



WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIVE AND APPOINTIVE POLITICAL POSITIONS AND INFLUENCE ON YOUNGER WOMEN'S POLITICAL ASPIRATION AMONG FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The male gender has dominated politics for a very long time in Nigeria and most part of the world while few women had actually come out to contest in elections and be appointed to some elective positions. This research work therefore, investigated the participation of women in elective and appointive positions and the influence it has on the political aspiration of female undergraduates in Nigeria. 300 female undergraduate students were used as sample. A purposive sampling technique was used to select two universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Also, only female undergraduates' students were purposefully selected to participate in the study. A self-structured questionnaire was used. Descriptive statistics involving frequency count, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics involving t-test were used to analyse the data. Three hypothesis were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance, all the null hypothesis were rejected. Findings revealed that, there was significant difference in female political appointments and their cultural beliefs having a significant level less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). The second hypothesis revealed that a P-value less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) this implies that there is a significant difference in the aspiration of younger women

participation in politics and previous performance of women in government. The last hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference in women economic status and their participation in politics. This was statistically confirmed as the p-value is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). Recommendations are made in line with the findings of the work include: The Beijing declaration of 2005 which stipulated allocation of 30% of elective positions to women should as a matter of urgency be implemented. Also, women in elective and appointive positions should serve as role models, mentors and coaches for other women who intend to seek political positions.

Keywords: *Women, Women Participation, Political Positions, Political Aspiration, Female, Undergraduates*

Introduction

Women might have been successful in the areas of business, management, academics, media, law among others but one area that has little representation is politics. Very few women are seen engaging in politics across the world. It's even more restricted in Africa and Asia but some have decided to stand tall and defy the norm. To the credit of the woman, we have female heads of state that are heading powerful nations. Germany is the largest economy in Europe and being headed by a woman, Angela Merkel (fourth term). Brazil, Argentina and Chile are the three leading economies in South America and have been headed by women in Dilma Rouseff, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and Michelle Bachelet respectively. Emerging Asian economy South Korea former president Park Guen-hye was a woman. This shows that women are taking over powerful nations. The greatest achievement for women would be to have a female president in the most world's powerful nations: The United States, Russia and China and also a female UN Secretary- General. A Nigerian female president would also be a plus to Africa's largest economy. Can that happen? The late Mrs Margaret Thatcher who was popularly known as 'Iron lady' is the longest serving and one of the best British Prime Minister till date.

According to Afolabi and Arogundade (2003), women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies, women assume five key roles: mother, producer,

home-manager, community organizer and socio-cultural and political activists. Over the decades, the issues concerning women have taken on new dimensions and received varied treatment by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The principle of equality of men and women was recognised in the United Nations Charter (1945), and subsequently in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). In spite of the international declarations affirming the rights and equality between men and women of which Nigeria is a signatory, available literature shows that women still constitute a disproportionately small percentage of those participating in political decision-making and leadership. Many global conferences, including the Cairo Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and the World Summit for Social Development (1995) have recognised that, despite the progress made globally in improving status of women, gender disparities still exist, especially in regard to participation in electoral politics.

Women's involvement in politics varies throughout the world and their participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance. In spite of the clamour for women's political empowerment by international organizations, research consistently shows that in many parts of the world women still linger on the fringes of political realm and their participation in government structures and the democratic process remains low (Vissandjee, Abdool, Apale and Dupere, 2006).

In Nigeria, although women constitute 50 percent of the population and 51 percent of voters in elections, yet they do not enjoy their full political rights as their male counterparts (Ofong, 2002). Available statistics reveal that women's overall political representation in government is less than 7 percent (Agbalajobi, 2010). Also, women have not still attained the recommended 30 percent seats in government as prescribed by the Beijing platform of Action to which Nigeria subscribes. It was not until 1979 that women in Northern Nigeria had the franchise to exercise their voting rights. This implies that they could not contest for political positions nor participate in choosing their political leaders until 1979 (BAOBAB, 2003).

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2003) notes that gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure this fairness, measures must often be made available to compensate for historical and political disadvantages that prevent women from otherwise

operating on a levelled playing field with men. Equity leads to equality. Gender equality implies that women and men enjoy the same status. Gender equality means that women and men have equal opportunities for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from results thereof. Gender equality includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The quantitative perspective concerns the physical gender balance in numerical terms. The qualitative perspective focuses on the equal distribution of power for both women and men. How far are the quantitative and qualitative aspects of gender equality in political circles ensured in Nigeria?

