

Innovations

Impact of Gendered Campaigning Strategies on Women Candidates in Nigerian Elections

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Abstract: *This study explores the complex factors surrounding female candidates and their electoral endeavours by examining the deep network of Nigerian politics. Given the historical discrepancies between men and women in political representation in this nation, it is critical to comprehend how gendered campaigning tactics affect women's participation. The paper examines the complex features of gender-based campaign strategies in the Nigerian context through a thorough analysis of election campaigns and their outcomes. Our study combines interviews with female candidates, campaign strategists, and important stakeholders with a large dataset of previous election campaigns. It examines campaign money, messaging, and voter engagement tactics through gender lens, analysing how they affect women's chances of winning office. This study also looks at the impact of media portrayal on campaign outcomes, the importance of women's networks and alliances, and the influence of conventional gender roles and stereotypes. The results show that gendered campaigning tactics and female candidates' electoral performance interact in a complicated way. Gender-specific campaign strategies highlight the difficulties presented by limited campaign funding and gender biases, even if they can empower women by addressing particular issues and energising female voters. The report emphasises how crucial it is to support programmes that train and empower female candidates, as well as how important it is to change laws and policies to improve gender parity in Nigerian politics. By providing insights that can guide policy decisions and campaign strategies aimed at promoting a more inclusive political landscape, this research makes a substantial contribution to the conversation on gender and politics in Nigeria. This article is a useful tool for academics, decision-makers, and activists who are dedicated to promoting women's political representation and involvement in Nigeria's electoral processes, particularly as the country struggles with the imperative of gender equality in politics.*

Keywords: *Gendered Campaigning Strategies, Women Candidates, Gender Equality, Political Representation, Campaign Finance.*

I. Introduction

Nigeria, frequently referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is a large, diversified country with a complicated political system and history. A complex interaction of historical, ethnic, religious, and economic elements shapes Nigerian politics. The nation's transition from colonialism to independence, from military control to democracy, as well as the difficulties presented by a varied populace, have all shaped its distinct

political environment. Comprehending these contextual elements is vital for evaluating modern Nigerian politics and the continuous endeavours to fortify democratic administration and tackle socio-economic obstacles.

Nigeria's history as an independent nation began on October 1, 1960, when it was freed from British colonial domination. Nigeria's governmental systems, social structures, and political institutions have all been significantly impacted by colonialism. The legacy of indirect rule, which permitted traditional rulers to hold onto power and influence long after independence, has been emphasised by academics such as Afigbo (1972). Nigeria is known for its population of over 250 different ethnic groups, each with its own language, traditions, and customs. Nigerian politics have found strength and difficulty in this diversity. According to Horowitz (1985), ethnic politics have a significant influence on the political dynamics of the nation and frequently give rise to rivalry and political parties based on ethnicity.

Nigerian politics are significantly influenced by religion as well. The north of the country, which is mostly Muslim, and the south, which is mostly Christian, roughly split the country. Theological leaders have a significant amount of influence over political alignments and voting patterns as a result of this theological split (Falola & Heaton, 2008). For a significant portion of its early post-independence history, Nigeria was subject to frequent military takeovers and protracted military rule. Nigerian politics underwent a significant change in 1999 with the return to civilian control, and the Fourth Republic was defined by efforts to strengthen democratic governance (Nwolise, 2012). However, the shift to democracy has been accompanied by a unique set of difficulties, such as conflicts and violence during elections.

Nigeria is one of the world's top oil producers thanks to its enormous oil reserves. According to Auty (1993), the "resource curse" phenomenon has played a major role in Nigerian politics, fueling economic inequality, rent-seeking behaviour, and corruption. In Nigerian politics, the allocation and control of oil revenue have long been divisive topics and corruption has always been a problem that has an impact on how the public views the government and how well its institutions operate. Nigeria is continuously ranked as having a high level of corruption by the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2020). Nigerian politics have revolved around the battle against corruption, with differing degrees of success.

