

An Appraisal of Women Political Participation in Nigeria 4th Republic.

Obi Success Esomchi¹ & Ocheja Akoji (PhD)²

¹Department of Political Science

Faculty of Social Sciences, Kogi State University Anyigba

²Department of Sociology

Faculty of Social Sciences, Kogi State University Anyigba

Abstract: *The study focus on the level of women political participation in representative government since the birth of democratic governance in 1999 after along military intervention in Nigeria politics. It is a known fact that women are often relegated to the background in political representative sphere. Consequently the study tends to highlight the level of women political participation, factors and conditions that impede women political participation and representative government. Some of the factors may include psychological, internal, religious, political parties, political violence, socio-economic and cultural factor among others. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is the liberal and radical feminism which is a useful analytical tool in explaining the inequality of women to men in the society and their subsequent subordination, subjugation, and marginalization in the socio-economic and political domains of the society. The study has its methodology rooted in the secondary method of data collection which has to do with the use of textbooks, journals, internet materials, etc. the situational approach of data analysis was adopted. Some of the findings are that the level of women political participation/ elective offices in Nigeria 4th republic is relatively low. The study recommends that change in the perspective of male dominance in representative government, advocating for equality and the ideology of male hegemony which has become a domineering factor in the political sphere of Nigeria should be eradicated for positive change in encouraging active and horizontal women political participation in representative government.*

Key words: *Gender, politics, equality, Democracy and Political participation.*

Introduction

Womenfolk's have since time immemorial contributed immensely to the socio-economic, political, cultural, and religious development of the Nigeria-state. Nigerian women constitute about 65% population of the country and are known to

play very vital roles as mother, time manager, community organizers and social and political activist. Nevertheless, despite the major role they play and their population, the society is yet to recognize these and coupled with the fact that, they have been marginalized in terms of representative government. This is might be due to some cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. in spite of the increasing proportion of women in politics, the fact still remains that only limited percentage of women are actively involved in Nigeria's politics. Poignantly, this assertion to a great degree brings to fore the nature and character of political drama in the art of politics in Nigeria The theatre of politics in Nigeria is seen as the palace where men sit to gossip, lie, manipulate, masturbates and propagate themselves in the corridor of power and women are to watch and serve like maids while the men play the game.

No doubt the issue of gender bias political participation in Nigerian political system is often traced to the onset of colonialism in Nigeria, Consequently, the western cultural notion of colonialism revolve around male superiority reflected in their relations with Nigerians. Agbalajobi (2010) and Yetunde (2010) have argued on the subjugation of women by colonialist when they wrote that the 1992 Sir Hugh Clifford constitution which was widely believed to have introduced the first elective principle in the pre-colonial Nigerian society, disenfranchised women and limited the participation of adult male to the wealthy. This is not to say that, argues Agbalajobi, there was no existing element of gender or gender inequality in traditional state and stateless societies in Nigeria but the colonial order made gender discrimination more pronounced. For example, in traditional Yoruba state, women held high political offices like the Iyalode, Iyaoloja, Iyalaje, and even the office of the Oba and their political impacts in such societies were variously felt. But after the establishment of the colonial order, women became estranged to these rights politically, but could

however still perform their traditional roles as in case of Yoruba kingdom earlier mentioned.

But in recent times, the recognition of women in politics has improved to the level of having 35% affirmative right of women in Nigeria government. It is an undeniable fact that the role of women in social, economic and politics offices has really improved i.e. the then Minister for Finance, Dr. Okonjo Iweala, late Dora Akunyili and others. Consequently, the issue of equal representation in Nigerian politics has given room for 35% Affirmative action. The involvement of woman in politics has really enriched the democratic system in Nigeria even to the highest level of decision making body.

At this junction, it is worthy to note the fact that Democratic governance cannot be fully achieved without the full participation of women in the decision making processes and debate about policy priorities and options, issues of great importance to woman will be neglected. This is because woman participation in representative government improves democracy, due to emphasizes on equality. It provides unrestricted atmosphere for discussion of human rights and women's empowerment. It also enables women groups to mobilize and makes it easier for women to realize their political, civil, economic and social rights. Women need to be involved in political administration of their respective constituencies where information about their problems will be heard and address by the appropriate institution not necessarily the Government but the voluntary institution that care about women. Panorama (2010). The low level of women participation in politics in Nigeria is due to the imbalance of the representation of women in the political arena. According to UN (2011), Gender inequality in decision remains a great impediment to democracy. It is in the light of the foregoing consideration that this research paper is geared towards assessing the level of women political participation (representative government) in the 2015 general elections for an enduring democracy and the survival of this Republic, how the present democratic government (Muhammed Buhari Administration) can survive through integration of women, to show how women's political subjugation and marginalization can be solved and total implementation of the 35% women affirmative right at federal, state and local government areas, Since the foundation of democracy is built on proportional representation of all groups and interests.