Nigerian universities are faced with the peculiar situation of having mid to late adolescents on the campuses. This is due to the minimum age requirement of 16 years for entry into Nigerian Universities. (*Joint Admissions Matriculation Board Brochure 2006/2007: 1*). Adams, Berzonsky and Keating (2006) posit that universities provide an institutionalised moratorium when late adolescence can consider and experiment with various roles and options in their efforts to construct a stable and coherent state of identity. Universities could be a place where adolescents who are undergraduates could learn how to govern, manage and do other administrative work by participating in students' politics. The universities admit both male and female students into various courses of study to earn degree certificates.

These students are called undergraduates. Women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the following ground; that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. Secondly that all human beings are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life. The right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law.

To this extent, how has the women in politics influenced the younger women to want to emulate? Few women that have showed interest in politics especially those seeking for elective positions had been side lined one way or the other. But anecdotal record has shown that these women in either elective or appointive positions had greatly influenced the younger women through various empowerment/motivational programs that were being organised by them.

Younger women are seeing these older women in politics as role models and mentors for their dogged role in the history of women’s contribution to nation building.

Trends and Patterns in Women’s Electoral Participation over the Last Decade

Increases in women’s electoral participation in Nigeria from 1999 to 2007 shows a positive progression that more women ever than before are aware of and becoming more interested in politics with specific emphasis on holding positions (being in government) but took a downturn in 2015 general election which show fewer women contesting for elective positions. Interestingly, women who are actively involved in vying for elective political positions are fewer in number compared to those seeking to enter government by nomination or appointment. Nigerian society is in dire need of active women, from the grassroots to the federal level vying for elective positions. However, in the 2015 concluded gubernatorial election in Nigeria, few women vied for elective positions and the ultimate is that for the first time in the history of Nigeria, a female governor emerged in the person of Aisha Jummai Alhassan of Taraba State which result was later rejected. This no doubt would have enriched but demoralized the democratic process, and Nigerian women are gradually beginning to recognize this need.

The National Assembly in 1999 had three (3) (2.8%) female Senators and twelve (12) (3.3%) female House of Representatives members. In 2003, four (4) (3.7%) and twenty-one (21) (5.8%) female members were elected respectively into the Assembly. In 2007 the National Assembly had nine (9) (8.3%) female Senators and twenty-six (26) (7.2%) female members of House of Representatives. In 2011, the National Assembly had seven (7) (6.4%) female members and twenty-five (25) (6.9%) female members in the lower House. In 2015, the National Assembly has seven (7) (6.4%) female members in Senate and (19) (5.2%) female in the House of Representatives. These are presented the table and graph below:

Table 1: Elective Positions from 1999 Till 2015

| | 1999 | | 2003 | | 2007 | | 2011 | | 2015 | |
|-----------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Office | Seat Available | Women | Seat Available | Women | Seat Available | Women | Seat Available | Women | Seat Available | Women |
| President | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|---------|-----|---------|
| Vice President | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Senate | 109 | 3(2.8) | 109 | 4(3.7) | 109 | 8(7.3) | 109 | 7(6.4) | 109 | 8(6.4) |
| House of Reps | 360 | 12(3.3) | 360 | 21(5.8) | 360 | 23(6.4) | 360 | 26(7.2) | 109 | 19(5.3) |
| Governor | 36 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 36 | 0 |
| Deputy Governor | 36 | 1(2.8) | 36 | 2(5.5) | 36 | 6(16.7) | 36 | 3(8.3) | 36 | 4 |
| State House of Assembly | 990 | 12(1.2) | 990 | 38(3.8) | 990 | 52(5.3) | 990 | 62(6.3) | | |
| SHA Committees Chairpersons | 829 | 18(2.2) | 881 | 32(3.6) | 887 | 52(5.9) | 887 | — | | |
| L.G.A Chairpersons | 710 | 9(1.2) | 774 | 15(1.9) | 740 | 27(3.6) | 740 | — | | |
| Councillors | 8,810 | 143(0.02) | 6368 | 267(4.2) | 6368 | 235(3.7) | 6368 | — | | |

