

ARE WOMEN NOT GOOD FOR THE KEY POWER POSITIONS TOO? AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIAN POLITICS FROM 1963 TO 2022

ABSTRACT

The majority of the population in Nigeria today is women. There is no doubt that their participation in politics can bring about political and socio-economical development in the country. Yet, women are sidelined and, most times, relegated to the background in terms of politics despite the affirmative action of 35% for women. Therefore, this study sought to critically review the importance of Nigerian women's participation in politics based on the affirmative declaration using past studies done with regards to the issue at hand. The intersectional theory serves as the study's foundation. Based on empirical research of previous studies, it was discovered that in order for Nigeria to achieve democratic consolidation, women must aim for prominence in mainstream political growth. As a result, it was suggested that remedial measures be taken to address limited female participation in Nigerian politics, which will have little influence until the nation's socioeconomic, cultural, and political reasons that limit women's empowerment are addressed.

Keywords: Equity, Equality, Key Power Positions, Women, Affirmative action, Politics, participation

1. INTRODUCTION

Homemakers are the backbone of the average family in Africa, especially Nigeria. Women are the custodians of social, cultural, and fundamental values in societies where changes are often realistic and achieved through their collective and individual efforts; community development is said to be impossible without cooperation and wholesome participation (Omoruyi et al., 2008). Women's participation and contributions towards political and socio-economical development with regards to democratic state is immeasurable (Krook, 2007). Some Nigerian women, such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Folorunsho Alakija, among others, have exhibited and demonstrated competence in the management of public affairs and leadership positions. Fasugba (2000) notes that women have continued to engage in activities which are traditionally regarded as male exclusive. Women, having become conscious of fundamental rights, have continued to hassle it out in areas of humanitarian endeavours (Ikpe, 2004).

Working with global standards, both genders have been endorsed with equal fundamental rights and opportunities to participate fully in all political processes at all levels. No doubt, a great percentage of the world's population are women who contribute vitally to societal development and progress generally (Henderson, 2006). Women all over the world play important roles such as mother, producer, home manager, and community organizer; socio-cultural and political activists (Iloka, 2021). Of these many roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by the women's movement.

In line with global trends, Nigerian women account for nearly half of the country's population; however, despite this significant population, women's roles in society have yet to reach their full potential and receive the necessary recognition (Fashola, 2008). Nigeria got independence from Britain in 1960. By October 1, 2022, the country will be celebrating her 61st anniversary. Sixty-one years later, women's participation in politics and decision-making remains abysmally low, with no woman ever holding the presidency or vice presidency, that is the number 1 and 2 citizen of the country, except Virginia Ngozi

Etiba (2006-2009), who was the governor of Anambra before her impeachment, and one deputy governor, which was Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe (2019-till date). Fifty years after independence and the establishment of republican rule, only seven female deputy governors have been identified, in the 2007–2011 Cabinet, women made up 20% of the Federal Executive Council, the largest percentage ever (Anifowose, 2004).

The Senate had the highest percentage of women in any position, with nine out of one hundred and nine members, at 8.3 percent. Meanwhile, only twenty-seven women, or 7.5 percent, are represented in the House of Representatives, which has 360 members. (Statisticalcs, 2015). Statistically, over the past few years, approximately 51% of Nigeria's female population has been actively involved in the electoral process, including voting in elections (Sogbesan, 2015). Women can be said to be under-represented in elective and appointive positions inclusively. Statistics and past studies have revealed that there is less than 7 percent of women in political representation in Nigeria's government generally (Agbalajobi, 2010). The implication is that Nigeria is yet to attain the 30 percent affirmative quota which was stipulated in the Beijing Platform of Action. Despite the fact that women make up about half of Nigeria's current population forecast of over 140 million people based on the 2006 census, women are underrepresented in politics and decision-making (Daniel et al., 2013). While the global average for women in Parliament is 19.2%—the same as for Sub-Saharan Africa—representation women's in Nigeria remains at an all-time low of 7% at the national level and 5.5 percent at the state level (Kolawole et al., 2013).

