

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA. (A CASE STUDY OF IFE EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OSUN STATE.)

AKINOLA Olaitan Titilayo

olaitan.akinola@fuoye.edu.ng

Department of Educational Foundations
Federal University, Oye-Ekiti

Abstract

Gender equality and human development in a society bring about development. This paper examines the factors that affect women's political participation in Nigeria. The paper examines constraints, including financial constraints, religious beliefs, customs and traditions, gender roles, and educational background, that affect females. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population is estimated to be women in the Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State. The sample size is 200 respondents selected through a simple random sampling technique. The study used questionnaires for data collection. The questionnaire titled "Women Political Participation in Ife East Local Govt" has two sections, A and B. The collected data were analyzed using the mean to answer the research questions, while a t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. A mean criterion of 2.50 and above was retained, while a mean below 2.50 was rejected. The null hypothesis was rejected. It implied that women's political participation has a significant influence on national development in Osun State. Additionally, the results show that women who participated in the previous government from my community do not significantly influence national development. In conclusion, the culture of male supremacy has roots in local traditions, and it is affecting women's participation and insecurity, too. It was recommended that the quota system must always be reaffirmed and adhered to across all levels of government. There must be a reform of political parties that should tilt towards women needs interests.

Introduction

Women's political participation is a critical aspect of democracy and good governance. It involves the involvement of women in decision-making processes, political leadership, and public policy formulation. In Nigeria, like many other countries, women's political participation has historically been marginalized and underrepresented, according to Fadipe (2017), Akiyode & Lanre (2003) and

despite the country's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, women continue to face numerous challenges in accessing political power and influencing political processes.

Nigeria, located in West Africa, is the most populous country on the continent and is known for its rich cultural diversity. The country gained independence from colonial rule in 1960 and has since witnessed various

political transitions and challenges. Despite the progress made in establishing democratic institutions, women's representation in political offices remains significantly low. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data from 2021, women's representation in the Nigerian National Assembly was only 4.4% in the Senate and 6.7% in the House of Representatives. Despite the declaration made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which advocated 30% affirmative action and the National Gender Policy (NGP) recommendation of 35% affirmative action for a more inclusive representation of women both in elective and appointive positions, it is worthy to note that Nigerian women are still being marginalized due to the style of leadership inherent in the country. Agbalajobi (2010) opined that women were half of the world's population and contribute in crucial ways to the growth and development of society. Women's participation in politics is a very germane issue around the world, both in developed and developing countries, especially in the Nigerian political environment.

Over the years, marginalization has characterized women's participation in politics due to various impeding social, cultural, and religious forces. These forces have continued to affect women's sensitivity to politics, leading to a very low level of political interest, knowledge, and activities of women in politics, despite an exciting political prospect for women in Nigeria.

Nigerian politics leans toward the "masculine model," which means men largely dominate the political space by setting the rules of the political game and defining the standards for evaluation. Nigeria's politics is almost entirely male-dominated, making women virtually politically unseen. This inequality and unfairness have

therefore been perceived by different people, especially the womenfolk, as an attempt to erode their fundamental rights (Uwa, et al., 2018). Moreover, women are scarcely noticeable in the country's political chronicle. A woman has at no time been elected president, vice president, or governor since 1960 when Nigeria gained its independence (Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014; Idike et al., 2020; Olurode, 2013; Quadri, 2015).

Historically, Nigerian women have faced socio-cultural barriers that hinder their political participation. Traditional gender roles, discriminatory practices, and stereotypes limit women's access to education, economic resources, and decision-making spaces. The patriarchal nature of Nigerian society often restricts women's agency and reinforces male dominance in politics.

Social Studies education plays a crucial role in shaping citizens' understanding of democratic principles, governance structures, and political processes. It encompasses the study of political institutions, ideologies, public policies, and political behavior. However, existing literature highlight the importance of women's political empowerment and the role of education in facilitating their participation. Research conducted by Awolalu (2018) emphasizes that education serves as a tool for empowering women and enhancing their political engagement. Similarly, studies by Osaghae (2014) and Olufunke et al. (2020) emphasize the need for gender-responsive political science education to foster gender equality and women's empowerment.

In recent years, Nigeria has taken steps to address gender inequality in political participation. The National Gender Policy, formulated in 2006, promotes gender mainstreaming in various sectors, including politics and governance. Additionally, the

adoption of the National Gender Policy on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Political Participation and Leadership in 2017 demonstrates the government's commitment to increasing women's representation in political offices. Nevertheless, some gaps and challenges need to be addressed.

