Women And Political Participation In Nigeria: A Case Study Of Taraba State

Rebecca Jacob Tama[1] , Emayi John Maiwuya[2]

[1]*Taraba State polytechnic Jalingo.,* *beckytama73@gmail.com*
[2]*Taraba State Polytechnic, Jalingo, emayimaiwuya@gmail.com*

Abstract

The low level of participation of women in politics is becoming alarming and disturbing. Hence, hampers women from contributing their quota to the development of Taraba and Nigeria at large. Research has shown Nigerians prefer voting men over women not minding the competency they can bring into governance due to the patriarchal dominant factor in the Nigerian society. The research examines the theoretical perspective of patriarchy and liberal feminism to be able to draw it conclusion on the level of women participation in politics. The aim of the study, therefore, was to find out why women are marginalized and the factors responsible for the low level of women in political participation in Taraba and Nigeria. In achieving this, Documentary research using descriptive and content analysis were generated from secondary data. This study reveals that some women that contested for key political positions were either refused to be voted for by the men or see as weaker folks for governance. In addition, some group of politicians, especially the men, rejected a call for gender equality bill and calling it a means for women empowerment. Most importantly, this study also discovered that Nigerians see religious and cultural beliefs to be more superior to Nigeria's constitution thereby discouraging women and creating a low level representation of women in government when compared to men. There is need for women to be enlightened on their potentials, study the nation's constitution thoroughly and avoid intimidation by men on political participation.

Keywords: Political, Participation, Women, Patriarchy, Liberal, Feminism, Marginalized.

INTRODUCTION

In many countries, women have been under recognized in politics, not because they lack the interest or the will to participate, but due to marginalisation in the society (Olamide Ajogbeje, 2016:71). In Nigeria, women make up to 50 percent of the population and about 51 percent of voters in elections, yet they do not enjoy their full rights as their male counterparts who dominate the political landscape and occupy an overwhelming majority of decision making positions in the country (Christiana Ogbogu, 2012:182). In the federal cabinet Nigeria has only five female ministers out 37 ministers. Out of a hundred and nine senators (109), seven (7) are women and out of three hundred and sixty (360) members of the House of Representatives, only fifteen (15). Current statistics show that the overall percentage of women's representation in the present government is only at 13 per cent (Punch, 2018). This is against the recommended 30 percent prescribed by the Beijing platform of Action to which Nigeria subscribes. In fact, the Nigerian National Gender Policy (NGP) had even recommended 35 percent affirmative action to include more women in both elective positions and appointive public service positions, (Oloyede

Oluyemi, 2005) 5 percent over what was recommended in Beijing. However, the percentage of seats occupied by women in the Nigerian government is not near half of the proposed percentage.

According to Nimah Abdulraheem, (2012:14) the poor level of women's participation in Nigeria was worse in the Northern region, until 1979 when women had franchise to exercise their rights to vote. This invariably means that women could not contest for political positions or participate in choosing their political leaders till 1979, 18 years after other women in the country had begun to exercise their franchise.

The reason for the limited participation of women in politics is not due to any deficiency on their part. In fact, the women who have succeeded in occupying decision-making positions in the country have made positive impacts. For example, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (1900 – 978) a feminist and a political leader in the 19th century who advocated for women's right in Nigeria, organised and led a protest to demand for women's right to vote. Margret Ekpo (1914–2006) was a women's right activist, a politician and a social mobilizer in the 19th century. Hajia Gambo Sawaba (1933–2001), one of the first female politicians in Nigeria, who championed the cause of women's rights. Sarah Jibril (1945 to date) a politician and psychologist, the only female who contested for the 2011 presidential election primaries with former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and had one vote. Aisha Jummai Alhassan a successful retired civil servant, a lawyer by profession, a politician and the current minister of women affairs in Nigeria. Dora Akunyili (1954–2014), a public servant, politician and former minister of information (2008-2010). Obiageli Ezekwesili a renowned woman internationally, former minister of solid mineral (2005-2006) and former minister of education (2006-2007), and the convenor of the 'bring back our girls' campaign,

an advocacy demanding the release of over 300 Christians girls abducted by Islamist group boko haram. Salomi Jankada, an advocate of women and youth empowerment in the 19th century to date, a former minister of water resources and a onetime minister of youth and social development. These women's roles in politics are subsequently discussed in later section of this dissertation.