Subsequently, Nigeria's low female involvement in elective and appointive roles has become a nemesis and source of worry for many Nigerians, as it appears that the modern woman is not considered worthy to rule (Mohammed & Zaid, 2014). However, it can be said that efforts by government and non-governmental organisations have been made to increase the significant participation level of women in Nigerian politics, which is in line with the fourth World Conference Beijing declaration with regards to women in power, advocating 30% dogmatic action (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013). However, the National Gender Policy (NGP) did recommend 35% affirmative action, aiming for women to hold at least 35% of elective political and appointive public service positions in the country (Agbalajobi, 2009).

With the upcoming 2023 general elections warming up in the country, there can be said to be female aspirants cutting across various political parties, both the big and small names. For instance, we have female aspirants such as Khadijah Okunnu-Lamidi of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Uju Ohanenye, the first female presidential aspirant under the current ruling party, AllProgressive Congress (APC), Carlo Nwosu of Africa Action Congress (AFFC), Ibainabo Joy Dokubo of Action Progress Congress (APC), Patience Key of the People's Redemption Party (PRP), Olivia Diana Teriela of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and last but not the least, Angela Johnson of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) (Nwachukwu, 2022). From the foregoing, the turnout of women in politics warming up for the 2023 general election is abysmally low. Most of these aspirants have not yet gotten presidential tickets from their respective parties, and with the look of things, some of these women who have indicated interest in elective positions may not even make it past the parties' primaries. No doubt, women can be as competent as their male counterparts in key leadership positions, but the big question is: can they be given the chance to occupy prominent positions such as the presidency or governorship in Nigeria, or are they going to be sidelined once again and only good for first ladies and wives of key political office holders?

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Going through many research studies with regards to women in power in Nigeria, Africa and even in the global hemisphere, it is quite disheartening to say the least that women in power are growing less significant as the days go by. Apart from the monarch system of government practised by the British Empire with Queen Elizabeth handing down power, hardly can it be said that women have been elected with ease and concurrently to the places of president and vice president of different democratic countries.

So far, from 1963 till date, they have occupied the positions of president, vice president, or been appointed as Senate president. Why is that so? Could it be a societal mentality that women can not occupy

those positions? Are there no worthy female aspirants across the country? Is the electoral process given a gender-equal playing ground? Are these political parties misogynist? This and many more questions intrigue the need to historically and empirically unveil the obstacles facing female political aspirants and possibly proffer solutions that may help in fixing the ideological mis-happening crippling the growth of women in politics, particularly in Nigeria.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

A critical review of the importance of Nigerian women's participation in politics is based on the affirmative declaration using past studies done with regards to the issue at hand. Also, a look at the various variables that work against women getting involved in politics, with special reference to the socio-religious and economic limitations, is necessary to ensure the inclusion of women in politics to a high degree.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical race theory, gender conflict theory, and critical components of Marx's class theory are all combined in intersectional theory. It's a "prism for understanding specific kinds of difficulties," according to Kimberlé Crenshaw. For example, a woman who exhibits certain behaviours that are generally regarded as appropriate for leadership (e.g., strong, opinionated, concise) may be viewed as "bossy" or "difficult to work with," whereas a man exhibiting the same behaviours would be viewed as someone who is ready for a leadership position. At the micro-sociological level, this form of meaning-making that is imbued with gender role norm socialisation leads to the wage disparity. This theory is relevant to the study because it addresses a point of contention addressed in the study: women are perceived as insubordinate or unfit for certain positions of power, and when such barriers are attempted to be broken and hurdles overcome by women, they are relegated to their ultimate "homemaker role." This begs the question: if a woman can successfully handle her household and follow her work, why can't a country do the same?

5. METHODOLOGY

This paper made use of library research method. According to Jumbo, Macaulay, Megwa, Okpongpong, Edikan and Etumnu (2022), this method involves identifying and locating significant secondary data, analysing it in line with the subject matter under investigation and then developing and expressing one's idea. It is a good source of secondary data collection where researches by other scholars can be accessed, analysed and evaluated. Secondary source makes information easily accessible. This approach allows for easy use of secondary data that can be access from journals, books, newspapers, magazine, internet etc. and then used for discussing the subject matter at stake by the researcher from which conclusion is usually drawn.

6. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Women in Political Race: From 1963 till date

Women's political participation has taken a favourable turn, yet there is still a minimal participation of women in Nigeria's polity (Ikpe, 2004). Women's participation in post-independence era politics was detrimental as ethnicity, paternalism, and personality oriented politics became the order of the day for both politics and parties. Support of politicians was basically on ethnic ground, with no consideration whatsoever for women's agendas and interests (Ojo, 2003). Women's collective action power was lost in Nigerian politics, which was a crucial point in the colonial era agitations; gender solidarity was replaced by party and ethnic allegiance; women's collective action power was lost in Nigerian politics, which was a vital point in the colonial era agitations (Ikpe, 2004).

The years 1960-1965 witnessed in the federal parliament, that is, the Senate, only two female legislators and three in the Eastern House of Assembly (Omotola, 2007). Four female legislators in the whole of the country, which gave the necessary platform to influence decision-making to favour the female gender. The military imposition era, which began in 1966, did not encourage women's political engagement, and there was little or no mention of women in positions of power. Military authority can be described as alpha male rule, and women were only allowed to play minor roles throughout that time (Agbalajobi, 2010).

In 1967, with the division of Nigeria into 12 states, one female appointee was nominated each as East Central and Lagos commissioners, two women commissioners were seen in Oyo state (Nwankwo, 1996). In 1975, Obasanjo's Constituent Assembly had no female delegates among its 50 members, which occurred during a military era with little or no consideration for constitutional interest balance, disrupting the operation of women's organisations as pressure groups as these outposts were forbidden. Women were not prominently recognised during the transition of power to civilians Mrs. Janet Akinrinade was elected to the Constituent Assembly during the Murtala/Obasanjo regime, despite the fact that no woman was appointed to the fifty-member Constitutional Drafting Committee, few women were elected to local government councils in 1976 elections, and no woman was appointed to the fifty-member Constitutional Drafting Committee. Among the 250 members of the assembly, four were chosen.

Despite increasing attempts to give women opportunities to contribute to national progress, there were no significant differences in women's political engagement in the Second Republic (Anifowose, 2004). Women made excellent steps to be a part of representative politics in 1979, but there were stumbling blocks, with low representation in the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the States House of Assembly. Women made up about three ministers and one senator out of 96 members of the Senate and 11 out of 450 members of the House of Representatives (Daniel & Faith, 2013). There was no female representation in any of the 19 state legislatures, and at the local government level, there was no female chairman or councillor (Omotola, 2007). Second republic's fall, women again faded out of relevance in Gen. Mohammed Buhari's two-year regime (Agbalajobi, 2010). The military's appointment of women to leadership roles was modest but evident in the mid-1980s, and as a result, in 1985, Gen Ibrahim Babangida reversed the military rulers' stance toward women's leadership. The phenomenon of personal First Lady Syndrome played an important role in the prominence of women in politics (Agbalajobi, 2009). Better Life for Rural Women was established under this aegis, and was later renamed Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) by the succeeding First Lady.

Women's minimal engagement in the Nigerian political process began with the Fourth Republic in 1999, with only 181 posts won by women out of 11, 881 positions available across the country in the general elections (Akiyode-Afolabi, 2003). Only five (4.6%) women were elected to the Senate out of 109 senators, while 13 (3.6%) women were elected to the House of Representatives out of 360 members, giving women a 6.3 percent participation in the national legislature (Ajayi, 2007). There were no women running for any of the 36 governorships. Chief Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, deputy governor of Lagos State (1999-2003), was the only female deputy governor, and 12 (1.21 percent) of the 990 seats in the State House of Assembly were filled by women (Adu, 2008). At the local level, 9 of the 774 local government chairpersons were women, while 143 of the 8,700 councillors were women (Anifowose, 2004).

