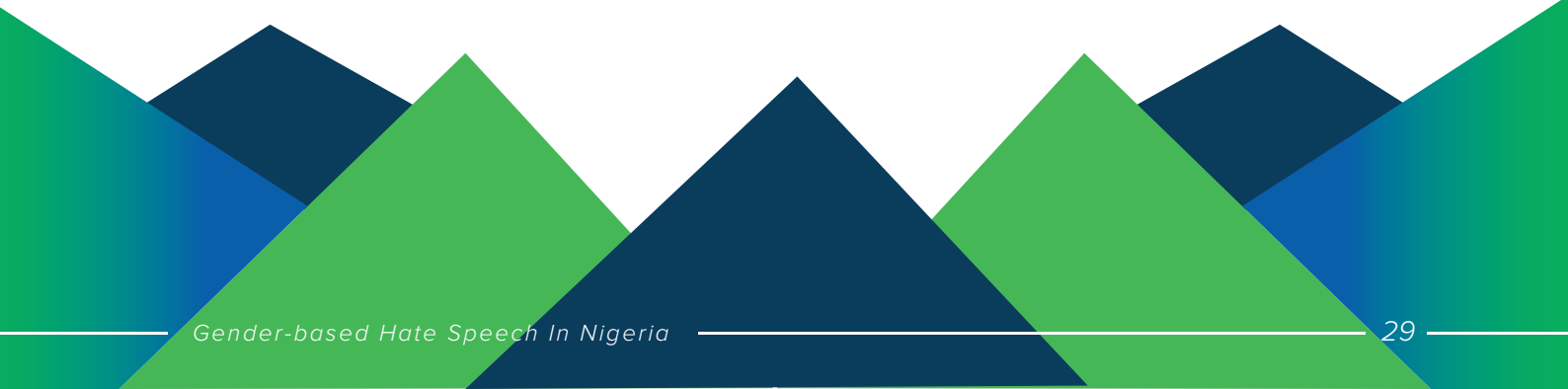


Figure 18: Suggested recommendations to curb gender-based hate speech

These recommendations are instructive to suggest that Gender-Based Hate Speech and its harmful effects need to be eradicated from our society. Moreover, its effects at hindering women participation in politics require a multi-faceted approach from government agencies, civil society organizations and advocacy groups.





## 4.0 Summary Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The summary findings of this study are as follow:

- In terms of roles of women in the society, 53% of respondents stated that women should care for the family and society in general; 42% were of the view that women can hold leadership positions and engage in politics; 23% were of the opinion that women should be involved in peace keeping and policy making; and 17% believe would should play supportive roles to men. Similarly, 88% of respondents believe that women have the rights to express their opinions and contribute on issues affecting the society, particularly those affecting women and girls.
- In terms of public perception of women in politics, 47% of respondents were of the opinion that women perform administratively better than their male counterparts, when give the opportunity to occupy leadership positions. This was followed by 32% who believe women have the legal and civic right to participate in politics; and 16% who believe women should engage in politics in order to promote gender equality. However, 22% of respondents said they do not support women participation in politics. Interestingly, while a significant proportion of respondents who believe women are administratively better than men reside in Jos (100%), Lagos (80%) and Abuja (75%); those who do not support women in politics seem to be respondents based in Bauchi (25%) and Kano (20%).
- On the issue of challenges faced by women in politics, Intimidation and gender discrimination came tops with 50%; followed by sexual harassment (31%): home / marital dispute (18%), socio-cultural & religious challenges (13%); and time & financial constraints (11%).
- In terms of defining Hate Speech, 41% of respondents defined the concept as “a speech that denigrates people for their gender, religion or tribe”. This was followed by 24% who defined the concept as “a speech that attacks the personality of a person” and 11% who defined it as “a speech that urges discrimination against others”.
- Similarly, Gender Based Hate Speech (GBHS) was defined simply as an attack or abuse on a particular gender (52%); Gender discrimination or intimidation (31%); and the act of downgrading a particular sex below another (17%).
- On the lexicon of Gender-Based Hate Speech, certain words, terms and phrases were identified as those commonly used to denigrate women in Nigeria: Ashawo / Olosho / Akwuna, which are all local translations of the word “Prostitute” (35%). This was followed by phrases such as “a woman belongs to the kitchen” (23%); women are “weaker vessels” (12%); and “Go and Marry”, all your mates have married, used to lampoon single matured ladies (8%).
- The study showed that the main perpetrators of Gender-Based Hate Speech are male youths (39%), students (23%) and politicians (20%).
- In terms of the effects of GBHS, the study revealed that GBHS negatively affects on women and girls, emotionally and psychologically (37%). It can also cause humiliation and inferiority complex (30%), depression and low self-esteem (26%), and political apathy (7%) amongst women.
- The study further highlighted that while 35% of respondents say they had previously been victims of GBHS; 46% of respondents further stated that they knew a woman or girl who had been a victim of GBHS. They were of the opinion that the intention of the act was to intimidate and humiliate the women involved (41%), and that the phenomenon was part of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society (38%).