Being a democracy, all Nigerian citizens are entitled by law to full political participation at all levels, implying that there is no legal barrier to the participation in governance. It is the patriarchal system coupled with religious and cultural inclinations in the country that serve as major impediments to their full participation. Politics centres on power and influence, involving contentious views on the allocation and distribution of resources. 'It determines who gets what, when and why' (Ajogbeje, 72). Thus, it is essential that women participate fully and at all levels in politics because it is through politics that they can determine their priorities, values and the allocation of resources.

Against this background, this dissertation focused on the issue of women's participation in Nigerian politics, with specific reference to Taraba state. This is not a bid to down play the effect of the challenges of women in politics in the entire country. The situation of women in Taraba state exposes some of the major challenges confronting women in the North in the political landscape of the country. Hence, the use of Taraba state as case study. Beyond the challenges confronting women in politics, this dissertation aims to conclude by making suggestions on the way forward.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nkiru, Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) asserted that patriarchy is a set of social relations with material base which enables men to dominate women. The

theory of patriarchy as postulated by Connell (1987) posited that the issue of masculinity has formed a critical part of gender order and cannot be understood separately from feminities which accompany them. This demonstrates the way social power held by men creates and sustains gender inequality. Connell stressed that the issue of gender inequality stems from the 'organized field of human practice and social relations' through which women are kept in subordinate positions to men (Connell, 1987 in Giddens, 2006). Connell does not agree with the notion that gender relations are fixed and static, she believes that they are the result of a continuous process and therefore subject to change and challenge. Connell could be considered a liberal feminist because her work dealt much with gender relations of inequality in society stating specifically the issue of power labor and cathexis. To her 'gender relations are defined by patriarchal power ranging from the individual to institutional level, various types of masculinity and femininity are all arranged around a central premise: the dominance of men over women' (Connell, 1987 in Giddens, 2006, 463). This has been the situation of Nigerian women in all their years of struggle to gain access into the Nigerian political system. The term 'patriarchy' was fished up from an anthropological theory backwater and used to name systems of male power and oppression of women. Patriarchy had to be confronted by an autonomous women's movement, and the demand for the liberation of women was a revolutionary demand. Patriarchy promotes gender discrimination and depicts women as subordinates to men in the society, while feminism promotes liberation and freedom of women from such subordination.

Women are always the greatest losers in Nigerian politics (Mohammed and Zaid, 2014). In 2015, records indicated an all-time low rate in women's participation elections compared to the previous ones. (Akpan, 2015: 1, and Gberiel, 2015: 4).

This is because of cultural and religious factors which portray women as subordinate to men. Unfortunately, the cultural and religious inclinations have been so ingrained in the minds of women that they consider themselves weak in all aspects of life. Thus, they are reluctant to contest for elections and withdraw due to fear, intimidation or lack of financial strength to contest for an election. Traditionally, women are inferior to men, as such as most women in Nigeria accept the perception of being inferior to men without question (Mohammed and Zaid, 2014). To sum it up one can say that political, economic, western gender stereotypes and traditional patriarchal institutions have all joined forces to deprive women of power.

Nigeria is a male dominated society where power resides with men. Too often policies that promote and reinforce subordination of women are promoted in this male dominated society. The very low level of education among women and consequently, their low consciousness has made them very vulnerable to the fraudulent manipulation of politicians and other dominant groups in the society. Although there are no current legal barriers to women's participation in politics, they are equally no enforceable laws that offer succor when women are discriminated against especially by administrative directives.

The position of Igbokwe (2013), which is in line with Connell (1987), and Johannsdottir, (2009) concerning patriarchy which is mentioned earlier in this work stands out to be what goes on in most societies. Thus, their definition is clearly what happens in the Nigerian political world. Nigeria is a patriarchal society where women find it difficult to participate in political process because of several factors such as the dominance of men in the political system, sociocultural and religious, which makes it difficult for women to get into the system (Umukoro, 2014). The Nigerian constitution does not see a woman as a second-class citizen, but the cultural practices

does not give women the right to participate actively when it comes to decision making regarding them. The society does not permit women to contribute to its development economically, socially and politically (Samkange, 2001). For most feminists, women's ability to make choices and speak their minds has been proof of empowerment (Flood and Gill, 2010). For centuries without end the status of women were perceived as none other than bearers of children and keepers of home. They were restrained from active participation in politics and other social activities. The typical attitude of the men towards women is that they can only be effective in domestic activities in the family and the assumption is that it is only men who know the problems in the country. Hence, women should be left alone to solve their home social problems while their husbands, parents and men solve public problems within the government. In the quest for their voice to be heard women must fight for their freedom and liberation in all facets of life. This is where liberal feminism comes into play.

THEORYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Liberal feminist theory

According to Giddens (2006) liberal feminism is a theory that believes that gender inequality is produced by access reduction for women and girls to civil right and certain social resources such as education and employability. Liberal feminists tend to seek solutions through changes in legislation that ensure the rights of individuals are protected (Giddens, 2006; 1022).

Samkange, (2015) an educationist and a senior lecturer with Zimbabwe's Open University defines liberal feminism as 'gradual reforms through advocacy for equal rights for all, and laws and policies that promote equality'. This implies equal right for women to participate in political process, contest in election without being intimated and get involved in political

activities and decision making in the society. Women should be allowed to have equal rights. Education and culture should not be used to restrict them from participating fully in societal activities. Freedman (2001) asserted that:

> Women have been 'closer to nature'; men have been perceived as 'closer to culture', more suited for public roles and political association. For this reason, women have been relegated to a secondary status in society, often confined to roles in the home rather than able to accede to powerful public positions (Freedman, 2001; 23).

This has made men custodian of culture in Nigeria and Taraba there by relegating women in the society and often believe that leadership roles and position is for the man because both culture and religion recognize the man as a leader. This is so bad that in Taraba the oldest son takes over the leadership of his family after the demise of his father even though his mum is still alive, and he has elder sisters. Freedman went further to opine that:

> The liberation of women thus depends on freeing women from this social construct of the 'eternal feminine', (the belief that men and women have different core "essences" that cannot be altered by time or environment). Which has reduced them to a position of social and economic inferiority, but it does not depend on the denial of 'men' and 'women' as biologically

distinct   categories
(Freedman, 2001; 23).

Liberal feminists tend to seek solutions through changes in legislation that ensure the rights of individuals are protected (Giddens, 2006, 1022). Although the roles of men and women vary from culture to culture, it is obvious that there is no society in which females are more powerful than males. Men's roles are generally more highly valued and rewarded than women's roles (Giddens, 2006, 469). On liberal feminism, Connell (2009:38) also opined that 'the characteristic women's liberation view was based on a categorical theory of power.'

In addition, based on Esther Boserup in 2007 propounded the two main feminist development frameworks "Women in Development" (WID) and "Gender and Development" (GAD), but Danielsson and Jacobson (2008) identified the different theoretical perspectives of the two theories. Current studies on third world women was limited to studying women and the environment, marriage, family relationships and sexual roles from an anthropological view point (Beneria and Sen, 1981). Women's productive roles and the significance of these roles in social, economic, and political arenas/spheres in pre-colonial and post-colonial societies were rarely reported and deliberated. Since the Danish economist Ester Boserup published Women's Role in Economic Development in 1970 (re-published by Cromwell Press, UK in 2007), it downed on the global stage that not only is there a woman's concern and problem in most developing countries, but a need to begin to address them. That is because the societal structure in most third world countries is often founded on the concept of inferiority of women leading to a denial of their right to active participation in social and political life of the society they belong thus being marginalized.

The state of women's marginalization in all spheres of life is because of several factors which include: political marginalization, socio-cultural and religious practices (Akpan, 2015: 5, and Aina, Ogunlade, Ilesanmi and Afolabi, 2015:1). The theories of gender oppression considered women's situation because of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men always have an interest in controlling and oppressing women (Okafor and Akokuawebe, 2015: 6). There are various reasons that account for subjugation of women in societies. Akpan (2015: 4) indicates that the low involvement of women in the Nigerian politics 'hinges on the issues of marginalization, male domination, cultural practices, abuse of religion practices, poverty, economic and social stability' (See also Folalo and Fwatshak, 2008; Shvedova, 2008; Arowolo and Aluko, 2010; Agbalajobi, 2010). Nigerian women in politics also face the challenge of the lack of internal democracy in almost all the political parties in the country (Akpan 2015:22), this makes it difficult for women who are vying for political offices scale through the primaries election, and even if they do they end up losing at the final election. It is generally believed that politics is a game for the man that is why Akpan asserts that:

> Just as men have always dominated the National Assembly since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the 2015 election result does not present a different picture in the number of women representation in the next four years. The gubernatorial elections have so far produced four women deputy governors. Equally, the only viable female gubernatorial candidate, Senator Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan lost the election in Taraba state after a spirited fight which raised and dashed the hopes of women that at least history will be made with the

election of the first female executive governor of a state (Akpan, 2015: 2).