The national summit for women politicians, held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja by the International Human Rights Law Group, the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), and Gender and Development Action (GADA), was primarily in response to women's poor election performance, with the overarching goal of increasing women's active participation in Nigerian politics (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003). Despite efforts to increase women's political involvement, there was no notable

improvement in the 2003 elections. In the 2003 elections, 21 (6.1 percent) of the 339 House of Representatives seats were won by women. In addition, just 3 (2.7%) of the 109 senatorial seats were filled by women, resulting in an 8.8% female representation in the national legislature (UNDP Report, 2003; Ojo, 2003). In the 36 gubernatorial seats available, no woman was elected, and 38 (3.84 percent) of the 990 seats in the States House of Assembly were elected by women (Adu, 2008). In 2007, women were elected to 25 (6.9%) of the 358 seats in the House of Representatives and 9 (8.3%) of the 109 senate seats. This equates to 7.3 percent female representation in the national legislature. At the state level, 36 gubernatorial seats were available; none were elected, and 54 (5.5 percent) of the 990 seats in the States House of Assembly were elected (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008).

According to data from the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC), a total of 7160 candidates ran in the April 2007 elections, with 628 women accounting for 8.8% of the total number of candidates. 209 or 6.7 percent of the 3141 candidates for seats in the National Assembly (799 candidates for the Senate and 2342 candidates for the House of Representatives) were women (59 or 7.4 percent for the Senate and 150 or 6.4 percent for the House of Representatives) (Adu, 2008), indicating a 2%, 4%, and 6% representation in 1999, 2003, and 2007.

However, this reflects an improvement in women's representation in politics, which is in line with the general trend. This was due to the Obasanjo administration's affirmative efforts to incorporate women in political administration, which resulted in the payment of pre-registration levies for political hopefuls by political parties being waived for women. In addition, the International Human Rights Law Group, the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), and Gender and Development Action (GADA) held a national summit for women politicians in 2002 with the goal of increasing women's active participation in Nigerian politics. Other gender-related organisations and NGOs, as well as other gender-related organisations and NGOs, encouraged women to run for political office in the general elections of 2003 and 2007. (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003).

In Nigeria's history, no female state governors have been elected, with six serving as deputy governors (Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Imo, Plateau, and Anambra States), casting doubt on the premise that democracy would increase women's political engagement (Ojo, 2003; The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008; Adu, 2008).

6.2 Empirical Study

Women in politics have, from back in the days, encountered numerous issues that have handicapped their revolution and success. Some term the demand for equality and equity as feminism, holding tenaciously that a woman's place is in her home. In modern times, from the 1900s till date, a woman's role has transcended beyond homemaker to home builder, who has to stand as alternative support to the man of the house. If a woman can balance home and career, why does the idea of balancing home and nation-building seem absurd to the general public? In the Igbo language, a woman is fondly known as 'Ori-Akudiya', but the way the economy and society are going, it has been changed to 'Oduzi Akudiya'. Many challenges hinder women's representation and actual success in the politics of the world. Nigeria, to be precise, has no female aspirants from 1963 till date who can be said to occupy the positions of president, vice president, senate president, or even governors of any of the 36 states.

Many scholars have suggested that the liberalisation of women in politics was a global phenomenon, highlighting various challenges that have hampered successful exposure of females to the world of politics over the years; this forms the basis of the study, which empirically reviewed these findings, pointing out errors and proposing feasible solutions to the issue of women in politics and gender equality.

Oluyemi (2010), while outlining issues handicapping females in politics, mentioned patriarchy as one of the major issues facing women in politics. Oluyemi was of the view that Nigeria is a society dominated by men, giving rise to the notion that women are mere household wives and non-partisans in decision-

making processes in households and political positions, and as such, their inputs equal nothing. In addition, according to Sogbesan (2015), there was no female governor among all the aspirants in the 36 states of Nigeria, and society did not look ready to accept a woman as president, despite the fact that a woman stood for the job in the year 201. In view of the foregoing, Ojo (2003) argued that women must rise and fight for inclusion into a freer society where equality and equity are extremely important in the political, social, cultural, and religious spheres of society, with the desire that women understand their rights as Nigerian citizens and should not be looked down on by societal standards.

