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PEACE-BUILDING THROUGH WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: A STUDY OF 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN YOLA, ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

By

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ABSTRACT

This research examined and analyzed the factors militating and enhancing women participation in politics in the 2019 general elections. The research was carried out in Yola North LGA and a total of four hundred respondents were purposively administered structured questionnaire. This research utilizes both primary and secondary sources for the collection of data through a well-structured questionnaire and from published materials. The study adopts one-fold theoretical perspective to discuss the issues of women participation in politics and to allow for more in-depth understanding of the issues. Liberalism theory was utilized in this study. The result deduced from this study shows that inadequate finance contributes to a greater percentage, the hindering factor that discourages women's participation in politics. This can be attributed to the high financial burden associated with active political participation in Nigeria and other socio-cultural reasons that could hinder women from pursuing their careers, thus, leading to lack or inadequate finance. Other inhibiting factors to women's political participation are violent nature of politics and lack of self-confidence, which are due to the thuggery activities in politics, fear of male dominancy in politics and the ideology that women should basically be homemakers. All these factors were found in this research to be responsible for poor women political participation in Yola North Local Government Area, Adamawa State. Based on the findings, the study suggests that proper and suitable conditions which can create equal credit facilities should be prioritized.

Keywords: General Elections, Nigeria, Political Participation, Women, Yola North LGA.

Introduction

It is argued that women are equal citizens and therefore should share equally with men in public decision-making – otherwise, there is a democratic deficit (Manon, 2007). In the past, the nature of democracy obtainable, exempted women from proper representation and governance. In ancient Greece, the very root of democracy, its practice was rigorously exclusive: the male citizens were more recognized. Scholars of the social contract and popular sovereignty – Grotius (1583–1645), Hobbes (1588–1679), Locke (1632–1704), Pufendorf (1632–1694), Rousseau (1712–1778) and Madison (1751–1836) – at best paid less

attention to women, and at worst endorsed their relegation to private and family spheres. The revolutions that were deemed great, led the way for more representative democracy – the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England, the American Revolution (1775–1783), and French Revolution (1789) – less likely entailed the predisposition of women to matters of national governance (Christopher & Uki, 2020).

This is in spite of the notion about utilitarian principle of democracy which is of the position that democracy centers on the greater good of the extension the inclusion of all and sundry in the process of governance. Global development agenda typical of globalization and of course, the sustainable development goals all prioritized political empowerment in the light of participation of women in politics or public life. This present-day Africa, particularly Nigeria, the most disadvantaged group in the population is the female gender. They have virtually no significant control over most aspects of public life. The propensity of this population group to assume greater significance is a pointer to Nigeria`s propensity to sustain and consolidate democracy as an alternative formidable enough to rely on and a recipe for good governance. Religious injunctions or jurisprudential stipulations intensify this phenomenon hence relegating them to a background denigrating enough to disenfranchise them from participating actively in politics. This has affected the appearance of the women as disadvantaged in the participation landscape hence a serious threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Riley & Riley, 1998; Orisadare, 2019).

Proper representation remains a vital aspect of democratic consolidation and liberal understanding of governance, which concentrates on institutions and organizations. Today in Nigeria, the statistics for women participation in political issues have increased steadily, although the number that eventually head on to contest for political offices remains minimal. Rasak (2017) argued that, in political space and public offices, the percentage of Nigerian women who get elected for public representation, is lower than what is obtainable in other developed countries where a more favourable system helps women to compete. Women ought to have their interests represented, as there are visible interests that only women can represent. The talent that abounds in women can equally be harnessed through political representation (Okeke, 2015).

In Nigeria, there are certain factors that hinder the total involvement of women in politics. These are: inadequate funds which are needed to sponsor every aspect of contesting political position. It is often projected that most women are not substantially empowered to yield the kind of resources needed to prosecute elections in Nigeria. Other existing constraints faced by women are cultural and religious barriers, turbulence of the political arena, lack of cohesion among women, and women's perception of themselves relative to men, and deliberate elimination of female aspirants at party levels, exorbitantly high registration fees, poor security holdings, male dominance at executive positions, undemocratic policies, violence and shrewd ideologies (Aluko & Ajani, 2006; Akiyode-Afolabi, 2008).