Patriarchy refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, which in turn has given rise to women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-participants in the decision-making process in households, not to mention coming out to vie for political positions. Ette (2017) argues that news media engage in universal support of patriarchal framing of politics. Also, Limited access to education has been a strong and noticeable impediment to female participation in politics. Low literacy rates are therefore a constraint (Orisadare, 2019).

Financial backing:

Among the fundamental factors, which constrain and serve as inhibitions to women's participation in politics across the world today is the issue of finance (Muriaas, Wang, and Murray, 2020). Some of the impediments to participating, contesting, and winning elections in the country are money politics and power play that effectively scheme women out. Politics in Nigeria, especially seeking elective positions, is an expensive venture requiring large financial involvement and solid financial backing. Political campaigns are expensive and require huge financial backing for success (Oladapo, Atela & Agbalajobi, 2021).

Insecurity:

An unhealthy political environment is another challenge to women actively participating in Nigerian politics. The cultural makeup of the traditions in the Nigerian setting is one that subtly encourages physical abuse of women (Arisi & Oromareghake, 2011). The political terrain in Nigeria is characterized by do-or-die affairs troubled with violence, maiming, assassinations, threats, blackmail, intimidation, and humiliation, amongst others, since the return of democracy (Agbalajobi, 2021; Uwa, et al., 2018).

Religious and Cultural Barriers:

Although there is no constitutional barrier to the increased participation of women in Nigerian politics, there exist societal, religious, and cultural barriers that frustrate women's participation. The culture of male supremacy has roots in local traditions and folklore, has taken form, and is characterized by cultural and religious beliefs (Aina, 2012; Pogason, 2012).

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. However, Nigeria has failed to achieve the affirmative action of 35% women's representation in the National Assembly to date. In marked contrast to many African countries in the world, Nigeria has no electoral gender quota system (Ette and Akpan-Obong, 2022). While countries like Rwanda and France reserved political seats for women in their countries as a means to solve the problem of underrepresentation of women in politics, this is a good way to get more

women into politics or elected positions (Agbalajobi, 2021).

This study aims to explore the intersection of women's political participation and Social Studies education in Nigeria. It seeks to analyze the current status of women's political participation, the state of political science education, and the interconnections between the two. By examining the challenges, opportunities, and potential policy interventions, this research aims to contribute to the existing literature and inform strategies to promote women's political empowerment and enhance gender-responsive political science education in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The problem addressed in this study is the low level of women's political participation and the inadequate integration of gender perspectives in political science education in Nigeria. Despite the country's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, women continue to face significant barriers and underrepresentation in political offices. Women's minimal representation in the political space in Nigeria is an outcome of the interplay of several economic and socio-cultural factors and the patriarchal nature of the political system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out the challenges facing women's political participation.

Research objective

1. To examine the current status of women's political participation in Nigeria, including their representation in political offices, electoral participation, and challenges they face.

2. To identify the challenges and barriers that hinder women's political participation and the integration of gender perspectives in political science education.

Research Questions

The following constitute the questions this study seeks to answer:

1. What is the level of women's political participation and representation in Nigeria?
2. What are the fundamental problems/challenges facing women's political participation?

Research hypothesis

Ho: Women's political participation does not have a significant influence on national development.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population is made up of all women in the Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State. The sample size was 200 respondents selected through a random sampling technique. The study used questionnaires for data collection. The questionnaire was chosen because it saves time. The questionnaire titled "Women Political Participation in Ife East Local Govt" has two sections, A and B. Section A deals with demographic information on the respondents, while Section B consists of three parts. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of one research assistant.

The collected data were analyzed using mean to answer the research questions, while a t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. A mean criterion of 2.50 and above was retained, while a mean below 2.50 was rejected. For the test of hypothesis, the null hypothesis was rejected if the calculated value was

equal to or greater than the t-tabulated value, whereas the null hypothesis was retained if the t-calculated value was less than the t-tabulated value. Also, the null hypothesis was rejected if the calculated p-value was equal to or less than the set p-value, whereas the null hypothesis was retained if the calculated p-value was greater than the set p-value.

Results

The two research questions raised earlier in the study were answered descriptively.

Research Question 1: What is the level of women's political participation and representation in Ife East Local Government?

Table 1: Mean analysis showing the level of women's political participation and representation.