Scholars Framework of Analysis

It has been thought imperative and necessarily at the on-set to explain the key concepts in this paper. The intension here is to put the concepts within the

context in which they are used, in order to avoid misunderstanding. Besides, concept may have cultural, administrative, institutional, and ideological contextualization (Chafe, 2013). In the introduction of this paper, key words were listed. The point here is to explain and review them. The concept of politics is not new, in fact is as old as man itself. The word politics is derived from the Greek word, Polis which means city state. In his book, on human association, Aristotle (384-322BC) stated that most sovereign and inclusive association is the Polis, as it is called whose essence is the establishment of government, law making, enforcement and eliciting obedience from the members of the society. Politics can be seen in all forms of human endeavour. At the international scene, between different countries of the national level, within a state, in religious organizations, communities, associations, at the individual level, among students, among members of a family etc. Wherever man exists, there is always an element of politics, this is because man's selfish nature put him in the position of always attempting to gain an advantage over another. This paper notice that, a search of the relevant and plethora literatures reveals that there is no consensus on the definition of politics.

Consequently, the great Greek Philosopher, Aristotle (384-322), began his famous work, politics, with the observation that "man by nature is a political animal". By this, he means that the essence of social existence is politics and that when two or more men interacting with one another there are invariably involved in a political relationship. In other words, they are two major problems in the society (1) scarce resource (2) many people subscribe to this scarce resource and in regulating this resource conflict becomes inevitable because some persons will be marginalized and comfort to resolve this conflict brings us in to form of politics. From the view of Aristotle, it is obvious that Men engaged in politics as they try to define their positions in society, as they struggle for scarce resources and as they try to convince others to accept their points of view. Aristotle then concluded that the only way to maximize one's individual capabilities and to attain the highest form of social life was through political interactions with others in an institutional setting, a setting, designed to resolve social conflicts and to set collective goals - The state (Anifowose, 1999).

Political Participation

This refers to those "voluntary activities, by which members of a society share in the selection share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy" (Simbine, 2003). In fact, according to *Plato* "one of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your

inferior". Political Participation is therefore a civic right of all citizens. High level political participation is usually an indicator of the political health of a country while its non-existence, especially for individual citizens is an indicator of political poverty. It is one of the undisputable ways by which one's secluded interest can be guaranteed. Political participation is therefore a necessary social mechanism that permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions. More so, democracy exists where the principal leaders of a political system are elected or selected by complete elections in which the bulk of the population has the opportunity to participate. By participation, it means the process by which citizens contribute their quota to the making of collective decisions, the citizens do not only exercise their rights but show also show their commitment to the system of decision making which in turns enhances the political process of a country and enables the citizens to have a sense of fulfillment. Just as there is no democracy without election, so also there is no democracy without women participation in the political process.

This is because political participation in its high level is the sine-qua-non for democracy which involves commitment to equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacities, it also connotes activities such as holding public and party offices, being a candidate for an office (presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial offices, LGA chairman, councilors etc), attending election campaigns, voting and expressing oneself to political motivations, Anifowose (2004). In the same view, Gauba (2004) argued that Political participation denotes the involvement of individuals and groups in the governmental processes affecting their lives. Explaining further, he argues that when citizens themselves play an active role in the process of formulation and implementation of public policies and decisions, their activity is called political participation. While the conservative method of participation includes voting, standing for office, campaigning for political party, contribution to the management of community project, like public safety, cleanliness drive or the maintenance of a public park etc. Fascinatingly, public protest also involves political participation, for example, signing a petition, attending a peaceful demonstration (civil society protest on January 1-2012 fuel hike protest by Good luck Ebele Jonathan administration) joining a protest march or forming a human chain etc. Since political participation are those actions carried out by citizens to influence, oppose or support government and individuals, the participation can either be direct in the sense of being involved in governance or indirect by observing and making contribution to the act of governance, therefore it is

a compulsory task for citizens to participate in several areas of the political process including political parties, education, and the running of the three organs of government namely; executive, legislature and judiciary in respective of gender either directly or indirectly.

Women Political Participation: The Nigeria Experience

Empirical evidences from the works of scholars around the world concur with a common theme of domination of women by men in the socio-political and economic scheme of things. According to the view of Agbalajobi (2010) and Kira (2003) women less representation in politics are due to persistent cultural stereotype, abuse of religion and traditional practices and the kind of societal social structures in operation at a particular point in time. 80% of world most socio-political, economic and social structure are dominated by men while women are subjected to B+ players in the art of politics. Agbalajobi, argued that the discrimination against women, in terms of participation and representative government is universalistic and has long historical standing dating back to the ages. The practice of gender discrimination and sexism according to him plays itself out even in the most advanced democracies of the world including Europe and America. Substantiating his claims, Agbalajobi (2010) puts it that:

"This form of discrimination is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one thus both developed and underdeveloped nation states are guilty of the same discriminatory sexist politics.....The only difference is that, it has lasted so long in this part of the world as other developed nations of the world are moving towards gender equality and equity".

Agbalajobi (2010) further claimed that women are unjustifiably discriminated against; not only in elective offices, but are also victims in matters of jurisprudence and litigations. For instance, some courts and police stations in Nigeria, refuse women who propose to stand for guarantor for accused persons who have secured bail are consistently disqualified on the ground of gender which negates equality before the law as the core value of democracy which is cherished in the world. This however, brings to limelight the nature and character of democratic dispensation in Nigeria and Africa at large. Another example is a popular female Nigerian musician (Onyeka Onwenu) who emerged from primaries for seats of chairperson of her local government, narrated her experience (Agomor 2004).

"Because you would be attending late night meetings and you would be staying in a hotel, then you are a prostitute, they would say we are going to give you some millions to be my girlfriend and lots more" (Jaja1999).