There is a need for government and statutory leaders to review the existing challenges which pose as hindrances to the active participation of women in Nigerian politics particularly those that border around religion and socio-cultural practices. The leaders should be adequately empowered about gender sensitivity and educated on the need to have women fully represented at all political sectors (Nwabunkeonye, 2014). It is on this background establishment that we aim to examine through this study, the inclusivity and participation of women in Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria.

The objectives of this research include proper identification of the underlying factors discouraging women participation in politics, in the midst of social and cultural issues prevalent in this part of the country. Also, to explore the extent to which women have gotten immersed in political affairs so as to help us offer recommendations that could improve the active interest of women in political positions, and all processes involved in the selection processes from the level of political parties to the point of national representations.

Conceptualization of Terms

Woman

The word woman can be used generally to mean any female human or specifically to mean any female human or specifically to mean an adult female as contrasted with girl. The New Merriam –Webster Dictionary also defines a woman as an adult female person. Looking at the concept from Nigerian political arena, researchers can state that a woman is one who has attained the age of franchise and by Nigerian standard the minimum age is 18years. According to Otite and Ogionwo (2006) women constitute about 50% of the Nigerian population. They are mothers, wives, and even workers. However, they argue that the perception of women is still culture-bound when related to men in matter of wealth, power and prestige under the prevailing patriarchal environment.

Political Participation

This concept according to Weiss (2020) deals with the level, nature and extent to which each citizens takes part or becomes involved in politics-power to take decisions, allocate resources and distribute them. The above implies that every qualified adult in a society is expected to participate directly or indirectly to influence political decisions that affect the individual and others. Simbime (2003) sees political participation as those voluntary activities by which members of the society share in the selection of rulers and indirectly or indirectly in the formation of public policy. He thus opines that political participation is a civic right of all citizens. In considering it relevance to national development, George-Genyi (2010) describes political participation as the ability of an individual citizen to initiate and participate in legislative policies and laws that are germane to national development.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Liberalism theory to discuss the issues of women involvement in politics so as to ensure an immense understanding of these affairs.

Liberalism Theory

The foundation of Liberalism is centered on the ideas of liberty and equality. This theory was propounded by John Locke (Locke, 1967). Individuals, who adopt this theory, focus on a vast range of opinions which support ideas like freedom of expression of speech, the media, religion, human and civil rights, free markets, democracy, international cooperation, gender equality and secularism in government (Crenshaw, 2017). The liberal view on gender equality is that which propagates equal access to opportunities and resources irrespective of gender. In addition, decision-making revolving around economical participation; appreciating the differences in behaviours and aspirations not minding the gender. Equality on gender has the concept that every human being can develop their distinct abilities, make choices without possible limitations from rigid gender roles, existing stereotypes or perceived prejudices. This denotes those various aspirations, behaviour and needs of men and women must be observed, assessed and treated in equal measures (Green, 2017).

Therefore, discussions around political interest should be of major concern to everyone not minding the gender and not an exclusive role of men. Women have experienced exclusion from the political system right from the past and this marginalization contradicted the stance of the Liberals which accommodated everybody on board to enforce order and societal development (Green, 2017).

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study utilized the survey research design in the collection of data from a sample of individuals, following their responses to outlined questions (Check & Schutt, 2012). This pattern of data collection design

gives room to explore various methods for recruiting participants, collecting data and utilizing various methods of instrumentation.

Method of Data Collection

This research assessed both primary and secondary sources for the collection of data. Under the primary source, a well-structured questionnaire was issued to the participants. Under the secondary source, the research obtained information mostly from published materials, journals, articles, encyclopedia, newspapers, speeches of political actors, seminar paper presentations, magazines, textbooks and other relevant literature to the study.

Area of Study

The study covers Yola North in Adamawa state, North-East Nigeria. The area comprises important towns like Jimeta, the heart and capital city of Adamawa state; with 266,800 populations (Joshua and Glanda, 2016) and a land area of 3,965/km². The city is also surrounded by rapidly developing towns growing in size and innovations. There is presence of high-density buildings which have not previously been developed according to designated urban plans; thus, creating clusters of buildings with varying sizes and shapes. Vast agricultural fields map around the city, outlining the primary preoccupation of the people. The land topography is somewhat flat in the eastern and some northern parts. The local government area is located within: Latitude 9° 6′ N, Longitude 12° 27′ (Babalola, Musa, Adegboyega, Abubakar & Ezeomedo, 2014).