II. Statement of Research Problem

In Nigerian politics, gender inequality is a major problem since women are still underrepresented and face numerous obstacles to full political engagement. The underrepresentation of women in political posts is one of the most obvious signs of gender inequality in Nigerian politics. Women make up about half of Nigeria's population, however they are disproportionately underrepresented in positions of decision-making (Onuoha, 2017). From local councils to the national parliament, this underrepresentation is noticeable at every level of governance (UN Women, 2020). Gender inequality in Nigerian politics is mostly a result of cultural and societal norms and expectations. Women's access to political power, economic resources, and education are frequently restricted by deeply ingrained patriarchal norms (Agbese, 2013). Women may be deterred from running for political office by traditional gender roles, which place an emphasis on women's household duties (Amadiume, 1987).

The discriminatory components of Nigeria's legal system also support gender inequality in politics. Men and women in Nigeria are guaranteed equal rights by the 1999 Constitution, although several of its provisions, like the citizenship clause, have come under fire for being biased against women (Agbese, 2013). Furthermore, party rules and election laws frequently fail to give female candidates enough encouragement or support (Aworawo, 2016). The fear of violence and harassment is a barrier that prevents women from entering the political sphere in Nigeria. There have been documented cases of intimidation, kidnapping, and physical and verbal assault directed towards female politicians (Aljazeera, 2019). Such instances serve to further entrench gender-based barriers to political participation. A Nigerian woman who marries a foreigner

immediately forfeits her Nigerian citizenship unless she files to save it, according to the current nationality rules. Section 28(1)(a): "A woman of Nigerian citizenship married to a man who is not a Nigerian citizen ceases to be a Nigerian citizen upon the dissolution of the marriage" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Due to the possibility of dual citizenship being looked with suspicion, which could have an effect on campaigns and voting procedures, these disadvantages women aspiring to political positions. Regulations pertaining to campaign finance may favour well-known male candidates who have connections to traditional financial sources, making it difficult for women to compete. Several female candidates in the 2019 election reported experiencing targeted violence, which included physical threats, attacks on their campaign rallies, and internet harassment (IFES, 2020). A clear example of the risks encountered by women in politics is the story of Ms. Winifred Uchechi Okagbue, a candidate for the Enugu State House of Assembly, who was abducted and assaulted during her campaign (IFES, 2020). Such occurrences foster a culture of fear and deter women from running for office, which keeps them underrepresented in Nigerian politics.

Certain male politicians utilise gendered tactics during campaigns, such as utilising sexist stereotypes and misogynistic language, in an attempt to denigrate and weaken their female rivals (Oviasuyi & Inegbenebor, 2016). These tactics not only support gender inequity but also make it more difficult for women to hold meaningful positions in politics. The democracy of Nigeria is greatly impacted by the continued presence of gender disparity in the political sphere. It prevents a range of viewpoints and experiences from being considered when creating inclusive and fair policies (Dovi, 2006). Furthermore, it is less possible to address important gender-specific concerns including women's rights, healthcare, and economic empowerment when there are not enough women in positions of political leadership (Ojo & Olayemi, 2018).

In Nigerian politics, gender inequality is still a major problem that has a significant impact on democratic representation and governance. A multifaceted strategy is needed to address this issue, including changes to the law, initiatives to alter cultural norms, and increased backing for women in politics. In addition to being a question of justice, achieving gender equality in Nigerian politics is a critical first step towards creating a democracy that is more responsive and inclusive.

The purposeful employment of gender-related themes, attitudes, and strategies by political candidates and parties to appeal to voters based on their gender is referred to in political discourse as gendered campaigning strategies. Studying gendered campaign tactics is crucial because it provides insight into the complexities of gender in politics and how they affect political engagement and democratic representation. The clear link between gendered campaigning tactics and political gender equality is a major motivation for research. Gender-specific campaign tactics have an effect on voter behaviour in addition to the candidates and parties involved. Researchers can learn more about the influence of gender on voting decisions by examining the resonance of gender-related appeals with various voter groups (Dolan, 2008). Gaining a grasp of this is essential to understanding the intricate relationships between gender, identity, and political inclinations.