This has made women give up on aspiring for political offices due to irregularities in the electoral process and political violence during elections. Emphasizing on this, Luka opined that 'participation entails involvement of citizens in some way with decision making in political system' (Luka in Akpan, 2015, 1). Thus, if women are not involved in politics how can issues about them be pushed forward? Their conditions continue to be pushed to the background. This has made women lose out completely in Nigerian politics. Only few contests for elections but end up losing out because of the abuse of Nigerian political process.

Oyeronke, Oyewumi (2005: 102) strongly argued that the biological determinism depicts the application of biological explanations and social hierarchies are thoroughly intertwined. This in turn has led to the construction of the social world with biological building blocks. This biological determinism is manifested in male-dominant gender discourses, discourses in which female biological differences are used to explain female sociopolitical disadvantages.

Alternatively, the shaping influence of gender on the formation of identity and on the structuring of inequalities has been a subject of debate among social theorists Akpan (2015). For example, based on scholars who are in favor of the socio-biological theory, the biological differences between men and women are sufficient explanation for the basic sexual division of labor in society. Tiger and Fox have argued that people are disposed to behave in certain ways by a genetically based program called 'socio-biogrammar' which programs men for politics, hence, their tendency of taking all key political and economic position in the society (Tiger and Fox, 1972:87 cited in Akpan, 2015: 5). This

biogrammar, on the other hand assigns to women only reproductive and domestic responsibilities. These are some of the things that Nigeria men (Taraba inclusive) are holding onto so firmly, never willing to relinquish power to women whom they consider only for their pleasure and domestic responsibilities.

Equality of all, in our society means that no social construction should limit women's participation in politics, access to education and control of resources in our society (Aigbokhan, 2017). As the social construction has rendered women ineffective in the political world and has made them bear the responsibility of child bearing, taking care of the family and doing all the domestic works in the family. Most feminist have pointed to the ways in which women physical ability to produce children has had some influence on their social position (Freedman, 2001). Pregnancy alone holds the woman down for nine months that she cannot participate or be involved in politics because even if she wants to, her husband will not allow her. Then after child birth she still breast feeds and cares for the child for a certain period. Though, this is a global experience of every woman, but the situation in Nigeria/Taraba cannot be compared to the rest as observe things are taken shape in most developed countries. Many women in Nigeria have not been able to participate actively in politics because of these factors. It is therefore important that child rearing and upbringing should be the responsibility of both parents (male and female), cooking and other domestic work should not be limited to the woman alone. This is the only way there will be equality in the society when there is no defined work, responsibility and roles for men and women. Society produces bias that is structured on the basis of gender identities. In a society where there is liberty, freedom and equality of all such society produces credible leaders and brings out the hidden quality and leadership style in women.

Liberal feminism in Nigeria

In Nigeria, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men prevail, as many people uphold cultural practices which enhance the subordination of women. Consequently, men continue to dominate women in political, economic, social, and religious realms. The latter's political endeavors, achievements and roles in society are hardly recognized or acknowledged. This situation has necessitated the clarion call that women should be empowered by giving them due status, rights, and responsibilities to enable them participate actively in decision making at the political level (Kasomo, 2012) Cited in Okafor, E. E and Akokuwebe M. (2015:7)

Current status of Nigerian women in relation to men in the areas of education, income, labor force and share of seats in parliament or political participation is still very low.(Azuh D. ,Egharevba M., Azuh A, 2014:24). Liberal Feminism exists in Nigeria but it needs to be given more attention for women to achieve their equality right in Nigeria.

