

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: A CASE OF BAUCHI STATE POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Political participation is a voluntary act which encompasses wide range of political activities, including voting at election, contesting for political and party offices, attending political rallies, joining political parties holding administrative office and many more. Although, these political activities are considered to be "free zone" to all qualified citizens, especially in liberal democracies irrespective of disparities in wealth, education and gender, experiences in World generally and in Nigeria in particular show that certain cultural values and religions have systematically over the years impeded female gender from participating in politics, while we believe women have taken more than half of the world population, therefore, no country in the world will develop politically while more than 50% of its population facing some challenge that will hinder them from participating into a political race. The paper is a survey research and uses primary data. The data were collected using structured questionnaire and interactions with the selected local communities of Bauchi state, Nigeria. A total of two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed. Out of which one hundred and eighty-four (184) were successfully completed by the respondents and retrieved. The research also indicates that out of the challenges women facing in political participation, the major one's include: The Marginalization, Lack of Education and Orientation, Socio-Cultural Influence and Religious Influence

Key Ward: Issues and challenges, women participation in politics, Bauchi State, Discrimination

I. INTRODUCTION

Historical evidences in many societies, both during the ancient and modern periods support the idea of male domination over their female folks in many spheres of human endeavor. The literature on the subjugation of women to men's domination knows no bound with such literature covering wide range of issues, including the body, class and work, disability, the family, globalization, human rights, culture, race and racism, reproduction, science, the self, sex, work, human trafficking and sexuality. ^[1]

Throughout ages and virtually in all cultures, women were rarely considered equal to their male counterparts. In some communities for example, women are not allowed to participate in modern school systems as well as

public offices. This happened as a result of their religious beliefs. Women are also known to have been discriminated, marginalized and dominated through the combination of gender-biased cultural norms and practices which were in favour of men. ^[1]

In Ancient Rome, an adulterous wife could be killed by her husband without trial, while the reverse attracted no punishment on the man (Keiefer, 1934). The Ancient Hebrew also considered women as legally minor and thus preferred a male child to a female child who was seen as inferior to the former. Pre-historical culture considered women as part of men's possession such that their wives' virginity is exclusively "part of the personal estate of their husbands" (Izugbara, 2013), and the absence of which attracted severe punishment. ^[2]

The widespread preference for the male child means, in part, the families often prefer to send the boy to school and not the girl since she is expected to stay at home to help nurture her siblings and to be married off soon. It is therefore not surprising that women constitute the majority of the illiterate population of most communities. Girls given out early in marriage do not only have their education aborted but are additionally exposed to early pregnancies and *visico vaginal fistula* (i.e. a disease which leaves its victims deformed and unable to control urination). When marriages do not result in children, it is often the wives that are blamed and consequently subjected to inhuman psychological pressures and dangerous medications. Traditional widowhood practices in most communities are such that compound the tragedy of the unfortunate women and also seriously endanger their health. ^[2]

Many other scholars including Aina (2012), Soetan (2014) and Agbalajobi (2010) have unveiled the travail of the female gender humiliation, manipulation and marginalization through a number of culturally biased norms and practices which has culminated into systematic institutionalization of male superiority over the female in all spheres of life – socio-culturally, economically and politically. Indeed, the life circle of a woman from the cradle to the grave is said to be characterized by all manners of violent relates manipulation and control of women by men through sex selective, abortion, different access to medical care, incest and sexual harassment in the workplace, rape, marital rape, abuse of widow, etc. (Aina, 2012). ^[3]

Over the years, the Nigerian political scene has been characterized by patriarchy which in the words of Heywood (2007) generally connotes the "rule by men". Although, women were politically active and relatively less exclusive in decision-making process in many pre-colonial societies, the advent of colonial administration with its anti-women policies gradually transformed a hitherto politically gender-unbiased to a predominantly male dominated political scene. For instance, women were known to have occupied very influential political offices, including the highest political office (the King or the Oba) among the Yorubas. Female individuals such as the Iyalode of Ibadan, Efunsetan Aniwura, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Queen Amina of Zaria, etc. were powerful political forces who occupied very sensitive positions in the overall political hierarchy of their Awofeso and Odeyemi 105 respective communities. Some of these women performed credibility even as military warlords in their respective communities. On the other hand, the offices of the President or the Head of State and the Defence Minister in Nigeria since independence till date have been the exclusive reserved areas for the male gender. Apart from major political offices which were keenly manipulated by men, statistics also show that

“women are grossly under-represented in public life and decision-making positions”. Udegbe (1998), had for instance, demonstrated that women representation in the three tiers of government since independence in 1960 till late 1990s was as low as two per cent. Similar trends were witnessed under successive administrations, both military and civilian. The little improvement made in female gender political representation in recent time was only marginal.