Source: www.inecnigeria.org

The marginal increase of women in the National Assembly since 1999 as the above table showed is very insignificant and with great implications for governance. Martin (2015) rightly observes that if the women overcome the many barriers of a very un-level playing field and succeed in being elected, they face the new challenges of life in a well-established “gentlemen’s” club that shuts the door on equal participation in parliament and its decision-making. However, Guzman (2004) thus explains why women access to positions of authority, when they are in a minority, is not necessarily a recipe for greater coordination of the interests of women as a whole, and it also explains why they run the risk of having their true needs subsumed into the interests associated with their membership of a particular class, ethnic group, or culture. The

presence of female representatives can contribute to “the feminization of the political agenda” that is the articulation of women’s concerns and perspectives in public debates as well as “the feminization of legislation” that is public policies are desired to take into account their effect on women (Dovi, 2006). According to a report in 2002 by BBC News through Online Women in Politics, women accounted for only about 14 percent of members of parliament worldwide. Out of over 180 countries, 14 are headed by women, six women are vice presidents. (Women’s Learning Partnerships, 2002). In May 2003, Qatar appointed Sheikha bint Ahmed Al-Mahmud as the state’s first woman cabinet minister. The appointment followed an April 29 referendum in which Qataris overwhelmingly approved a written constitution recognising a woman’s right to vote and run for office. (DAWN Internet newspaper, May 2003). New Zealand became the first nation to grant women full voting rights in 1983.

A 2006 report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union gave the gender parity of female participation in elective politics in the world as 16% while the annual growth of females in national parliament is about 0.5% (UNICEF, 2006) which is very low compared to the growth the involvement of women would have been to the world. However, some countries do not have quota for women to participate in elective and appointive positions. Cuba has the highest percentage for countries without quota while Nepal, a South Asian country is the highest in the rank of women participation in politics with 33%. In East Asia, Taiwan has the highest percentage of women in Parliament (38.0%). The United States of America and United Kingdom are roughly in line with the world average with 139 (19.7%) for House of Lords and 125 (19.4%) for House of Commons. Rwanda has the highest number of female parliamentary member in Africa with (56.3%), followed by Angola (37.3%). Moreover, some countries are also doing well with Sweden (47.0%), Cuba (43.2%), Finland (41.5%), Netherlands (41.3%), Argentina (40.0%), Denmark (38.0%), Costa Rica (36.8%) and Spain (36.3%). The analysis above shows the top ten countries (from Rwanda to Spain) of the world where female participation in elective politics are prominent.

Factors Affecting Women’s Participation

Nigeria's deep-rooted cultural and religious traditions support men and pose serious challenges for women to participate in politics. According to Muoghalu and Abrifor (2012), women (including Nigerian women) are not allowed to participate in public life from childhood to adulthood by important individuals

such as spouses, fathers, mothers, and others. Also, due to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, most Nigerians, including women, believe and accept the traditional belief that women are inferior to men

Different explanations have been presented by political scientists as to the reason women have lower rate of participation as elective and political appointment positions than men. It is assumed that women are perceived to lack the psychosocial characteristics associated with political leadership which is seen as physiological constraints while cultural constraints has the perception that politics is a man's world; role constraint believed women have been socialized into the lifetime role of mother and wife and the last one which is male conspiracy made men seek to preserve their positions by imposing restraints barring women from access to position of influence (Medoff, 1986). These explanations were corroborated by the findings of Santos et al in 2007. The study zeroed in on the barriers to women's participation in politics. Various issues such as cultural, political and economic factors both personal and structural were cited as part of what impede women's full and meaningful participation in politics. Also, a lot of women are frightened because of the violence that is often associated with politics which makes politics almost impossible for most women (Ngara et al., 2013). Another factor hindering women's participation, is the male chauvinistic, the males do not want to hear the feminine voice. Further, Nigerian women are marginalized, discriminated against and highly under-represented in politics and government when making important decisions which is a big challenge for their active involvement in national politics and this continues to consolidate women inadequate representation in national politics (Agbalajobi, 2010). All these factors have affected the emergence of women in politics.