Examining gendered tactics in campaigning helps advance inclusive political discourse. A detailed analysis of the manner in which gender interacts with other identification characteristics like race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status can be obtained by examining how gender problems are presented and discussed during elections (Hancock & O'Reilly, 2021). Developing policies and messaging that accommodate the various needs and concerns of all citizens requires an intersectional viewpoint. The use of gendered campaign tactics affects political accountability as well. Researchers can evaluate the accountability systems in place by closely examining how candidates follow through on their gender-related pledges or commitments after the election (Norris & Lovenduski, 1993). Research of this kind can help to improve the quality of discussions regarding elected officials' performance and the efficacy of laws pertaining to gender.

III. Literature Review

Over time, women's involvement in Nigerian politics has changed dramatically, mirroring the nation's larger sociocultural and political shifts. In pre-colonial Nigeria, women were integral to the governance framework and frequently took part in local decision-making (Nwoke, 2016). But the late 19th century saw the establishment of British colonial rule, which significantly altered the political climate. Many women were excluded from formal political responsibilities by the colonial administration's indirect control, which mostly benefited male chiefs and leaders (Oyediran, 1984). In spite of colonial restrictions, women started banding together to form different groups, such as the 1929 Aba Women's Riots, to voice complaints over land rights and taxes (Enloe, 2000). These pioneering movements-initiated women's political activism and showed off their ability to work together. Nigeria's politics entered a new chapter in 1960 when the country declared its independence from British colonial rule. With the support of female pioneers like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who fought for women's rights and political representation, women's involvement in electoral politics began to pick up steam (Oyediran, 1984). Janet Moku, the first female politician from Nigeria, was elected to the Western Region House of Assembly during the First Republic (1963–1966) (Ebigwei, 1996). But despite these early successes, the proportion of women in political office remained low.

In the late 20th century, Nigeria went through periods of military dictatorship, which had conflicting effects on women's political participation. Women's organisations persisted in advocating for political participation and gender equality even while military rulers curtailed democratic freedoms (Chinweizu, 1995). The basis for further gains was built during this period by the hardships faced by women's groups. A major turning point for women's participation in Nigerian politics was the country's return to civilian administration in 1999. A more democratic political climate and increased chances for women to participate in electoral politics were brought about by the Fourth Republic (Oyediran, 2003). The National Gender Policy and the National Gender Policy Implementation Plan are two examples of policy efforts that were put into place to support women's political representation (UN Women, 2011). These programmes sought to improve the gender gap in political office holdings and build a more welcoming political environment. Women in Nigerian politics nevertheless confront a number of obstacles in spite of these legislative initiatives, such as patriarchal standards, resource scarcity, and electoral violence (Oyediran, 2015). However, there have been noteworthy achievements, such as the nomination of female governors and ministers, with women holding key positions at both the federal and state levels (Azinge, 2020).

Gender Stereotypes and their Influence on Politics

Gender stereotypes are deeply embedded societal expectations and ideas about the roles, behaviours, and qualities that are considered suitable for people according to their gender. These prejudices frequently have an impact on politics and other facets of society. Perceptions of political leadership are one of the most important ways that gender stereotypes affect politics. According to research, political leaders have historically been thought to benefit from the preconceptions of masculinity, which include being aggressive, authoritative, and strong (Eagly & Karau, 2002). On the other hand, in political leadership settings, the clichés about femininity—such as being cooperative, kind, and sympathetic—have lost their significance. In political elections, these prejudices frequently lead to a bias that favours male candidates over female candidates. Male candidates may be viewed by voters as more capable and suited for leadership positions, while female candidates can be thought to lack these attributes (Dolan, 2010). Women running for political office may face serious obstacles as a result of this prejudice.