S/ N	Item	Level of Agreement				Mean	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	Our male family gives instructions to you for polled poll.	64	108	23	5	3.38	Agreed
2	Was gender your reason for not voting vote	94	76	16	14	3.25	Agreed
3	I don't have an interest in country politics.	92	79	21	8	3.28	Agreed
4	The level of women's political participation is low compared with men.	93	66	24	17	3.18	Agreed
5	Women have better moral skills	89	82	15	14	3.23	Agreed
6	Do you think that the election is only Men's job?	88	76	24	12	3.20	Agreed
7	Women participated in the previous government from my community.	15	13	90	80	1.26	Disagree
8	I have participated in political campaigns.	98	70	22	10	3.28	Agreed
9	I will get help if I want to become a political office holder.	104	69	15	12	3.33	Agreed
10	Women's representatives are too small in Nigeria	97	73	20	10	3.29	Agreed
Sectional Mean						3.07	Agreed

Scale Mean 2.50, n=200

From Table 1 above, it could be observed that mean scores of 3.38, 3.25, 3.28, 3.18, 3.29, 3.23, 3.20, 1.26, 3.28, and 3.33, respectively, are in agreement with items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10. while 1.26 is in disagreement with line 7. Men's job, I have participated in political campaigns, and

I will get help if I want to become a political office holder has influenced national development.

Research Question 2: What are the fundamental problems/challenges facing women's political participation?

Table 2: Mean analysis showing challenges facing women in Ife East Local Government.

S/ N	Item	Level of Agreement				Mean	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
11	I have access to the political leader in my community.	23	13	64	108	3.38	Agreed
12	Because of custom and tradition, I am not allowed to take part in a political post.	94	76	16	14	3.25	Agreed
13	Customs does not allow me to go for political campaigns.	92	79	21	8	3.28	Agreed
14	My religion does not permit me as a woman to join a political party	93	66	24	17	3.18	Agreed
15	Finance can be a constraint for a woman.	97	73	20	10	3.29	Agreed
16	A woman can work in any political organization.	89	82	15	14	3.23	Agreed
17	Low literacy rates are a constraint for women's participation.	88	76	24	12	3.20	Agreed
18	The Nigerian constitution allows for a women's quota system in politics.	90	80	17	13	3..27	Agree
19	The culture of male supremacy has roots in local traditions, and it's affecting women's participation.	98	70	22	10	3.28	Agreed
20	An unhealthy political environment is another challenge to women actively participating in Nigerian politics.	104	69	15	12	3.33	Agreed
	Sectional Mean					3.27	Agreed

Scale mean= 2.50 n-200

On to table 2 above, it could be observed that mean scores of 3.38, 3.25, 3.35, 3.18, 3.29, 3.23, 3.20, 3.27, 3.28, and 3.27, respectively, are all in agreement with the items. I have access to the political leaders in my community, because of custom and tradition, religion does not permit me to join politics, and customs do not allow me to go for political campaigns.

Finance can be a constraint for a woman, etc.

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H₀: Women's political participation does not have a significant influence on national development

Table 4: t-test analysis showing the influence of women's political participation on national development

Variable	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Df	t-cal	t-tab	Sig (P-cal)	Remarks
Political participation	200	44.82	6.222	398	3.188	1.652	0.000	Reject H ₀₁
National development	200	43.68	6.259					

Significant at df=398; $P \leq 0.05$, $t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{tabulated}}$

Table 4 shows the t-test analysis of the influence of political participation on national development in the Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State. The t-calculated value of 3.188 was found to be greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.652, given 398 degrees of freedom at a 0.05 level of significance. The t_{cal} value was significant since it was greater than the t-tabulated value; the null hypothesis was rejected. It implied that women's political participation has a significant influence on national development in Osun State.

Discussion

The null hypothesis was rejected, which implied that women's political participation has a significant influence on national development in Ife East local government. The findings show that most women's votes are made by the choice of their male relatives; they are expected to follow the instructions. Also, in this study, most women do not have permission from their family to take part in the civic, political, and electoral process. Again, women have no voice and they are always marginalized according to the study, which is in line with Awofeso and Odeyemi 2014; Idike et al (2020, who all believed in their study that women are marginalized in the electoral process in Nigeria. In addition, according to this study, women's impediment to participating, contesting, and winning elections in the country is money. This is in line with Oladapo et al. However, Ette and Akpan's findings are in contrast with

this work; in their study of Rwanda, women participated and even have reserved quotas and seats in their country.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the various constraints on women's participation are rooted in the Ife East Local Government.

Also, the culture of male supremacy has roots in local traditions, and it's affecting women's participation and insecurity, too.

Recommendations

1. It was recommended that the quota system must always be reaffirmed and adherence to it must be ensured across all levels of government.
2. There must be a reform of political parties that will be responsible for women's needs and interests.
3. The government of the day must use all media outlets to sensitize women folks their role in national development.

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