Methodology

Flood and Gill (2010) adopts the dominance ideology of not voicing out pains by women in their methodology of silence and secrecy in feminism. Therefore, it will play a vital role in addressing the challenges of women being marginalize in politics. Flood and Gill (2010:1) stated that "feminist research has a tradition of demanding that the unseen and the unacknowledged be made visible and heard." This heightens and encourages the researchers to delve into unveiling pains and unheard cry of Nigerian women politically. The act of speaking out is often identified in feminist literature as the key conditions to demonstrating women's empowerment (Flood and Gill, 2010). There is need for every woman in our society today to

speak out and fight for their right when their rights are threatened. Women have been victims of sexual abuse, denied education and political violence because they do not know their rights. They have subjected themselves to the norms and values of the society, which does not give them right in any form (Ahmed, 2010). The methodology gave the researcher an insight to unveiling and making known the unheard, unacknowledged and unseen marginalisation and dominance of women in Nigeria's political process.

The methodology for this research is based on documentary evidence research. Documentary research method refers to the analysis of documents that contains information about the phenomenon we wish to study (Bailey 1994) cited in Ahmed (2010). The documentary research method is used in investigating and categorizing physical sources, most commonly written documents, whether in the private or public domain (Payne and Payne, 2004 cited in Ahmed 2010). The methodology attempts to answer the research questions regarding women and political participation in Nigeria.

Findings

The research identified that various Nigerian social, cultural and religious practices have played a major role in marginalisation of women. The traditional social structures offer limited incentives and opportunities in the distribution of power between men and women. According to Nmadu (2000), the Nigerian society is dotted with different cultural practices that are unfavourable to women's emancipation, such as early/forced marriage, wife-inheritance and widowhood practices. As such, Bhavani et al (2003) such unequal social and gender relations needs to be transformed in order to take women out of want and poverty. For instance, the patriarchy forms of inheritance automatically see men as more important than women within a set

of social system which enables men to dominate women. Example, older son takes over leadership of his family when their father dies, while the mother is still alive. When it comes to decision-making the contribution of women is considered insignificant, as such their voices are unheard and have very little to contribute to society. Also, the perception that women role is place is in the kitchen, child bearing, and children upbringing have travelled along with time. Therefore, most women in Tabara State were majority are less educated find it difficult to indulge in politics because most of them see themselves as inferior to their male counterparts.

In addition, religious factors have become another hindrance to women empowerment and development. As evident in Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan (Mama Tabara) scenario, as a Muslim she faced critics because Islam does not consider women as fit to rule over men and cited verses in the Quran to back up their point.

> A people will not succeed who are commanded by a woman.

> Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 4163, Grade: Sahih

Based on this citation, other Muslims in Taraba state believed if a woman were to lead the state, they would not succeed, so it was better for them to vote in support of a man for the growth and development of the state. According to some critics, Muslim belief and teachings, women should not be more successful than their husband. As a result, some of these informed the decision of many women, who would rather sit back and be carer for by their husbands instead of vying for any political office.

In addition, citing Bible scripture some Christians criticized her on similar grounds that

Wives should submit themselves to their husbands as unto the lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. (Ephesians 5: 22-24)

This bible verse and others are misconstrued to mean man the head of the house and woman, his subject by urging the wife to submit to the husband. Again, women interpreted to be the weaker sex as they are formed out of men and as such need men protection in everything they do. Many of the Christian women in Taraba State believe that they were created out of the man's rib, and that God has made man their head, therefore, they are not supposed to compete with any man in vying for political offices as the subservient sex- politics is for men.

This ideology has also promoted violence and intimidation against women because every man sees women as subservient.

Al-Hassan also married twice, based on this some critics consider her to be 'an adulterer'. They considered being divorced and remarrying as against the teaching of the Bible. Therefore, a woman will be called an adulterous if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law (Romans 7:2-3). Thus, everyone who divorces his wife and marries commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery (Luke 16:18). This ideology, belief and teaching influenced many women in Tabara State not to vote for her.

In addition, the second research question, "What are the effects of gender discrimination against women in Tabara State?" Women are not involved in decision-making process and participating that affect the society and Nigeria at large. According to Opaluwah (2007), women in Nigeria lack of adequate representation, lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general; and undue dominance of men in the socio-political scheme of things (Mohammed & Zaid, 2014).

Ngara & Ayabam (2013) indicated poverty or lack of money or resources; uneven political appointments and the general imbalances associated with very unjust treatment of the female citizens in its entirety. There is no doubt that this trend negates the collective interests of human fundamental rights and the rights of equality, freedom and personal dignity of women in society (Ngara et al, 2013). For example, to buttress the effects of gender discrimination against woman, the president of Nigeria Mohammad Buhari said his wife does not belong to any political party but belongs to his kitchen and bedroom. This assertion depicts why women in Nigeria and Taraba state today, are not encouraged or does not any role to play in politics based on norms and values of the society. Therefore, the low representation of women in the political landscape of Nigeria is a violation of the principle of democracy, as the country is yet to meet any of the national targets of getting our numbers right for gender representation.