The propagation of gender stereotypes and their influence on politics is greatly aided by the media. Instead of highlighting their qualifications and policy ideas, news coverage of female politicians frequently concentrates on their beauty, family life, and emotions (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). The idea that women are not as capable or serious as men in positions of political leadership may be bolstered by this kind of reportage. Furthermore, how female politicians are portrayed in the media may place an emphasis on their

"likeability" or "electability," which perpetuates gendered standards of charm and civility (Banwart & Hardin, 2006). This can damage female candidates' reputations and support the myth that says women should put likeability before skill.

Stereotypes about gender can also affect political engagement. According to Ridgeway (2011), women who internalise stereotypes linking politics to hostility, competition, and confrontation may be less likely to get involved in politics. Women may be discouraged from engaging in political discourse and debates due to stereotypes implying that they lack political understanding (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). In order to achieve more gender equality, it is imperative that efforts be made to confront and disrupt gender stereotypes in politics. Studies have indicated that the dissemination of counter-stereotypical material, such as profiles of accomplished women in leadership roles, can lessen the influence of gender stereotypes on political beliefs and actions (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). Another way to combat the perpetuation of gender stereotypes is to support media literacy and ethical journalism (Ross, 2014).

Empirical Review

Political scientists and gender scholars have studied gendered campaigning methods, or modifying political campaign messaging, strategies, and appeals to appeal to particular genders, in great detail. A conceptual framework for comprehending gendered campaigning tactics has been built by earlier research. The "role congruity theory," first proposed by Eagly and Karau in 2002, postulates that prejudices based on gender affect how people view political candidates. According to this hypothesis, voters' expectations about the behaviours and characteristics that male and female candidates should exhibit are shaped by gender stereotypes. The effect of gendered campaigning tactics on political outcomes, for both candidates and voters, has been the subject of numerous scientific studies. Studies conducted at the candidate level have demonstrated that political candidates who are men and women frequently use distinct campaign tactics. According to Dolan's (2010) research, female candidates tend to highlight their credentials and policy stances, whereas male candidates could prioritise their charisma and aggressiveness. Furthermore, data points to the possibility that female candidates will have to demonstrate their qualifications more than their male counterparts. Research has investigated the ways in which voter behaviour is influenced by gendered campaign tactics. Research already in existence showed that voters' support for female candidates decreased when they were exposed to campaign messaging that emphasised feminine characteristics, but their support for women in politics increased when they were exposed to messages that questioned gender preconceptions.

The reinforcement of gendered campaigning methods by the media has been a major area of academic attention. After examining how male and female candidates were covered by the media, Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) discovered that media narratives frequently highlighted gendered qualities and attributes, which had an impact on voters' perceptions of the candidates. Global research is being done on gendered campaigning techniques; it is not exclusive to any one nation or area. To compare gendered campaigning tactics and their outcomes in other nations, academics have carried out cross-cultural assessments. Research has looked on the connection between gendered campaigning tactics and gender quotas. Gender quotas have been shown to incentivize parties to use gender-sensitive campaign tactics in order to satisfy representation criteria, according to research by Krook and Child (2010).

Gender Quotas and Policy Initiatives in Nigeria

Nigeria is hardly an exception when it comes to the ongoing global debate over gender imbalance in political representation. Nigeria has instituted gender quotas and policy measures targeted at boosting women's involvement in politics in order to rectify this imbalance. Mechanisms known as gender quotas mandate that a specific proportion of political posts be held by women only. Gender quotas have been utilised in Nigeria to encourage women to run for various political positions. Zoning and rotation, a system of rotating political posts throughout the nation's regions, characterises Nigeria's political landscape. Political parties

have occasionally implemented gender quotas within this system, reserving jobs for women in particular regions, in an effort to encourage gender diversity. Political parties are required by the Electoral Act of 2020 to guarantee that a minimum of thirty percent of their candidates are female. Although the inclusion of more women in the workforce has been facilitated by this clause, implementation issues still exist.