The expectation of women as the moral custodian of their societies is used to checkmate their political participation and most are not seen first as human beings aspiring to better their society through governance but as sex objects even within party hierarchy, moreover, the use of female candidates, marital statuses as a pre-condition for elective office exerts further pressure on women who have to pave themselves far beyond the men to be accepted. However, in general, women occupy lower positions within political networks. The military regime and all others dealt harshly with women's political participation. For some reason, women were initially absent in the military schemes. Although the military later involves some civilian, there was no woman among them. Although, in the second regime, in 1975, two regions appointed two women commissioners. There was no woman at the federal or state level during the third military regime (Newman and Fryingly 1980).

In fact, women were totally unnoticed when seeking the 250 person to draft the constitution in the return of democracy and women reacted with extensive censure to their exclusion from the constitution. Drafting committee later included five women in the 250 member constitution assembly that draws up the constitution; these women did a lot to get into the constitution, the right to freedom against discrimination (Hiebert and Reuss, (1988). Yet, this resulted in little change for Nigerian women in 1987. For example a major step taken was in 1987 when the wife of the Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida added what she called "The better Life for Rural Women Program". But men objected by pointing out that the name was unfair since men too, are rural dwellers renewed "Better Life for rural dwellers".

However, in the process to fulfilling the promise to return to democracy in 1993, the military government held government and governorship elections in 1990 and out of 1,297 local positions all over the country, women won 206 local position. None was elected as governor, but two were chosen as deputy governors. In fact, national, Assembly elections and 12 women won seats in the 638 - member House of Representatives that same year. The 1993 presidential elections were believed to be the most free and fair in the history of Nigeria political system. Many Nigerians were surprised when the

military annulled the elections for surprised indiscretions that were not specified. As it happened three women contested for that election, but it was unclear, whether they won because of the annulment (Tayo, 1999). In the May 1999 elections only three women were elected out of 109 senate members, 13 women were elected as House of Representative, no woman was elected out of 36 governors, nor was any interested in contesting for the presidency (Tayo, 1999).

Subsequently, in April 2007 general elections, there were a total of 1,200 women aspirants to 1,532 offices. 660 of these women won their primaries of the 660 candidates who contested elections into various posts, 39 finally emerged as winners: 6 deputy governors, 9 senators, 27 national representatives and 52 in various state House of Assembly. Even though this represent a significant increase in women's participation in the political process. It is still a far cry from aspirants of women in any society, either civilized or primitive, is to seek control of power, acquisition of power and dispensing power to organize society, harness and distributive resources and to influence decision making in line with organized or individual interests (Arowolo and Abe, 2008).

Deducing from the above analysis excerpts, one can conveniently say that the discrimination against women has its root in the character and content of our social setting which celebrates the males folks as high-class beings, who are considered stronger and unique to fit for public space while women are merely weak minded and so, reserved for domestic use at any point in time. This tendency has undermined the apparent role of women in politics, thereby according them low level of participation and representation in the political process of the 21st century.

TABLE1. Constitutional Involvement if Women in Nigeria Politics

YEAR	CONSTITUTION	SUFFRAGE
1914	Constitution	None
1922	Clifford	Adult males with annual income of \$100
1946	Richards	Adult males with \$50
1951	Macpherson	Adult males who paid their taxes
1954	Lyttleton	Adult males +females in east and west
1960	Independence	Adult males + females in east and west
1979	Presidential	Adult males

1999	Presidential	and females Adult males and females (18 and above)
2003	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)
2011	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)
2015	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)

Source: Authors calculations 2015

Deducing from the above tables it is obvious that men started voting in 1922 and women in all parts of the country started voting in 1979 with a huge margin of fifty seven years. Consequently, the near total exclusion of women from governance led to the rise of women activism which culminated in the formation of women's association initially with welfare character in the 1940s. Notable in the formation and organization of such women's association was Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, who at different times president of the Nigerian women's union, the Nigerian council of women, and of the Federation of women's societies. In Eastern Nigeria, Mrs. Margret Ekpo was a proving force in the women's movement. The federation of Nigerian women's societies had the following objectives:

- To encourage the women folk of Nigeria to take part in political, social, cultural and economic life of Nigeria.
- To create facilities for female education
- To generally raise the status of women and to win

These women's groups were all concerned with influencing political parties and government issues. Such education, property rights, employment and conditions of service for women (Mba, 1982). Despite all the restrictive measures taken against women, they demonstrated great resistance to participate and have a say in the decision-making processes. Women's demand for change and participation in decision making led to Aba women riots of 1929 and the Abeokuta riot of 1947-48. During the 1929 Aba women riots, women attacked native courts and warrant chiefs

because of the obnoxious taxes imposed on them by the colonial masters. Similarly in Abeokuta, women fiercely opposed colonial policies which were detrimental to their economic interests.

Women and Party Politics in The Nigeria's 4th Republic

The formation of more political parties was a real turn around for women in the Fourth Republic. Thus women were to head two of the thirty (30) political parties and ran as their presidential candidate while three other women were nominated as vice presidential candidates of the political parties. In 2002 and 2003 respectively, the party primaries turned out to be a table of woes for women. Few cases can be cited on the experience of female politicians in the party primaries (Kabber, 2002).