At best, women were strategically, through several means including cultural exclusion, reduced to the second fiddle offices of ‘deputy’ and ‘vice’.^[1]

The Aims of this research is to assess challenges faced by women in political participation of Bauchi State, Nigeria. This can be achieved through identification of factors that limits their participations in politics.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

“If half of the world’s population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy. We still have a long way to go and the United States must remain an unambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women’s right in every country, every region, on every continent.” Hillary Clinton (2016).^[4] Therefore, this section presents related literature on previous research conducted regarding the topic of the study. Focus is given on the Factors Responsible for Low Participation of Women in Nigerian Politics.

I. Gender roles – Patriarchy

The family is the main institution of patriarchy (Kate Millet, 1970), 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 African families. Giving men a higher social status over females has 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 man is the length of time they have enjoyed dominance over women, who have taken it for granted especially in the area of politics that often continue to stereotype women and justify their subordination.

[1] [3] [4]

II. Virility deficiency – women’s conception of politics

Some consensus has been of the belief that Nigerian politics is based on high political virility – those who have all it takes to compete in the turbulent environment; those who possess the wherewithal to take it by force when force is required; those that can march violence with violence. This consensus belief that men possess the superiority strength, competitiveness, are self-reliant and are prepared to tussle in political endeavour, whereas women are considered too passive to engage in politics and governance. This consensus is also constructed by

societal norms and values, which through socialization has defined different gender roles according to biological differences. Women's perception of politics as a dirty game and continued fright at the thought of violence has further alienated them from mainstream politics.

In Nigeria there seems to be no critical understanding of the difference between "a visible agenda for women and an impacting agenda for women." (Nkoyo, 2002:29).^[5]

While severally, emphasis is laid on women's numerical strength, translating such into the attainment of power has been difficult as women are perceived as "supporters club, team of cheerers and clappers" in contrast to their male counterparts. Women politicians seek offices on the premise of being different; most believe they must do what men are doing to succeed. And the meekness of women is not to their advantage in political tussle.^{[1] [3] [5]}

III. Lack of economic incentives (Financial backing)

Women's historical experience of discrimination puts them at a disadvantage economically. Political campaigns are expensive and require solid financial backing for success. Over the years, division of labour and job opportunities offered on sex basis has given men productive gender roles, enabling them to possess more purchasing power over their female counterparts. As an implication, the Nigerian labour market has about 75% of labour being supplied by men. This economic disparity favour men to the disadvantage of women. Only few women that are affluent possess the economic power to bankroll political campaigns.

Societal value assumes that political activities are masculine and this makes it worse as financiers and sponsors of politicians prefer male candidates over female ones, since they believe they stand a better chance. Most success achieved by women in politics has been through women movements that sponsor women political aspirations financially and otherwise. Women dependence on men financially made manifest through wife's dependence on their husbands in families reveals the extent of financial incapacitation of women in Nigerian politics. As a result, women political aspirations have been grossly hampered by lack of financial bedrock to subsist their endeavor.^[1]

IV. Discriminatory customs and laws

The customary practices of many contemporary societies are biased by subjugating 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-à-vis their male counterpart in the socio-political scene even in urban centers.

These socially constructed norms and stereotype roles make women overplay their 'femininity' by accepting that they are 'weaker sexes', overemphasizing the dainty nature of their sex and regarding exceptional achievement as masculine. For example, 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 women and stiffens their competition with their male counterparts in politics.^{[1] [6]}

V. Lack of affirmative action quota

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. They include policies where deliberate action is used to stop discrimination. A policy process of this kind allows for rules that have the objective of enhancing equal opportunity for individuals and the improvement, in the situation of marginalized groups. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This convention has variously been described as the “Bible of women empowerment” and “Women’s International Bill of Rights.” Since its adoption it has become a reference point for the women’s movement in the demand for gender equality.

The Convention “reflects the depth of the exclusion and restriction practiced against women solely on the basis of their sex by calling for equal rights for women, regardless of their marital status in all fields – political, economic, social, cultural and civil. It calls for national legislations to ban discrimination, recommends temporary special measures to speed equality in fact between men and women” (UNESCO, 1999:6). The Convention provides that:

Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto 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.