Relative Population

The population for this study comprises all the citizens of Adamawa state. The National Bureau of statistics reports that the population of Adamawa residents and indigenes is estimated at about four million, two hundred and forty-eight thousand, four hundred (4,248,400): including male and female (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Sample Size

The sample size of the work is represented by Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State with a population approximated at 266,800. In this study, we used probability sampling where the sample was derived using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967).

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = sample size
N = population size
e = level of precision which is constant at 0.05

Data Analysis

The research utilized both the use of quantitative (statistical techniques) and qualitative methods of data analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to test and verify the research hypothesis. To collect primary data, 400 questionnaires were distributed to the citizens of Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Data Presentation

Table 1. Factors affecting women political involvement in Yola North, Nigeria

S/No.	Statement	Number of	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Percentage (%)

		respon dents					
1	Women are supposed to hold political offices	400	212 (53.0%)	108 (27.0%)	15 (3.8%)	65 (16.3%)	100
2	Lack of finance is the reason why women do not contest for political offices	400	225 (56.3%)	91 (22.8%)	25 (6.3%)	59 (14.8%)	100
3	Cultural reasons like religious restrictions and taboos are the reason why women are not active in politics	400	141 (35.3%)	56 (14.0%)	36 (9.0%)	167 (41.8%)	100
4	Lack of self-confidence is the reason why women do not participate in politics	400	152 (38.0%)	140 (35.0%)	39 (9.8%)	69 (17.3%)	100
5	Lack of education is what hinders women from political participations	400	97 (24.3%)	55 (13.3%)	83 (20.8%)	165 (41.3%)	100
6	Violet nature of politics in Nigeria is responsible for poor women performance in politics	400	235 (58.8%)	45 (11.3%)	39 (9.8%)	81 (20.3%)	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the result of the respondents on factors militating against women participating in politics. Over 53.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that women are supposed to hold public offices; 27.0% of the respondents agreed, 3.8% of the respondents disagreed and 16.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. On inadequate finance as a constraining factor, 56.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, 22.8% agreed, 6.3% disagreed and 14.8% strongly disagreed that lack of finance is the reason why women do not contest for elections. On statement 3, 35.3% of the respondents strongly agreed, 14.0% agreed, 9.0% disagreed and 41.8% strongly disagreed that cultural reasons like religious restrictions and taboos are reasons why women are not active in politics. Self-confidence when found lacking, can lead to disinterest in politics for women especially in most cases where they compete against their male counterparts. 38.0% strongly agreed to this, 35.0% agreed, 9.8% disagreed and 17.3% strongly disagreed that lack of self-confidence is the reason why women do not participate in politics. On statement 5, 24.3% strongly agreed, 13.8% agreed, 20.8% disagreed that lack of education is what hinders women from political participation. Statement 6 results show that 58.8% strongly agreed, 11.3% agreed, 9.8% disagreed and 20.3% strongly disagreed that violent nature of politics in Nigeria is responsible for poor women performance in politic.

Table 2. Women Participation in Politics in Yola North, Nigeria

S/N	Statement	Number of respondents	Yes	No	Percentage (%)
1	Over the years have women participation in politics increased in Yola North	400	263 (65.8%)	137 (34.3%)	100
2	Do you know of any woman in elected position in Yola North?	400	299 (74.8%)	101 (25.3%)	100
3	Are there women activist or pressure groups in Yola North?	400	270 (67.5%)	130 (32.5%)	100