Onyeka Onwenu who hoped to contest election for the chairmanship position of her local government in Imo state had to say:

"The intrigue were many as you have candidate who brought in many to the field, you have candidates who sent buses to get under-aged school children to vote for them, you have candidate who when they were through with this ward, they would get their supporters transported to another ward to stand on the line and vote for them, also you have candidates who had paid officials".

She was not alone in the cry of negation of all sense of civility in the primaries for Nkoyo Toyo who contested primary for the House of Representative seat under Calabar Municipal/Odukpa Federal Constituency felt that the main challenge of the primaries for her as a woman and person, from the NGO background with determine how far she could go with all the manifest malpractices that were apparent in the primaries. She later understood that there were no rules and even if any existed at all, some people felt that the law was not for them as these rules were flaunted with impunity. Her party, she felt was structured in such a way to exclude rather than to include some people believed as though they owned the party and spent much effort and time making sure that these they considered as outsiders should not penetrate other terms of getting information or even getting a fair chance to contest. Unbelief and shock trailed the release of the POP National Assembly primaries conducted in Anambra North Senatorial district. The First day of the party primaries were inconclusive and delegate were asked to come the second day for the conclusion of the nomination. By the next day, a result sheet was already being bandied about the

supporter of "successful aspirant" who laugh at those within to cast their votes (WPL January-March, 2003). Joy Emordi's case as worrisome as that of Oluremi Adikwu-Bakare, a business woman and former gubernatorial candidate who aspired under the platform of the ruling party (PDP) for the chief executive position for Lagos State.

The party asked her in very short notice to form about 312 kilometers to Akure for clearance preceding primaries, meanwhile when she was away, the party in Lagos fixed the election for the next day she left Akure around 2 o'clock in the morning when the screening ended and made a four hours' drive straight to the venue of the almost press interviews expressing her belief that the party somehow predetermined the result in her absence, she left the party immediately after the primaries (Aziken 2009). Furthermore, Barrister Nkoyo Toyo who contested for a seat in the Federal House of Representative also encountered similar problem. Nkoyo's initial was to contest for a senatorial seat. The Governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke, made it clear to her to contest. He did however, supported her candidacy for the House of Representatives, an opening that Nkoyo subsequently pursued. The very fact that an aspirant needs permission from a state governor in order to contest for a seat is an indication of anti-democratic character of the contemporary polity (Nkoyo, 2002).

The implementation of provision in party documents relies in political will and political commitment to the principles inherent in these documents, at all levels of the party structures, the availability is exercised at the national not the state level of the party. From Nkoyo's point of view, a key aspect of the initial process of getting accepted as a candidate for the primaries was about coming to a term with the politics of entryism. How could

she, as an outsider, gain acceptance to enter arena of political contestations. This was a primary concern regardless of formal pronouncement about affirmative action for women in POP. Nyoko's experience during the primaries confirmed to her that POP was not a political party. The party has no efforts to present itself, its programmes and ideology in any coherent manner. More significantly, events in the party had shown it's very abusive of principles, process anti-internal accountability and there is not any popular control of any kind (Ibrahim, 2004).

Women in Governance (Representative Government) in Nigeria's 4th Republic

In the face of overwhelming social, economic and political challenges, the Nigerian women have made considerable "success" in terms of women in leadership positions especially in the political arena. The periods of 1999 to 2015, is worthy to note. In 1999 for instance, few women were elected as deputy governors, senators and honorable members at both the federal and state assemblies (Anyia, 2004) summarized the number of women in elective positions as at 1999 thus:

- 3 women out of 109 senators
- 12 women out of 360 state house of representative members
- 12 women out of 990 state house of assembly members
- 143 women out of 8810 local government councilors
- 9 women out of 774 local government chairman.

Of course the offices of the president and vice president and 36 state governors were no areas for women in the 1999 election.

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seat Available	Women								
President	1	0		0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	9(8.3)	109	7(6.4)	109	7(6.4)
House of Reps	360	7(1.9)	360	21(5.8)	360	27(7.5)	360	25(6.9)	360	14(3.8%)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	
State House of Reps	990	24(2.4)	990	40(3.9)	990	57(5.8)	990	68(6.9)	990	

Table 2. Illustrating Female Representation from 1999-2015.

Source: compiled by the authors with data from INEC Website

In 1999 election, Nigerians witnessed a break through from women political marginalization of the military dictatorial administration, to civilian administration that gives room for equal participation. In 1999, the office of the president was dominated by the male, 3 women emerged as senators out of 109 slot, 7 emerged in house of reps out of 360 slot, no women emerged as governor of a state out of the 36 state and only 24 emerged in the house of assembly. In 2003 election, the presidency male statuesque remains, but the number of women increase to 4 lawmakers in the senate, there was also a sharp increase from

7 -21 female members in the house of representative, while no women emerged as governor in 2003, and there was also increase from 24-40 women in state house of assembly. The women folks enjoyed some degree of representative government in 2003 compared to the 1999 election. However, there exist a wide merging between the males and female representation in government. Women continues to enjoy active governmental representation in 2007 election, the number of senators increased from 4-9 in 2007, house of reps members increased from 21-27, but no woman have been able to claim the position of the presidency and governor which can be accrued to male dominating nature of Nigeria political system.