It is important to realise that women play enormous contribution to national development is gradually engineering re-evaluation of the role, and capabilities of women in public capacities in positive light. Therefore, considering the various women discussed from Taraba State, there is no doubt they have contributed immensely to the political and economic landscape (Ngara et al, 2013; Mohammed et al, 2014).

Furthermore, the third research question was "to suggest ways to address the issues of gender discrimination and political marginalisation". Suggestions are outlined in the recommendation section of this chapter to help address these issues. In Hon. Kazaure's speech in the house to mark the international women's day on the 8th of March 2018, he asserted that women are very intelligent and if given more opportunity in politics they will one day over throw the men in politics.

Nigeria as a country needs to consolidate on patriarchy and a departure from culture and tradition to a new struggle for equity and equality with men (Ngara and Ayabam, 2013). Unless and until major radical, social, economic and cultural changes are done through effective measure, with tradition and culture being juxtaposed alongside with feminism and gender concern visa-vis women status in the Nigerian society, it becomes controversial as to where the Nigerian women should be really be placed (Mohammed and Zaid, 2014). As such, the multiple role of women in the family, economy, education, health and leadership in Nigeria, have identified them as hard working, disciplined, thorough, creative, enterprising and productive (Mohammed et al, 2014).Their enormous contribution to national development is gradually engineering re-evaluation of the role, and capabilities of women in public capacities in positive light. Therefore, considering the various women discussed from Taraba State, there is no doubt they have contributed immensely to the political and economic landscape (Ngara et al, 2013; Mohammed et al, 2014).

DISCUSSION

Women Participation in Politics at the National Level (Nigeria)

Political participation as one of the key elements of democracy, it provides the justification for inclusion of marginalised groups such as women and youth in electoral competition. Participation of women in politics will be meaningful only if the process is just, fair, permissive and level playing ground is guaranteed for possible ascension of women politically (Quadri, 2015:4).

Nigeria's women participation in politics is of eminent importance because it empowers women politically, socially and economically. Nigeria's women constitute about half of Nigeria's population with a total of 97,727,196 (49.4%) and

as such, their productive capabilities must be utilized to the fullest for sustainable national development. The importance of women in nation building cannot be over emphasized due to their laudable achievement when in leadership position. Politically, women in Nigeria are often marginalized; socially women suffer sexual harassment, early marriage, discrimination; single women stigma while economically, they are

sometimes discriminated against with regards to employment, economic opportunities and access to credit and financial facilities and all the above mention facts are based on patriarchal nature of

Nigerian society. The men in Nigeria's politics always feel they have something to contribute better to the political development of society than the women folks if given the opportunity. Men have been occupying most of the political offices in Nigeria with women having little or no role to play in politics. Women and men should be represented at all level of decision making-bodies in Nigeria locally, regionally and nationally particularly where crucial resources are distributed and allocated.

Below is a table showing the representation of men and women in Nigeria's elective positions.

Table 4.3: Representation of men and women in Nigeria's elective positions

S/N	Position	Men	Women	
1	President	1	0	1
2	Vice President	1	0	1
3	Senate	102	7	109
4	House of Representative	348	12	360
5	Governor	36	0	36
6	Deputy Governor	33	3	36
7	House of Assembly	-	-	-
	Total	**521**	**22**	**556**

Source: Authors Personal survey

The number of women elected in Nigeria's elective office is defined by the level of women participation in Nigeria's political process. From the table, above a total number of 556 were elected into different political office only 22 were women and 521 are men. However, I couldn't have access to the number of men and women elected into various States' House of Assembly. Notwithstanding the available data shows a very wide margin between the number of men and women elected into political parties in Nigeria

4.5 Women and Political Participation in Taraba State

Women Participation in Taraba politics has not been encouraging. The very few that contested for elective positions did not emerge victorious in most elections conducted in the state thereby discouraging most women involvement and most often believed politics' is men affairs. If women are allowed to participate fully in Taraba politics without fear and intimidation from the men's folks and serene environment, their contribution will help in promoting democracy and socio-economic development of the state. Below are Tables showing number of women elected into political office in Taraba State from during the 2015 and 2019 general election.