4	Are you seeing an increasing desire among women to be active in politics in Yola North?	400	193 (48.3%)	207 (51.8%)	100	
5	Do you have a voter's card?	400	292 (73.0%)	108 (27.0%)	100	
6	How would you rate comments on women political candidates by men in Yola North?	400	Positive	Negative	Others	Percentage (%)
			186 (46.5%)	205 (51.3%)	9 (2.3%)	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 illustrates the frequency and percentage of the participants on women inclusion in politics in Yola North LGA of Adamawa State. The first statement shows that 65.8% affirmed to its validity while 34.3% responded in the negative about women participation in politics. From statement 2, 74.8% agreed that they knew a woman who has been elected into public office in Yola North while 25.3% admitted not knowing any woman in elected positions in Yola North. On the presence of women activist groups in Yola North, 67.5% said yes to knowing any of such groups and 32.5% said there were no women activist or pressure groups in Yola North LGA. On the fourth statement, 48.3% said yes and 51.8% said no that there was no increasing desire among women to be active in politics in Yola North LGA. Statement 5, 73.0% said yes and 27.0% said no, they do not have voter's cards. On the sixth statement, 46.5% rated positive, 51.3% rated negative and 2.3% rated others on women political candidates by men in Yola North.

Table 3. Ways of Encouraging Women in Active Political Participation in Yola North, Nigeria

S/N	Statements	Number of respondents	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Percentage (%)
1	Making public offices gender specific would bring about women participation in politics	400	203 (50.8%)	131 (32.8%)	47 (11.8%)	19 (4.8%)	100
2	Subsidizing the cost of financing campaigns would promotes women participation in politics	400	159 (39.8%)	113 (28.3%)	53 (13.3%)	75 (18.8%)	100
3	Making election less violence would encourage women participation in politics	400	172 (43.0%)	186 (46.5%)	27 (6.8%)	15 (3.8%)	100
4	Educating the girl-child with the right information would endure future women participation in politics	400	204 (51.0%)	125 (31.3%)	45 (11.3%)	26 (6.5%)	100
5	Socio-cultural paradigm shift would encourage women participation in politics	400	141 (35.3%)	135 (33.5%)	68 (17.0%)	56 (14.0%)	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 illustrates the frequency and percentage of the respondents on ways to encourage active participation of women in politics in Yola North LGA of Adamawa State. The first statement shows that 50.8% strongly agreed, 32.8% agreed, 11.8% disagreed while 4.8% strongly disagreed that making public offices gender specific would bring about women participation in politics. On statement 2, 39.8% strongly agreed, 28.3%

agreed, 13.3% disagreed and 18.8% strongly disagreed that subsidizing the cost of financing campaigns would promote women participation in politics. Pertaining violence in elections, 43.0% strongly agreed and 46.5% agreed that making the process less violent would encourage women participation in politics, 6.8% disagreed while 3.8% strongly disagreed. On statement 4, 51.0% strongly agreed, 31.3% agreed, 11.3 disagreed and 6.5% strongly disagreed that educating the girl-child with the right information would ensure future women participation in politics. On the fifth statement, 35.3% strongly agreed to it, 33.8% agreed, 17.0% disagreed and 14.0% strongly disagreed that socio-cultural paradigm shift would encourage women participation in politics.

Research Findings

Factors discouraging women from political involvements in Yola North

i. Inadequate Funding:

The findings of this study indicate that 80% of our participants, including men and women supported women to hold political offices. Our research study revealed that the most prevalent factor militating women's active participation and representation in politics is inadequate funding. This may be due to the high expenditure associated with active political participation in Nigeria and probably due to some cultural reasons that hinder women from pursuing their careers, thus, leading to poor motivation to solicit and raise funds.

ii. Violent Nature of Political Processes:

Another contributing factor as indicated by our respondents is the violent nature of political processes, ranging from intra party affairs to the election proper. There exists a fear of male dominance as a result of male involvements in thuggery and physical oppressions and intimidations.

iii. Cultural/Religious Restrictions:

Others militating factors to women active participation in politics based on our findings are cultural reasons like religious restrictions and purported taboos, lack of empowerment and inadequate education. All these inhibiting factors were found in this research to be responsible for poor women political participation in Yola North LGA, Adamawa State.

Women participation in Politics in Yola North, Nigeria

Our findings showed that there has been a tremendous improvement in the past years towards peace-building in order to encourage women political participation in Yola North LGA. There are women in elected positions in the study area, also increased number of women activists in pressure groups whose activities have helped women participation in politics. Furthermore, our findings revealed poor desire among women to be active in politics in Yola North, although about 73% of the respondents already have their voter's Permanent Voters Card, (PVC). The data also rated comments on women political candidacy by men to be poor, which raises issues for discussion.