In Nigeria, the introduction of gender quotas and other policy initiatives has produced both favourable and unfavourable results. The number of women holding political office has significantly increased as a result of legislative measures and gender quotas. For example, the proportion of women in the and state legislatures has increased. The number of women elected to state legislatures increased somewhat in the 2023 elections, reaching 48 out of 1019 candidates (4.7%). Still, compared to past elections, there is only a slight improvement (45 women in 2019). (Dataphyte, 2023). Notwithstanding these initiatives, obstacles include cultural hurdles, reluctance to change, and political parties' poor adherence to gender quotas continue to exist (Aworawo, 2012). Furthermore, there is ongoing discussion regarding the efficacy of gender quotas in increasing women's meaningful engagement in politics.

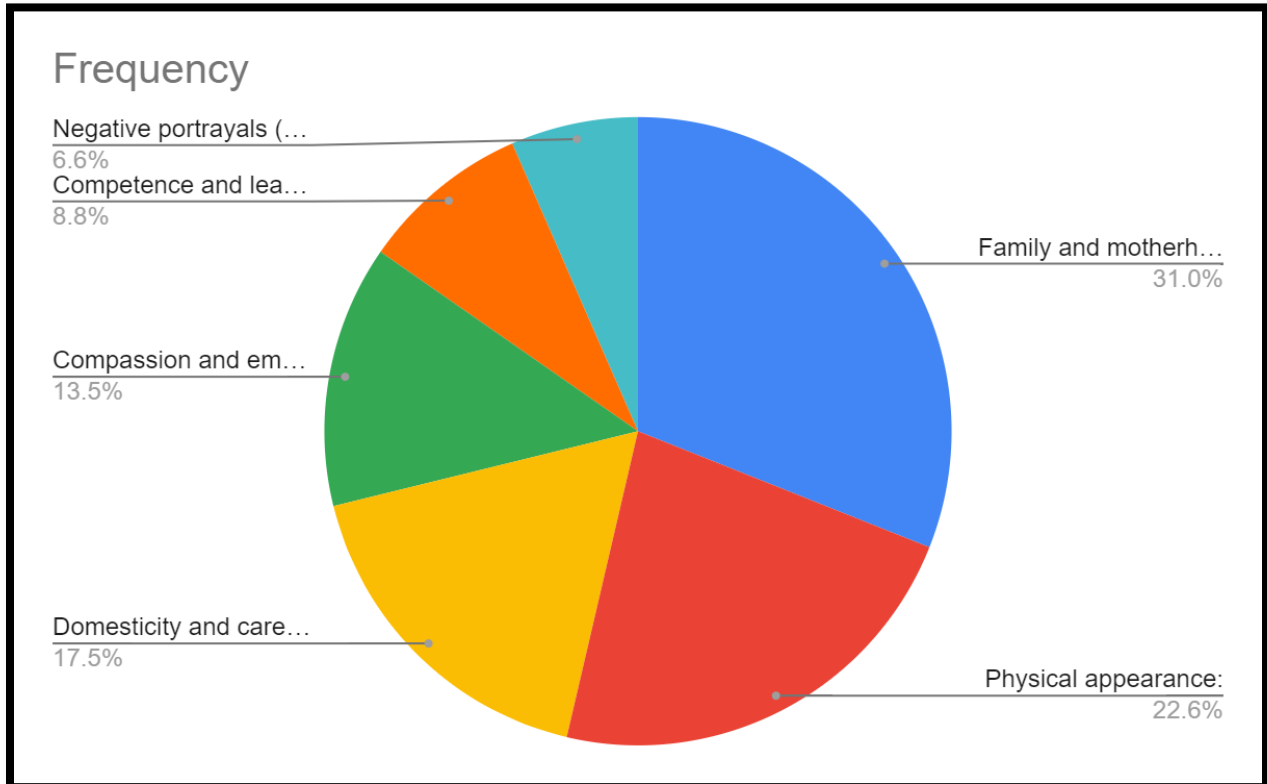
III. Methodology

The methodology used in this study is qualitative. It seeks to thoroughly examine how gendered campaigning tactics affect female candidates in Nigerian elections. A random sample of campaign posters, pamphlets, ads, and speeches from different candidates and political parties provided the data for the content analysis of the campaign materials. To examine gender-specific attractions, stereotypes, and message in advertising materials, a systematic coding scheme was created. Additionally, twenty female candidates who ran in Nigerian for different positions ranging from executive, national and state assemblies in the 2023 general elections were interviewed in-depth. Purposive sampling was used in the interviews with campaign managers, political strategists, and specialists in gender and politics. The experiences, difficulties, and perceived effects of gendered campaigning tactics were examined using open-ended questions. Using a stratified random technique, surveys were given to ten campaign workers and fifty voters from various regions of Nigeria. Likert-scale and open-ended survey questions were included in the instrument to gauge respondents' opinions about gendered campaign tactics and how they affect voting patterns and campaign dynamics. Content analysis was done on campaign materials to find language, concepts, and visuals that were distinctive to one gender over another. A system of codes was devised in order to classify and measure the utilisation of appeals and stereotypes. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data obtained from open-ended survey questions and interviews. The Likert scale replies and other survey data were descriptively analysed. To give a thorough picture of the effects of gendered campaigning tactics on female candidates in Nigerian elections, the results of content analysis, interviews, and surveys were combined. To test and corroborate findings across several data sources, data triangulation was used.