The 1999 Constitution made provided somewhat similar affirmative action to supplement non-discrimination of contending parties. The Constitution provides that: “the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also command loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or any of its agencies.”

It is not the use of Affirmative Action that seems to be the problem but the practical effects and its linkage to fundamental ideas of fairness and justice. By the same token there can hardly be a stronger argument for gender based affirmative action than equal representation in a country where women who constitute about half of the population have been continuously sidelined in public life to the extent that they have never held more than 15% of both appointive and elective offices (See Table 1 for statistics of elected positions). However, the Constitution was not explicit in ensuring equal representation on sexual bases. Unlike the constitutions of some African countries, notably South Africa and Uganda, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria takes no cognizance of the disadvantaged position of women and has no provision for gender equality. Apart from the general reference to nondiscrimination on the basis of sex etc, there is nothing in the constitution that is aimed at redressing the disparities that exist along gender lines in Nigeria. On the other hand, the Federal Character Principle, which is meant to ensure equitable representation of states and ethnic groups in national appointments, actually places women at additional disadvantage by implying that they can only represent their

states of origin. Where culture does not permit a woman to represent her place of birth, she loses a golden opportunity. There have been many cases where a woman's state of origin disallows her appointment and the husband's state also refuses to endorse her. In many of these instances the government plays safe by appointing a man instead. And this has continued to consolidate women's under-representation in national politics.^{[1] [3] [4] [7]}

VI. Other factors

- a. Inadequate knowledge of written and unwritten rules protecting women's political rights.
- b. Religious Doctrine: Some religious doctrines militate against the active participation of women in politics and position of authority. As Millet puts it: "patriarchy has God on its side" that is, Christianity portrays Eve as an afterthought produced from Adam's spare rib. Furthermore, it is held that the origin of gender discrimination began from their sins. Islamic doctrines strictly bar women from some political endeavour – public speaking etc. – that can facilitate their political ambitions.^[1]

In recent times, however, there have been a number of movements to the commitment, both to the personal and social change of women in their status in public life.

Through series of women enlightenment, emancipation and conscious raising of groups on women movement, women subordination in politics have been reduced to an extent. Women through several of these platforms have played influential roles and this has further spurred more women in to politics.

III. METHODOLOGY

The paper is a survey research and uses primary data. The data were collected using structured questionnaire and interactions with the selected local communities of Bauchi state, Nigeria. The questionnaire items were developed based on the objective of the research and were distributed among the people consisting of young ladies, women politician, Religion and community leaders. A total of two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed. The results were analyzed using simple percentage and presented in a form of tables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total number of two hundred (200) Questionnaires were distributed. Out of which one hundred and eighty-four (184) were successfully completed by the respondents and retrieved.

Table one (1) Sex Distribution of Respondents

Response	Bauchi (Nigeria)	
	Frequency	%

Male	52	28%
Female	132	72%
Total	184	100%

Table 1 above has shown the sex distribution of the respondents. The male respondents are 52 representing 28% respectively. The female respondents are 132 representing 72% respectively. This is accordance with the number of returned questionnaires.

Table two (2) Age Distribution of the Respondents

Response	Bauchi (Nigeria)	
	Frequency	%
Under 20 years	29	16%
20-30 years	72	39%
Above 30 years	83	45%
Total	184	100%

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents. The ages were range into three categories of below 20 years, 20 – 30 years, and Above 30 years. The table shows the responses of participants below 20 years is 29 which represent 16%. The response of participants between 20 to 30 years is 72 which represent 39% of the total response respectively. Then, the response of participants above 30 years is 83, representing 45% of the total responses respectively.

Table Three (3) Marital Status of the Respondents

Response	Bauchi (Nigeria)	
	Frequency	%
Married	122	66%
Single	31	17%
Divorce	24	13%

Widow	07	04%
Total	184	100%

Table 3 shows the marital status of the respondents, this kind of response has been divided into four responses, Married, Single, Divorce and Widow. The table shows the responses of participants that are married are 122 people representing 66% of the total responses. The response of participant that are single are 31 people representing 17%. The response of participants that are divorce is 24 representing 13%. While the response of participants that are widow are 7 representing 4% of the total responses. The above table shows that most of the people we interact with are married and are the people facing the most difficult situation regarding the issue of political participation.