However, number in state house of assembly increased from 40-57. In 2011, the office of the presidency was exclusively reserved for the male fork, and the women representation dropped by 0.9% in the senate, 1.8% in the house of reps and increased by 1.1%. consequently, in 2015, the male folks politics of dominance continued in the office of the presidency, but a record was broken for the first time in the history of Nigeria politics when Aisha Alhassan from court tribunal emerged the second female governor of Nigeria in Taraba state behind *Dame Virginia Ngozi Etiaba* in Anambra state, however, the victory was short lived as the male counterpart emerged governor of the state through a court with higher jurisdiction.

TABLE 3: BELOW IS THE FEMALE PRESIDENCY GENDER STATISTICS OF 4th REPUBLIC

S/NO	Office	Male	Female
1	President	1	0
2	Vice President	1	0
3	Senior Ministers	24	4
4	Junior Ministers	15	3
5	Head of Service	1	0
6	Secretary of Government of the Federation	1	0
7	Chief of Staff of	1	0

	the President		
8	Special Advisers	14	2
9	Deputy Chief of Staff	1	0
10	Permanent Secretaries	40	8
11	Directors General	3	0
12	Senior Special Assistants	11	2
13	Chief of Protocol	1	0
14	Deputy Chief of Staff to VP	1	0
15	Deputy Chief Press Secretary to VP	1	0
16	Personal Assistance to President	1	0
17	Principal secretary to the President	1	0
18	Special Assistants to the President	20	6
19	Special Assistants to the Vice President	4	1
20	Accountant General of the Federation	1	0
21	Auditor-General of the Federation	1	0
		144	26

Source: Ada (2003:30), women in the power equation of Nigerian politics, Lagos: Dat& Partners logistics Ltd.

The above table shows that both the offices of the president and that of the vice president was occupied by male elected candidate and it further gave the statistical representation of both the number of male and female appointees in the 4th republic.

Table 4: List of Female deputy Governors Elected after the 2007 Election

S/NO	State	Name	Party
1	Anambra	Mrs. Stella Okife	POP
2	Imo	Lady Dr. Ada Okwuonu	PPA
3	Lagos	Mrs. Sarah Bisi Susan	AC
4	Ogun	Alhaja Salmot M. Badnu	POP
5	Plateau	Mrs. Pauline L. Tellen	POP
6	Osun	Enelu Olushola Obada	POP

Source: Adopted from INEC (2007) cited in Charles and Ikenna (2007).

From the above table, Mrs. Stella Odife was elected deputy governor to Andy Uba in the 2007 election. However, the Supreme Court judgment of the 14th June, 2007 declared that Peter Obi (elected on the platform of APGA had not finished his tenure. Incidentally Peter Obi's deputy was a female (Dame Virgy Etiaba) and as such the equation was not affected (Charles and Ikenna 2009). Meanwhile, Mr. Peter Obi following the February 6, 2010 general election has new deputy in the person of Engineer Emeka Ndubisi Sebeudu, a male.

Table 5: Current Representation of Men and Women in Elective Positions (2015).

S/N	Position	Men	Women	Total
1	President	1	0	1
2	Vice President	1	0	1
3	Senate	102	7	109
4	House of Representatives	346	14	360
5	Governors	36	0	36
6	Deputy Governors	32	4	36
7	House of Assembly	-	-	-
	Total	517	26	1533

Source: Compiled by authors with data from INEC, 2015.

The poor outing by women in the 2015 general elections became most worrisome and disappointing because of the level of preparations carried out by a lot of women advocacy groups. Numerous seminars and conferences aimed at preparing the bulk of Nigerian women with political ambition for the electoral contest were also organized with both local and international participants. As part of the preparations, the Nigerian Women Interparty Forum was launched during one of such events in Lagos. The focus of the conference was "Redefining the Role of Nigerian Women in Political Life" held for female political leaders at the national and local levels from the six leading political parties and women legislators in the National Assembly. The Forum now offers a platform for women beyond the conferences to share experiences, network, advocate and lobby for political space for women within and outside the political parties. The necessity of this platform was summarized by one of the participants, "women should be empowered and encouraged to aspire for political leadership and governance positions, which is critical to societal and human development" (Olasupo, 2012:16).

Earlier, the Majority leader of the House of Representatives Mulikat Akande-Adeola, said that the conference was aimed at strategizing and preparing women for full participation in politics. She expressed optimism that as from 2015, women's representation in elective and appointive positions, at the federal, state and local government levels, would increase to 50 percent. Akande-Adeola said that one of the objectives of the conference was ensuring grassroots mobilization in favour of female candidates in 2015. The house leader commended President Goodluck Jonathan for sustaining his minimum quota of 35 per cent of women representation in political positions and offices (Okechukwu et al, 2014:2). The conference, hosted by the Women's Democracy Network (WDN) in collaboration with the International Republican Institute (IRI), was led by trainers from around the world with experience in political leadership: Christine Abia Bako, a member of the Ugandan parliament; Deborah Grey, former member of the Canadian parliament; and Michaela Mojzis-Böhm, campaign manager and former General Manager of the Austrian People's Party. The first day of the conference focused on conducting an assessment of the status of women's participation in politics using the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) tool, and reviewing strategies utilized by each of the trainers in their political careers which were successful in combating similar barriers. Grey shared her political experiences over her 15 years of public service, citing that a positive attitude, strength and commitment to her beliefs led her to success.