IV. Findings

Campaign materials were analysed, and the results showed that gendered campaigning techniques were widely used. Using language that perpetuated old gender norms, stressing the candidates' duties as mothers and carers, and portraying them in stereotypical ways were some of these tactics. Campaign posters frequently featured visuals of female candidates that focused on their looks and responsibilities as mothers, drawing attention away from their qualifications and opinions on policy. There were also misconceptions about women supposed emotional and nurturing traits, and campaign materials tried to capitalise on these to win support. During their campaigns, female candidates often encountered prejudice and discrimination based on their gender. Their electability and trustworthiness were directly impacted by derogatory depictions in their campaign materials. During their campaigns, some female candidates claimed to have encountered more than usual levels of animosity and harassment. Female candidates discussed how they dealt with gendered tactics during their campaigns.

Gender-specific appeals were deemed unimportant or distracting by 45% of voters. 35 percent said it had an impact on their assessment of the candidate, both favourably and unfavourably. Twenty percent of respondents said they felt uneasy or uninterested in campaigns that used these tactics.



Family and motherhood

Physical appearance

Domesticity and caregiving

Compassion and empathy

Competence and leadership

Negative portrayals (e.g., weak, emotional)

Figure 1: Frequency of Gender-Specific Themes and Appeals in Campaign Materials (Content Analysis)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Nonetheless, a number of female campaign managers and candidates employed tactics to combat gender preconceptions. They highlighted their credentials, leadership abilities, and policy stances. Political strategists and campaign managers understood how critical it was to frame statements that went against conventional gender standards. A thematic analysis revealed multiple important themes:

Empowerment: During their campaigns, female candidates who embraced their identities and dispelled preconceptions frequently expressed a greater sense of empowerment.

Influence of the Media: Gender-based campaigning tactics were either strongly supported or refuted by the media. When female candidates dispelled stereotypes, the media gave them more favourable coverage.

Political Party Support: Women candidates' capacity to negotiate gendered campaign tactics was significantly impacted by the degree of support and resources offered by political parties.