Women's participation in politics is very important. Women defend their own interests better than anyone else (Diakité 2007). According to Karl (1995), there can be no true democracy, no true people's participation in governance and development without the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of life and at all levels of decision making. Future society will not progress without making the best use of its women (Jung Sook 2006). Women's active political participation will improve the trends of events in this nation. So on this, the study is based on liberal feminist theory approach. Several theoretical

approaches have been used to explain patterns of participation in various types of political activities (Conway 2002). One aspect of sociological theory emphasizes cultural explanations for the low proportion of elective and political appointments positions held by women. The patriarchal culture that has dominated societies with its social norms has assigned women to domestic life or narrowly prescribes work roles, such as clerk, secretary, nurse, or teacher.

Therefore, this study is based on the liberal feminist theory. The theory promotes that the female gender like their male counterparts, should be entitled to full human rights and should be free to choose their role in life and explore their full potential in equal competition with men. In other words, there should not be any intimidation, hindrance or barrier inhibiting women from engaging in any elective nor appointments for political positions. The theory goes more to propose that there should not be any nepotism for any sex on the basis of gender. Men and women should enjoy the same rights and have equal opportunities (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2007). Another perspective of the liberal feminists, are that all people are created equal by God and deserve equal rights. The theory believed that oppression exists because of the way in which men and women are socialized, which supports patriarchy and keeps men in power positions. Liberal feminists believe that women have the same mental capacity as their male counterparts and should be given the same opportunities in political, economic and social spheres. Women should have the right to choose, not have their life chosen for them because of their sex.

Politics is multifaceted and is undertaking changes due to globalization. There remain old and new unresolved issues to resolve but also new issues evolving and the development of new opportunities for women. Women are creating a mark in the formal institutions of government. This study advocates active women's participation in electoral politics and the removal of all obstacles that stand on the way of women towards achieving parity with men in politics. Momodu (2003:48) submits that the issues of women's political participation and representation in politics and governance should be seen from four perspectives. Access, Participation, Representation and Transformation. Access to political institutions, participation (which includes control of power within such institutions), quantitative and qualitative representation and the end result will

be social and political transformation in the polity. Women's political empowerment can be enhanced when these four conditions are fulfilled.

The view that women in politics matter is sustained by three reasons: First, politics is an important arena for decision making. Individuals who hold official positions in government get to decide how to allocate scarce resources, such as tax revenues. Politicians make political decisions that may help some people at the expense of others. Decisions by politicians often affect people's individual choices by encouraging some behaviours and outlawing others. Second, political power is a valuable tool. Politicians hold power over other social institutions, such as the family..., third, holding a political position is to hold a position of authority (Paxton, 2010). Women in positions of authority and power can influence decisions on issues that bother on women and impact positively on the lives of female gender. Integrating women in the political process provides women with the opportunity to discuss women issues facing challenges.

Hypothesis

It is against this background that this study seeks to find answer to the following hypothesis;

1. There is no significant difference in female political appointment and their cultural beliefs.
2. There is no significant difference in aspiration of younger women participation in politics and previous performance of women in government.
3. There is no significant difference in women economic status and their participation in politics.

Instrument

The research made use of a self-developed structured questionnaire titled (FPEAIYW) Female elective and political appointment influence on younger women seeking for political elective and appointment positions in data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections- A & B. Section A elicited information about the biosocial data of the participants while Section B, was on seeking electoral appointment positions.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study was made up of 300 female undergraduate students. A purposive sampling technique was used to select two universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. These universities are Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-ode. Also only female undergraduates' students were purposefully selected to participate in the study. Therefore, one hundred and fifty female undergraduates were selected from each university without any bias in terms of religion or parental socio-economic status.

Methodology

Descriptive statistics involving frequency count, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics involving t-test were used to analyse the data.