Table 4.4: Political Positions held in Taraba State from 2015 General election

S/N	Position	Men	Women	
1	Governor	1	0	1
2	Deputy Governor	1	0	1
3	Senators	3	0	3
4	House of Representative	6	0	6
5	State House of Assembly	26	0	26
	Total	**37**	**0**	**37**

Source: Compiled by Author with Data from inecnigeria.org

The Table above shows that in the 2015 election in Taraba State, there was no woman elected into any political office. All the women that contested election lost. Table 4.5: Political Positions held in Taraba State from 2015 General election Source

S/N	Position	Men	Women	
1	Governor	1	0	1
2	Deputy Governor	1	0	1
3	Senators	3	0	3
4	House of Representative	6	0	6
5	State House of Assembly	26	0	26
	Total	**37**	**0**	**37**

Source Compiled by Author with Data from inecnigeria.org

To have more women getting to politics in Taraba will involve modifying the cultural and religious notions about subordination of women in Taraba state. Modifying this cultural and religious belief has made some men (senators) in the national assembly move against the gender equality bill. This made the senate President puts the Bill to vote before the house and the 'Nays' have it.

Factors responsible for this marginalization and discrimination against women in Nigeria

Nigerian women have been marginalized and discriminated in participating in politics over the years now. This is largely due to the sentiment attached to the feminine gender. Women have been playing crucial role in Nigerian politics by coming out en masse to vote during election. Most are living below average and may not be

financially buoyant for elective positions, and supporting other women who are contesting for elective offices. The following are some the factors responsible for marginalization and discrimination of Nigerian women in politics:

Religion: Oluyemi (2016) opined that both Christianity and Islam do not accord women role in public life. Nigeria is a country that operates a convention constitution, yet very religious that they see their religion to be more supreme to the constitution. It was basically on religious ground the bill on gender equality by Senator Olujimi was rejected on the floor of the national assembly of Nigeria. Religious values have constrained women in Nigeria and Taraba state to be fully involved in political participation especially in the northern part of Nigeria where the Senators who kicked against the gender equality bill come from.

Culture: Culture and tradition have also been cited as major reasons why the case for gender parity can't just fly. How dare we try to change an age-old tradition? How dare modern day feminists attempt to distort the "tried and tested" way of doing things? How dare they attempt to rock the boat by distorting culture? These questions are always asked whenever the issue of gender equality arises in the Nigeria society. And then again, one is compelled to ask who determines the way of life of a people? Many of us were told the story of Mary Slessor, the Scottish missionary that stopped the killing of twins among the Efiks between the 18th and 19th century. A good number of archaic traditions which were religiously practiced in the past were jettisoned when we knew better (https://punchng.com/whos-afraid-of-the-gender-equality-bill). Contrary to what some of the antagonists of the bill think, it is not a tussle or a battle of supremacy between males and females. What proponents of the bill are saying is that the girl-child should be empowered to be all she can be just like her male counterpart. Is that too much to ask in the 21st century? Culture is a strong factor inhibiting women involvement in Nigeria's politics. Culture and traditions has made women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-partisans in decision making process in households not to talk of coming out to vie for political positions. Women are seen culturally as quite submissive and image of virtue and not to be seen in public domain. And so, it is a challenge to women participation in politics as women found in the corridor of politics are also seen as irresponsible people. More so, the Nigerian woman knows that culture and tradition have a very strong hold on her. Therefore, the best solution is to find a way of blending culture with modern trends. Society is growing in a fast trend and women in such locality are still being marginalized and suppressed. This will involve a radical feminist approach towards agitating for a better status in the society.

Ethnicity: According to Omoniyi (2012), Nigeria as a multiethnic country with diverse languages and cultures with about 500 spoken languages. As a country of diverse ethnicity with Taraba state alone being close to 80 indigenous ethnic group speaking different languages (2011https://www.cometonigeria.com/region/north-east/taraba-state/). The diverse languages and ethnicity has affected women political participation in Nigeria and Taraba State, while these had made it very difficult for women to come together in unity to support each other due to difference in ethnicity and cultural believes.

Olu-Adeyemi (2017) asserts that:

The ethnic diversity crisis of Nigeria is such that Party affiliations are hinged on ethnicity. The contemporary electioneering and party processes has been bedevilled by increased manifestations of ethnic influences thereby, increasing citizen's apathy to political participation and in a way, further widening the divisive tendencies that have hampered Nation Building in the Nigeria.