Grey also provided guidance on how women can attain and strive in leadership positions in male dominated parties and legislatures based on her experience as minority leader for the Reform Party in Canada. Bako shared her political experiences, as a woman political leader in Africa, with particular focus on how she was able to develop effective outreach strategies to increase women's political participation in Uganda, noting that "the power of being organized is what will win you an election" (Okechukwu et al, 2014:2).

The fact is that the 2015 general elections did not deviate from the pattern of previous elections although scholars, analysts and even women were optimistic that female aspirations in the political process will receive a boost from the amount of preparations undertaken in that direction. What this means is that the men had once again decided to go on their own as usual leaving the women to wonder as rudderless ship in a

contest that they would have made meaningful impact had policies been put in place to encourage female participation. (Nse Etim Akpan,2015).

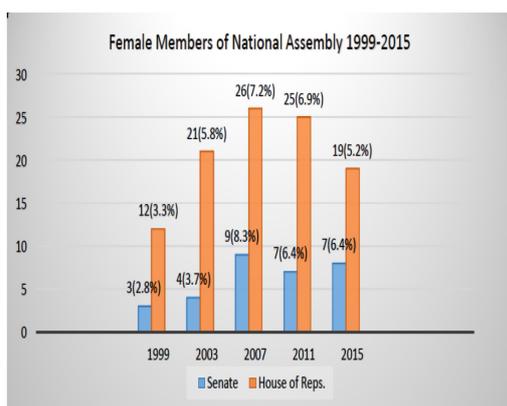
Table: 6

Female Members of Nigerian National Assembly 1999-2015

Year	Senate	House of Representatives
1999	3 (2.8%)	12 (3.3%)
2003	4 (3.7%)	21 (5.8%)
2007	9 (8.3%)	26 (7.2%)
2011	7 (6.4%)	25 (6.9%)
2015	7 (6.4%)	19 (5.2%)

Source: www.inecnigeria.org

Figure 1:



Source: www.inecnigeria.org

A critical appraisal of women representative participation in Nigeria since transition from military dictatorship to civilian rule in 1999, brings to fore the level of women marginalization in the fourth republic. The National Assembly in 1999 had three (3) (2.8%) female Senators and twelve (12) (3.3%) female House of Representatives members. In 2003, four (4) (3.7%) and twenty-one (21) (5.8%) female members were elected respectively into the Assembly. In 2007 the National Assembly had nine (9) (8.3%) female Senators and twenty-six (26) (7.2%) female members of House of Representatives. In 2011, the National Assembly

had seven (7) (6.4%) female members and twenty-five (25) (6.9%) female members in the lower House. In 2015, the National Assembly has seven (7) (6.4%) female members in Senate and (19) (5.2%) female in the House of Representatives.

Perceived factors militating against women’s active participation in Nigeria politics

Several impediments have been identified as limiting the participation of women in the social, economic and political scenes. These barriers are cultural, economic, and religious amongst others. Below are the factors that hinder women’s active participation in politics in Nigeria.

• **Gender roles – Patriarchy**

The family is the main institution of patriarchy, which is an important concept in explaining gender inequality. Literarily, it means “the rule of the father”; more broadly, it refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women. This is inherent in most social status females and it had crept into public life, which reflects in state activities. The family plays an important role in maintaining this patriarchal order across generations. The socialization of children to expect and accept different roles in life has created a social mechanism for the development of values that engender the several forms of discrimination against the female sex. The greatest psychological weapon available to men is the length of time they have enjoyed dominance over women, who have it for granted especially in the area of politics that often continues to stereotype women and justify subordination.

ROKEDITY OF POLITICAL PARTY’S

Lack of internal democracy in most of the political parties which has to a large extent negated active political participation of the women at the party level because the number of women that always scale through the parties primary are very low compared to the number of men who excel at the primaries, for example only Sarah Jibrin emerged presidential candidates for 2011 presidential under the umbrella of progressive action congress (P.A.C). The scenario is explained in the table below:

Table 7:

Summary of the 16 April 2011 Nigerian presidential election.			
Candidates	Parties	Votes	%
Goodluck Jonathan	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	22,495,187	58.89
Muhammadu Buhari	Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)	12,214,853	31.98
Nuhu Ribadu	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	2,079,151	5.41
Ibrahim Shekarau	All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP)	917,012	2.40
Mahmud Waziri	People for Democratic Change (PDC)	82,243	0.21
Nwadike Chikezie	Peoples Mandate Party (PMP)	56,248	0.15
Lawson Igboanugor	Peoples Progressive Party (PPP)	54,203	0.14
Peter Nwangwu	African Democratic Congress (ADC)	51,682	0.14
IheanyichukwuNnaji	Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP)	47,272	0.12
Chris Okotie	Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH)	34,331	0.09
Dele Momodu	National Conscience Party (NCP)	26,376	0.07
Akpona Solomon	National Majority Democratic Party (NMDP)	25,938	0.07
Lawrence FakindeAdedoyin	African Political System (APS)	23,740	0.06
EbitiNdok	United National Party for Development (UNPD)	21,203	0.06
John Dara	National Transformation Party (NTP)	19,744	0.05
Rasheed Shitta-Bey	Mega Progressive Peoples Party (MPPP)	16,492	0.04
YahayaNdu	African Renaissance Party (ARP)	12,264	0.03
Ambrose Awuru	Hope Democratic Party (HDP)	12,023	0.03
Patrick Utomi	Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP)	11,544	0.03
Chris Nwaokobia	Liberal Democratic Party of Nigeria (LDPN)	8,472	0.02
Sarah Jibrin	Progressive action congress (PAC)	1	0.00
Invalid votes		1,259,506	3.19
Valid votes (turnout 53.7%)		39,469,484	96.81

Source: INECnigeria.org retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_general_election 20-08-2014.