- 88% of respondents identified Social Media as the most common media channel used to transmit and perpetuate GBHS. And Twitter (46%) and Facebook (38%) are the two most used social media platforms for transmitting Hate Speech; because they are easily accessible and affordable (53%).

- Finally, in order to find a solution to the menace of GBHS and curb its negative effects on women and girls, respondents suggested that more public enlightenment and orientation needs to be conducted in the society (64%). Also, perpetrators of Hate Speech should be arrested and prosecuted (24%) and Laws and stricter rules need to be introduced to manage abuse of all media platforms, particularly social media.

In conclusion, the study have succeeded in highlight public perception regarding roles of women in the society and women in politics, as well as the concept of gender-based hate speech (GBHS) and its attendant implication on women and girls. Therefore, it is imperative that GBHS is a phenomenon that needs to be eradicated from our society to protect our women and girls from abuse; and further advocate for more women participation in politics.

Premised on the foregoing findings and the syllogical conclusion that action needs to be taken to put an end to the issue of GBHS and its attendant negative effects on women and , while encouraging more women to participate in politics. The study therefore recommends that:

1. Government should show serious commitment in upholding the standards and protocols of the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation, which stressed some important recommendations in all contexts to boost the number of women in politics and leadership roles. For instance, the Assembly resolved that governments should:

- a. Strongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminates against the participation of women;
- b. Promote the ability of women to fully participate at all levels of decision making within the political parties;
- c. Promote awareness and recognition of the importance of women's participation in the political process, at the community, local, national and international levels;
- d. Encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, including indigenous women, women from rural areas, and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority in decision making at all levels; and
- e. Address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision making at all levels, amongst others. It is believed that if the government pushes for some of these recommendations, the bottlenecks (e.g. societal culture and religion) that usually hinder women political participation will be drastically reduced; and in turn women's political participation would be greatly enhanced.

2. Women's participation in politics is critical to the development of the country as history shows that most Nigerian women who have been given the opportunity to serve in politics and pick up leadership roles both abroad and in Nigeria have performed excellently well. Hence, it is suggested that proper orientation and public enlightenment be given to the citizenry, to strongly guide against the discrimination of women who wish to participate in politics and / or pick up leadership roles in governance.

3. There should be zero tolerance towards offences associated with Gender-Based Hate Speeches. Legislation on such speeches should be enacted and enforced, and offenders should be duly prosecuted.

4. Lastly, the issue of Gender-Based Hate Speech is a multi-faceted issue that would require the collaboration of a wide array of stakeholders to resolve. Therefore, we recommend that there's need for the collaborative efforts by government, civil society organizations, think-tanks, advocacy groups, traditional rulers and religious leaders.



# Women in a Poisoned Arena: Hate Speech, Online Gender Violence and Elections in Nigeria



Data Analysis and report prepared by:



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