Analysis and Discussion

Table 2 shows the demographic data of the respondents

Demographic Distribution

| | | NO | % |
|-----------|----------|-------|-------|
| Age | 15-18 | 73 | 24.5 |
| | 19-21 | 225 | 75.5 |
| | Total | 298 | 100.0 |
| Level | 100level | 7 | 2.3 |
| | 200level | 31 | 10.4 |
| | 300level | 35 | 11.7 |
| | 400level | 225 | 75.5 |
| | Total | 298 | 100.0 |
| Christian | 298 | 100.0 | |
| | YORUBA | 127 | 42.6 |
| | IGBO | 97 | 32.6 |
| | OTHERS | 74 | 24.8 |
| | Total | 298 | 100.0 |

H0₁: There is no significant difference in female political appointments and their cultural beliefs

One-Sample Test

| | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Cultural beliefs | 52.753 | 297 | .000 | 2.95302 | 2.8429 | 3.0632 |
| political appointments | 77.614 | 297 | .000 | 4.19128 | 4.0850 | 4.2975 |

Hypothesis one reveals the difference in female political appointment and their cultural beliefs. From the result, using t-test statistics, it shows that there is significant difference in female political appointments and their cultural beliefs having a significant level less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$).

The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative was accepted. That is, there was significant difference in female political appointments and their cultural beliefs. The findings is in consonance with the work of Aluko (2005) who recognized the fact that the gender gap that begins in the primary school has become a gender gulf at the tertiary level and by extension their involvement in politics. In essence, historical, sexism and religious, educational and political and socio-cultural factors add significantly towards gender imbalance. (Johnson & Elizabeth Makham, 2004).

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the aspiration of younger woman participation in politics and previous performance of women in government.

One-Sample Statistics

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------------------------------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Political appointments | 95 | 17.5053 | 3.43596 | .35252 |
| Previous performance of women | 95 | 23.7368 | 3.77058 | .38685 |

One-Sample Test

| | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Political appointments | 63.897 | 297 | .000 | 3.57383 | 3.4638 | 3.6839 |
| Previous performance of women | 115.494 | 297 | .000 | 4.21141 | 4.1396 | 4.2832 |

Hypothesis two reveals a P-value less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) this implies that there is a significant difference in the aspiration of younger women participation in politics and previous performance of women in government.

The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was accepted that is, there is a significant difference in the aspiration of younger women participation in politics and previous performance of women in government. This tallies with the findings of Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) in their study across European nations on adolescents about gender differences in political participation. The study revealed that differences in intentions to participate between girls and boys; decline in countries with more women in office and goes ahead to suggest a socialization effect in which women politicians serve as role models, inspiring young women to become active in politics. In contrast, other cross-national studies find little relationship between women in office and increased political involvement (Karp and Banducci, 2008; Kittilson&Schwindt-Bayer, 2012). The result also correlate with what the symbolic argument says that every female politician acts a role model for all women, regardless of political ideology.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in women economic status and their participation in politics.

One-Sample Test

| | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | t | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Political appointments | 48.333 | 297 | .000 | 3.68456 | 3.5345 | 3.8346 |
| Economic Status | 66.327 | 297 | .000 | 3.5839 | 3.478 | 3.690 |

Hypothesis three was also tested using t-statistics test. From the result it shows that there is a significant difference in women economic status and their participation in politics. This was statistically confirmed as the p-value is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). Hence, the H_0 is rejected.

Literature has revealed that the status of women to a greater extent play a significant role in enhancing their participation and representation in political decision making. Shvedova (2002) argues that social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies. In other word, lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics in greater numbers. Though, the findings of this work does not support that assertion. Easier avenues should be created for women to access economic resources, which is a key in expanding women's presence in the political realm (Tova, 2007).

Conclusion

Culturally and anecdotal record have shown that women are supposed to be led but not to lead has greatly affected the way women participate in politics in Nigeria because women has been relegated at the background politically for years which has created an awareness of women under-representation in politics. The active participation of women at all levels of decision-making is vital to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy and the presence of their viewpoints and experiences into the decision-making practises can result to the resolutions that satisfy larger number of the society, for better and more appropriate social, political, legal, and economic solutions for their problems.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendation are made:

1. The Beijing declaration of 2005 which stipulated allocation of 30% of elective positions to women should as a matter of urgency be implemented.

2. Women should be encouraged to come together to use their population to an advantage because they are the largest in terms of population in the country by supporting and voting their own gender.
3. Women in elective and appointive positions should serve as role models, mentors and coaches for other women who intend to seek political positions.
4. Political parties in Nigeria should create incentives that will encourage more women in coming out to seek elective and appointive positions in government.
5. Also, the government should promote principle of affirmative action at all levels of local government to create room for more women to be involved in politics.

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