Table four (4) Educational Background (Level)

Response	Bauchi (Nigeria)	
	Frequency	%
Primary	26	14%
Post Primary	42	23%
Tertiary	81	44%
None of the above	35	19%
Total	184	100%

Table 4 shows the Educational background of the respondents, the response has been categories in four (4) categories: Primary, Post Primary, Tertiary and those that have not attended school. The table shows the response of participants with primary education are 26 representing 14%, post primary has 42 responses representing 23% of the total response, those with Tertiary education are 81 representing 44%, while those that have not attended school are 35 representing 19% of the total number of responses. Therefore, the table shows that most of the participant have attended the high education and it will be good for them to attend any question that might be in line with the research.

Table five (5) Respondents views according to their occupational dispositions

Response	Bauchi (Nigeria)	
	Frequency	%

Students	18	10%
Civil Service	96	52%
Farmers	09	5%
Trades/Business	17	9%
Politician	39	21%
None of the Above	05	3%
Total	184	100%

Table 5 shows the respondents views according to the occupational dispositions. The response has been categories in six (6) different categories: Students, Civil Service, Farmers, Trades/Business, Politician and None of the above-mentioned categories. The table shows the Students response are 18 people representing 10%, Civil Service are 96 representing 52%, Farmers 9 people representing 5%, Trade/Business are 17 people representing 9%, Politician 39 people representing 21% and people that are not in the above-mentioned categories have 5 people which represents 3% of the total responses. The shows that most of the respondents are civil servants with 96 people which representing 52% of the total response, because they are the people that are close to the people possessed political power they know how they are using their power to make sure they did not leave any one to come to their way.

Section Two (2) presents challenges that mostly hinder women from participation into politics in Bauchi State Nigeria

Response	Bauchi (Nigeria)	
	Frequency	%
Marginalization	43	23%
Lack of Educational and Orientations	18	10%
Socio-Cultural Influence	48	26%
Religious Influence	75	41%

Total	184	100%
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The table shows the respondents on some of the challenges facing by the women in participating into a political arena. The response has been categories into four major challenges namely: the problem of Marginalization, Lack of Education and Orientations, Socio-Cultural influence and Religious Influence, the table shows that the issue of marginalizing women under the power of men respondent has 43 people representing 23%, those that have a believe on lack of Education and Orientation is a major challenge that make women have very less participation in politics are 18 people representing 10%, some 48 people representing 26% think and believe that the major issue behind the discrimination is the Socio-Economic Influence of the in Bauchi State, while some 75 people representing 41% of the total response believes that Religion Influence is the major issue behind the sate back of women participation in politics.

Considering the above four different categories which we believe are the most major problems resulted to the discrimination and park aside faced by women in political space, the result shows that in Bauchi State of Nigeria the most and major think hindering the participation of women in politics is the Religion Influence which has 75 response representing 41%, this is because more than 85% of people in Bauchi State Nigeria are Muslim, according to their religion traditions women are treated like diamond that will be kept in very safe place, also they believe women are created with very less strength and short coming that will not allow them to make right decision at a right time, they also have a believe that politic is a very dirty game, it made for dirty people, therefore nobody will allow his daughter, sister, wife or mother to participate in it, follow by Socio-Cultural Influence, the people under this view believe that society and their culture describe women as only one of the house property, she has no room for external issue rather than home activities, starting from their home under her parent up to her house with her husband, some also believe that already women has been marginalize with their counter-part, they have no any role to play in the society and some believe of lack of education and orientation are major reason behind this issue.

V.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It must be recognized that the principle of equal rights of men and women is enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution. Article 42 guarantees right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sex. In addition, the Nigerian Gender Policy prescribes that at least 35 percent of political leaders should be women. Moreover, many political parties have waived nomination fees for women. Yet, the number of women in political positions continue to decrease in Nigeria such that the percentage of women in parliament in Nigeria is one of the lowest in the world well below the African average. This happened as the result of marginalization, lack of education and orientation, socio-cultural influence and religion influence. Finally, the research provided the following recommendations:

- i. Government and Political organizations should increase the rate of women participation in both politics and appointment offices.
- ii. Religious leaders should create awareness to their communities on the need to educate their girls children.
- iii. Women in politics should try to exhibit sense of maturity while discharging their political responsibilities. This will encourage other women and the society at large to support programme that will empower women into politics.

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