Important information about the connection between voter behaviour and gendered political tactics was uncovered by survey data. Voters were more inclined to take policy platforms and qualifications into consideration when casting their ballots when they were exposed to campaign materials that made gender-sensitive appeals. Stereotypes have a negative impact on voters' opinions of women candidates' qualifications for office and competence when they appear in campaign materials. Compared to male voters, female voters were more perceptive of gendered political tactics and gave policy stances more thought.

The efficacy of gendered strategies Mixed outcomes: Some politicians thought their campaigns were hindered by gender-specific appeals, such as family focus, while others reported success with them. Limited long-term impact: Gender-specific voting techniques were typically seen by voters as flimsy and insignificant. Counterproductive effects: Derogatory representations of female candidates frequently backfired, feeding prejudice and creating a reaction.

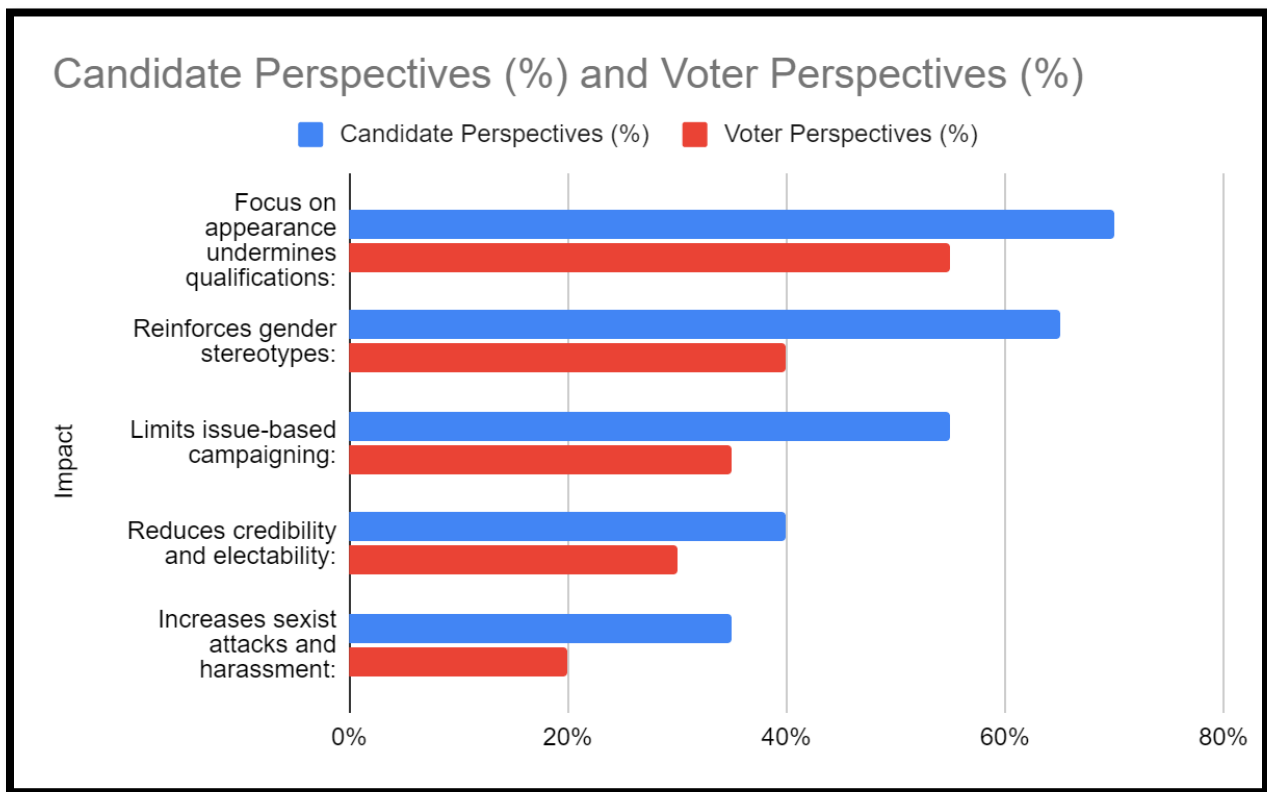


Figure 2: Perceived Impacts of Gendered Campaigning Strategies (Interviews and Surveys)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