Out of 21 political parties that registered for the 2011 presidential election only one produced a female for presidential candidate, and during election she got just one vote, which means she only voted for herself

• **PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR**

This factor hinders women participation in politics by implanting various reasons or motives in the mind of women on why women cannot

participate fully in politics. For instance, a married woman with kids would be insulted even by her fellow women. If she attends political party frequently and he is hardly at home to take care of her kids, especially if the meetings are held at night. A typical Nigerian husband or man would suspect her of having extra marital affairs since his wife would be coming back very late, this psychologically discourage women from participating in politics. The nature of Nigerian

politics is said to be very violent but those with the heart of stone can withstand such violence that transpires every election season, a woman naturally would not want to get involved in such as she has a lot to lose, health wise and beauty wise. If most women continue to think this way, there is no way any woman would want to participate in politics, or allow any family member of hers to participate in politics; Simi, (2013:5)

- **CULTURE**

The customary practices of many contemporary societies are biased by subjecting women to men and undermining their self-esteem. The overall impact of gender bias, cultural norms and practices has entrenched a feeling of inferiority in women and place them at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their male counterpart in the socio-political scene in urban centers.

About 270 different tribes in Nigeria share the same concept that the woman's position is at home. The most important roles women are defined as wives and mothers. Throughout Nigeria history, women have been valued variously as property, as cheap labour and child bearers. The tradition of women was a kind of money, traded in exchange for cattle and land (Heibnoner, 1970). Moreover, Ahern (1976) say that, the whole institution of ownership began by ownership of women. Even today in Nigeria culture, the tradition of dowry continues to place money on women. These socially constructed norms and stereotype roles make women over play their "femininity" accepting that they are "weaker sexes", overemphasizing the dainty nature of their sex and regarding exceptional achievement as masculine. For examples, most customs often prefer sending the male child to school over the female, who is expected to nurture siblings and to be married off. This marginally increases the illiterate woman and stiffens their completion with their male counterparts in politics.

The seclusion of women by the Muslims is another political obstacle for women. Although it is practiced in the Northern and Western part of Nigeria, the practice started after the flub took over the Hausa states in the early 19th century. This resulted in the slow introduction of seclusion among all classes. The major reason for the practice of seclusion is that Islamic tradition views women as sexual creatures, who if they were not controlled, would distract men from politics and grand quest for religion. Margaret stable went further to explain that where seclusion was strictly allowed, it could inhibit a woman from actively pursuing her own economic interest and force her dependence on male representatives (Stable, 1984).

- **LACK OF SUPPORT**

Nigerian women play significant roles in campaigning and rally support for their politics, yet

they hardly ever occupy decision-making positions in these arrangements. In fact, less than 2% of party leadership in Nigeria are women. Although political parties had resources for carrying out election campaigns, women do not gain from these resources, for instance, parties do not give enough financial support for women candidates in running their campaigns (IDEA, 1998).

- **LACK OF EFFECTIVE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

According to Agbalajobi (2010) affirmative action is usually a measure intended to supplement non-discrimination. It is a broad term encompassing a host of policies that seek to support weak groups in society, especially women. They include policies where deliberate action is used to stop discrimination. Thus, a policy of this kind, according to him allows for rules that have the objectives of enhancing equal opportunity for individuals and the improvement in the situation of marginalized groups. Accordingly argues, Agbalajobi (2010) the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 adopted the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW). The convention has been aptly describe as the singular article of gender empowerment and women's International Bill of rights. Thus, the convention has since become a reference point in the demand for the equality of women.

The convention largely reflects the depth of neglect of the fundamental rights of women arising from biological difference by calling for equal rights for women notwithstanding their status in virtually all aspects of life. The convention provides clearly that:

Adoption by state parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating defacto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved (Article iv, CEDAW).

It is however, instructive to note that framing of the specification of the affirmative action is not the problem in the elimination of gender bias. It is however the critical question of lack of implementation. And this appears to be a mosaic affecting virtually all nation states of the world in terms of the place of women in both elective and appointive offices. The experiences and evidence from those of 2003 and 2007 general elections are worthy of illustration. The table below depicts the aforementioned.

• **THE GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS**

The extent of political participation of Nigerian women is very low compared with their male counterparts who dominated the Nigerian politics. While men are very interested in seeking political powers, women's interest lies mostly at the level of voting. The large number of women coming out for voting attested to this fact. Some of the authors are of the opinion that in Nigeria, women constitute more than 50% of the entire population. Nwafor Ezegbe (1998) but the number that seeks to control state power are very insignificant. Arowolo & Abe (2013) opined that, "the essence of political participation in any society, either civilized or primitive, is to seek control of power acquisition and dispensing power to organize society, harness and distribute resources and to influence decision making. However, in the recent time, the upward mobility of women in politics in the area of appointive positions is very apparent. The number of women representation in the Federal Elective Council (FEC) is an attested fact. Nda (2003) records that prior to 1999, women representation in the FEC has never exceeded 5% but in 1999-2003 during Obasanjo's regime, 4 (13.7%) women out of 18 junior ministries, two women, two senior special assistance, six special assistant, one special assistant to the vice president and eight permanent secretaries were appointed.