This has made women to support a man from their ethnic group rather than supporting a fellow woman. Ethnicity is more central than ever as a problem in Nigeria's political process, it has remained a grave barrier to women political participation and contribution to nation building.

Education: In an increasingly competitive world, education is the most powerful instrument in developing and empowering women to master their social and natural environment and to compete for political survival with the men. Education is the principal instrument for generating and transmitting the appropriate values to all women and for establishing a cultural identity.

Oluyemi, (2016) opined that;

The low participation of women in education is also part of the shortcomings. The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2010 published by National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult literacy rate in English in Nigeria is 50.6 per cent while literacy in any other language is 63.7 per cent (female adult age 15 and above). This explains why most women are least qualified for political offices due to low educational attainment. This is also an effect of colonialism, where men were more favoured than women.

During colonial period, more men were enrolled in school by the British compared to women. This has made access to education among women limited when compared to their male counterparts. Men gained the education necessary for wage employment and capital accumulation at the expense of women. When women received any training at all it is mostly in the realm of domestic skills which prepared them for mother's roles. Few women are thus qualified for wage employment and even professional positions. The level of women in educational attainment is a main determinant for their political empowerment. Statistics has shown that women

constitute a large number of world's illiterates while the general illiteracy rate is dwindling; the female illiteracy rate is rising. It is not surprising, therefore that even education which is very basic to human existence and which every human ought to have a right to, is not accessible to many women in Nigeria and Taraba state.

Economic Poverty: Unequal access to productive resources is a very strong constraint against women empowerment to political participation. This is sometimes caused by easier access of men to land through inheritance. Difficulty to getting access to credit facilities is equally a strong constraint. Olusegun, (2015:18) opined that:

Finance is a major factor for the survival of every politician in Nigeria and Taraba. It is the bedrock upon which politician becomes successful. First, to understand the financial problem of women in Nigerian politics, we have to fathom the type of politics in Nigeria. Politics in Nigerian parlance could be understood within the framework of monetization. Any political contestant must have prepared to acquire the entire necessary wherewithal to make him or her successful in the electoral contest. The cost of running electoral contestation in Nigeria is too exorbitant for women to bear (this includes; party nomination form which runs into millions of naira, election campaigns, gifts to god fathers, people mobilization and money for political party leaders, etc). This financial burden discourages women to run in democratic contests.

Competing for political positions in Nigerian and Taraba requires huge finance. Most Nigerian women who seek elective positions could not afford meeting the financial obligations therein, despite the wavers giving to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts.

Attitudinal Change: Currently in Nigeria, various communities see women with contemptuous eyes. Most men prefer that women remain housewives, cooks, mothers, child minders and lovers of their husbands only. Anything outside these traditional roles is considered taboo and should not be ventured into by the woman. This has made most women in Taraba to believe that politics is not for them but rather for men.

Political Violence: Elections in Nigeria are marred with all sort of political violence since the return to democracy. Female aspirants of various political parties find it difficult to withstand political violence; the challenges of the nature of political violence in Nigeria, which has been part and parcel of Nigerian democracy, pose an obstacle to women's interest in party politics therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced. Olusegun (2015:19) opined that:

During the periods of campaigns, the political atmosphere is usually characterised by waves of assassinations, thuggery, murders, arson, looting and kidnappings. The incidence of Mrs. Emily Olufunke Omope-Aborishade also known as "Ms Thatcher" who was bathed with acid in Ekiti State in 2002 for her unwavering determination in the state politics was a case in point. The physical battles which often accompany electoral contests in Nigeria need to be addressed and this can be spearheaded by civil society organizations.

Conclusion

Democracy is about fair representation of all interest groups in the society no matter their affiliation and gender. However, Nigeria as a country is yet to meet any of the national targets of getting our numbers right for gender representation. This has informed the basis of the conflict and tension for gender equality. A major explanatory factor of low female participation in Taraba state is based on cultural, religious, education, direct and indirect discrimination of women. From available data, it can be concluded that the issue of women participation in politics in Taraba state is a fight for women participation in politics but for women full participation in politics. This is important because women's resourcefulness is wasted and the skills women acquire are as good and useful to in national development as that of men.

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