V. Conclusion

The intricate and varied effects of gendered campaigning tactics on female candidates in Nigerian elections are demonstrated by this study. Although such tactics could attract attention in the short term, they frequently serve to perpetuate unfavourable preconceptions and reduce the impact of campaigns for women. Going forward, attaining greater gender equality in Nigerian political participation will require a change towards issue-based campaigning, moral behaviour, and assistance for female candidates. The results of the study demonstrate the widespread influence that gendered campaigning tactics have on female candidates running in Nigerian elections. These tactics provide chances for resistance and empowerment, even as they pose difficulties in perpetuating prejudice and gender stereotypes. Political party support and the media both have a significant impact on whether gendered campaigning tactics are challenged or maintained. The study emphasises how crucial it is to dispel myths and place a strong emphasis on legislative agendas in order to advance gender equality in Nigerian politics. These results offer insightful advice on how to successfully negotiate gendered campaigning tactics and forward the cause of gender equality in Nigerian elections for policymakers, political parties, and female candidates themselves.

VI. Recommendations

Several recommendations are made in light of this study's findings about the effects of gendered campaigning methods on female candidates in Nigerian elections. These recommendations are meant to advance fair and equitable electoral processes and improve gender equality in Nigerian politics.

- i. Put an emphasis on competence and policy: Support campaigns that highlight the qualifications of female candidates and their stances on important policy issues that affect voters.
- ii. Dispel gender stereotypes: Actively dispel unfavourable stereotypes through media initiatives and positive messaging.
- iii. Encourage moral campaigning by pushing for laws and standards that protect women from discrimination and guarantee impartial campaigns.
- iv. Encourage female candidates: Provide more tools, instruction, and chances for mentorship to women who want to go into politics.
- v. Gender-Sensitive Campaign Training: Political strategists, campaign managers, and candidates should all get gender-sensitive campaign training from political parties and organisations. The main goals of this training should be to dispel gender stereotypes and advance tactics that support female candidates while empowering them independently of conventional gender norms.
- vi. Media Education and Accountability: To enhance the representation of female candidates, media organisations should put policies and training into place. Gender-biased language and visual stereotypes must be avoided. Programmes for journalists to learn media literacy can also contribute to ethical reporting.
- vii. Extensive female Quotas: Political parties in Nigeria ought to pledge to implement extensive female quotas that surpass token representation. It is imperative that political parties impose strict quotas and guarantee that women receive sufficient campaign resources and are nominated for positions that can be won.
- viii. Grassroots Mobilisation: To increase awareness of gender equality in politics, women's organisations and civil society organisations should take part in grassroots mobilisation campaigns. This entails supporting prospective female candidates and enticing women to engage in political processes.
- ix. Ongoing Research and Monitoring: Institutions and researchers ought to keep up their investigations on the effects of gendered campaign tactics and women's involvement in Nigerian

- politics. Research using longitudinal methods can monitor development and pinpoint regions most in need of treatments.
- x. Legal Reforms: To reinforce and uphold the gender-sensitive laws and policies that are already in place, legislative reforms ought to be sought. Among these is the 2020 Election Act, which requires at least thirty percent of candidates to be women. Increasing the rigour of enforcement procedures can promote compliance.
 - xi. Mentorship Programmes: It should be possible to match potential candidates with seasoned female politicians through the establishment of mentoring programmes. For women aspiring to political office, these programmes can offer networking opportunities, support, and assistance.
 - xii. Data Dissemination: Information about the effects of gendered campaign tactics and women's election participation ought to be extensively shared via public and policymaker-accessible venues. Sharing data in a transparent manner helps promote responsibility and well-informed choices.

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