Despite this improvement in women involvement in politics, the degree of involvement still remains marginal lamenting on this situation, the women advocate research and documentation center WADEC (2003) succinctly states as follows; "in spite of the clamor for the women's empowerment by many international organization, women represent in government and other public decision making body is still low in the world all over". It is against this background, that Ismail (2001) rightly notes that, the battle for women's political rights does not end with enacting laws but also with our ability to have a paradigm shift in our culture and prohibit ourselves from acceptance of all these practices which perpetuate the exploitation and subjugation of women.

Effects and prospect of Women involvement in politics in Nigeria.

- **Effects**
 - i. It limits the level of educational acquisition by women.
 - ii. There will be male - hegemonic syndrome of political domination and continued existence of gender disunity.

- iii. It may encourage political apathies which will automatically affect the political system.
- iv. The societal ideology against women is still projected of women who will affect the level of their political exposure as it is typical of Nigeria situation at the moment.

• **PROSPECTS**

- i. Women participation in politics may alter male hegemony syndrome of political domination. A typical projection of what happened in Liberia when Ellen Sirleaf Johnson became the Liberian President, amidst of men who have dominated the politics of Liberia.
- ii. It structures and re-modifies the societal ideology against women as a weaker vessel.
- iii. Women's participation plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women.
- iv. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.
- v. According to the United Nation Development Programs the encouragement of women participation in politics is more than a social justice. It is a fundamental human right.
- vi. The encouragement of women in political participation allays the fear of segregation and marginalization both in the resources allocation processes and the decision making arena.
- vii. It promotes gender unity which has been a contending issue in recent years.
- viii. It will encourage men to give room or opportunity for flexibility in interacting with women within religious, economic, social, cultural and political sphere, in order to produce logical outcome that may project the aspirations and needs of women in the society thereby encouraging the formation of all encompassing public policies that is gender sensitive.

Conclusion

Women participation in Nigeria politics is an issue of great importance. Women have been put at the background politically for years; this has engendered a consciousness of women under-representation public life. However, viewed from the perspective of culture and tradition, women actually face massive resistance from participating in politics. It is pertinent to note that a lot of females believed that politics would prevent them

from taking absolute care of their families. Fear of broken homes, breeding irresponsible children and the need to perform their domestic activities were identified as major reasons preventing them from going into politics. The issue of violence, thuggery, intimidation and money politics are considered secondary. The first major issue is lack of interest arising from the need to effectively handle their sedentary activities. In order to ensure active participation of women in politics, civil society organizations, governments as well as political parties should increase the level of awareness of women by organizing seminars/workshops not only in the cities but also in the villages, attendance to such seminars/workshops should be open to both women and men. Men need to be oriented about need to allow their wives to participate in politics. This is necessary as most of the male respondents are of the opinion that women prostitutes are in politics and that any woman in politics is an irresponsible house wife.

In addition, government at all levels should encourage girl child education. It can be made compulsory that all female children of school age should go to school free of charge. This will give them equal opportunity with their male counterparts. The exclusion of women from participation on the economic and political fronts is an affront to the spirit and values of democratic governance and free market economy. Women are pivotal to the sustained socio-economic and political development of the society. Women are at the heart of the success of any development policies and programs, indeed, women by virtue of their humanity, numerical strength and unique roles they play are of strategic position to shape and influence the progress in a strategic position to shape and influence the progress of the society and therefore deserve special attention and care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the relatedness that has greeted the rise of women in leadership positions of the country in recent time, the positive development however is not a true reflection of the potential rewards and benefits due to women in view of their population, strength, contribution to national development as meeting the call for justice and equity as reflected in the 35 percent affirmative action. There is the need to critically address the societal induced limitations and hurdles to the political empowerment of women in Nigeria. This goes beyond the society to the government, political parties, national and international development agencies, civil society and non-governmental organization to take up the challenges via necessary building to redress the continued political subordination to empowering the society as a whole.

However, there should be equality in the sharing of political offices on the basis of quota system between competing candidates. This will enable both men and women to have equal chances of control in such public offices. Again, the Federal Government should make it mandatory that certain public offices be allotted to women on equal basis. As this will dissolve any form of discrimination of women by men. Furthermore, money politics should be discouraged in Nigeria while women who want to take active part in politics be encouraged to do so without any fear or favour. Also, establishment of legal funds to enable women politicians challenge electoral malpractices should be done. More so, the doctrine of the affirmative action, and CEDAW should be strengthened so that they could have considerable impacts on the political landscape of Nigeria thereby curtailing any form of discrimination against women. Also, building a coalition of NGO's and grassroots women associations that coordinates the support and advocacy for women aspirants.

Again, there should be support network and prospective role models: though the identification of aspirants and pairing them with established women politicians, playing mentoring role and provide capacity building training to young or aspiring female politicians. In addition, there is enabling environment that allows for women to engage in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way free from political harassments and violence. The ideology of male hegemony which has become a domineering factor in the political sphere of Nigeria shall be totally relegated if any positive changes have to be made in encouraging women participation in politics.

The aforementioned recommendations, if comprehensively followed, will no doubt enhance the political status of women in Nigeria thereby giving them an edge over their male counterparts in the 21st century and beyond.

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