Politics in this nation has always been referred to as a "dirty game" and as such, one has to trade their humanity for power. Indeed, men who venture into politics in Africa are seen as heartless men, not to talk of women. In line with the above, Jumbo et al. (2022) note that a political environment engulfed with so much negativity can hardly attract people with genuine political interests who have a strong desire to advance the socio-economic and political sectors of the country. Oluyemi (2010), terming this challenge in a study as stigmatisation, was of the view that with the way Nigeria's politics is played, it is being perceived that it is for individuals that have no regard for human rights and for those who compromise virtue for indecent gains. This has become a norm in the politics of Nigeria and, as such, women aspirants are viewed as promiscuous. Furthermore, Eme et al (2008) said in their study that the structure of Nigerian politics discourages women's engagement because meetings are frequently held late at night on an ad hoc basis, exposing attendees to potential or personal hazards. Women who attend such gatherings are sometimes labelled as possessing easy virtues. In general, Nigerian politics is regarded as "hazardous," and female politicians are generally regarded as having questionable moral character due to their desires and ambitions. Nonetheless, thuggery and gangsterism, which are part of Nigerian political culture, have made the political environment unsafe for women who want to enter mainstream politics. Women's stigmatisation by other women inhibits them from participating in politics; in many cases, the lack of true and decisive affirmative action to encourage women to participate in politics leaves a legacy that limits women's political participation as candidates and voters (Suleiman, 2017).

Religion in Nigeria Inclusion in Christianity and Islam does not disseminate much role for women in public life, which is also attainable in cultural values, where women's culturally defined roles are submissiveness and image of virtue. This proves to be a barrier to women's political participation. Cultural conventions and traditional beliefs influence women's political participation to a considerable extent (Bari, 2005). After defining culture, consider how cultural ideological elements influence women's political engagement (Bari, 2005). As a result, findings from previous studies show that gender roles ideology creates not only a duality of femininity and masculinity, but also a hierarchical structure in which women are subordinated to men, making it difficult for women to participate in politics due to limited time availability due to productive and reproductive dual roles (Bari, 2005). However, Alexander and Welzel (2007); Inglehart and Norris (2003) note an increase in emancipative orientations, which leads to increased women's empowerment and political participation, highlighting modern societies' changes that favour women's empowerment and establishing a link between cultural factors and women's participation in public life. Cultural influences provide actual and beneficial benefits for women's empowerment and political involvement (Inglehart & Norris, 2003).

Nigerian politics can be categorised into four clusters. Finance is the foundation upon which successful businesses are built. Any candidate must be prepared to raise the required funds in order to run a successful election campaign. The high expense of mounting an electoral campaign in Nigeria can be crushing for women (this includes party nomination forms, which can cost millions of naira, election campaigns, gifts to godfathers, people mobilisation, and money for political party leaders, among other things) (Bari, 2005). Political positions in Nigeria require substantial financial backing, which some aspirants, including women, lack. Most Nigerian female candidates for these positions frequently struggle to meet their financial obligations, despite wavers provided by some political parties, and as a result, little or nothing can be done to outweigh their male counterparts in the political race.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 1963, this study looked at the evolution of women's political participation under democratic democracy. Despite the global gender equality effort, women's political representation in parliament has failed to reach a majority of 30%. Socioeconomic factors, political institutions, heritage, political thuggery and gangsterism, societal conventions and beliefs, and other factors all contribute to a culture that excludes women from important political arenas in Nigeria. In order to consolidate democracy in Nigeria, women must strive for prominence in mainstream political growth, as democracy can only be achieved with widespread popular engagement, both genders included. Conclusively, corrective measures such as mass sensitisation, rural-urban outreaches, more competitive ground for aspirants, funding, elimination of godfatherism, and so on should be adopted in order to address low women's participation in Nigerian politics.

The issues identified in this study can be solved by political and legislative efforts. The concepts and techniques of affirmative action, as demonstrated in Uganda, South Africa, and Rwanda, are encouraged in the Review of the 1999 Constitution. Affirmative action and quotas have been utilised to address the gender gap in political and bureaucratic development all around the world. Nigeria can benefit from these "best-practices" by putting them in place for the country's overall prosperity and well-being. Regardless of unprecedented developmental efforts, inequality between both genders persists, especially in the political terrain, as a result of a decade's lack of focus on gender-related issues. Gender as a catchphrase for closing the gender gap should give enough impetus for political growth to correct generational ages of social injustice in Nigerian gender relations.

This study has been able to add to the literature of women's participation in politics, especially in the area of how they have fared in key power positions in Nigerian politics right from the first republic to the fourth.

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