Ways to Encourage Active Political Participation among Women in Yola North, Nigeria

There is a pressing need for peace-building in order to conduct less violent elections, which is one of the major factors that discourages women from getting involved in the helm of political affairs. Our study also revealed that making public offices gender specific and educating the girl-child with the right information would highly encourage women participation in politics. Other measures that can encourage active participation of women in politics include but not limited to; subsidizing the cost of nomination forms, financing campaigns and socio-cultural paradigm shift.

Discussion

The violent nature of politics, inadequate funding, cultural and religious discrimination, poor education and low self-confidence are some of the constraints to active participation of women in political affairs in Yola North in particular and Nigeria in general. The result of our report aligns with the findings by Ahmed, Singh and Mukhtar (2018), where they indicate the major challenges encountered by women during political participation in Bauchi State, these challenges identified by Ahmed et al (2018) includes; exclusion, inadequate education and sensitization, social and cultural influence including the impact of religion. In 2022, Tama and Maiwuya (2022), also discovered that certain Nigerians uphold religious and cultural beliefs as superior to the country's constitution which led to the discouragement of women and creating of a low-level representation of women in government, relative to men. The findings of Tama and Maiwuya (2022) also support our results. The works of other researchers whose findings are in agreement with ours include; Yahaya & Umar (2008), Epelle & Oriakhi (2003), Uhunmwuangbo (2011), Samuel & Segun (2012), and as well as Makama (2013). These researchers maintained that these factors could impede the constitutional rights of women as it concerns exercising their franchise, particularly in respect to voluntary involvement in true democracy.

Without cognizance of the efforts of women right advocates in Nigeria, human right violations remain prevalent with women rights recorded more commonly violated that in men. One of these human right violations is the early marriage of girls. This act has a debilitating impact on the political participation of women. The findings thus revealed that, also dealt with political violence, thuggery, rigging and high level of intimidation shows that it contributes to low level of women participation in politics which agreed with the report of Luke (2011). Oguadimma *et al.* (2021) had a similar finding with ours where they confirmed inadequate or lack of funding, lack of self-confidence and inadequate education as essential factors hindering women from contributing their quota to the societal development.

Judging from the perspectives of our study, it was discovered that over the years, there has been an increased participation as evidenced by the 65.8% of the respondents who agreed to this fact, and about 74.8% know of a female politician in an elected office in Yola North of Adamawa State. This is in agreement with report by Leadership (2011) about Hon. Aisha Dahiru Ahmed being the first female to be elected as member representing Yola North/Yola South/Girei Federal Constituency under PDP platform in the 7th Assembly.

As a review of current trends, Hon Aisha Binani is currently the first elected senator of Adamawa Central Senatorial seat (Yola North/Yola South/Girei/Furfore/Song/Gombi/Hong LGAs) in 2019 general elections under the platform of All Progressive Congress as reported by Premium Times (2019). Currently for the first time, a woman from Yola North LGA is a gubernatorial candidate of Adamawa State under the APC platform as reported by Daily Trust (2022). In 2020, Hessami and Lopes da Fonseca, discovered that sharing of women in political offices has increased considerably recently in almost every country in the world. Hessami and Lopes da Fonseca went further to report higher female representation in politics has improved institutional quality by reducing corruption and rent-extraction by those in power.

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that making public offices gender specific, subsidizing the cost of financing campaigns, making election less violence, women empowerment, educating the girl-child with the right information and socio-cultural paradigm shift. This finding is similar to the report of Brook and Halfari, (2015), where they encouraged active participation of women politics. Brook and Halfari went ahead to emphasized on the need for total empowerment of women on every stratum; socially, politically, economically and psychologically in order to afford them the chance to develop individual talent and adequately contribute more meaningfully to societal development.

Our findings on how to encourage women political participation is in accordance with the work of Tama and Maiwuya (2022), where they suggested that there is a need for the sensitization of women on their potentials. Then study the nation's constitution thoroughly especially regarding gender equality and avoid

intimidation by men on political participation. In 2008, Adu, mentioned Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics (FONWIP) as an example of organizations, whose major objectives include promoting women education and eradicating every form of violence and discrimination against women. He went further to reveal how the aims of FONWIP support the voices of women in times of crucial decision making, both in public and private sectors. This agrees with our findings where 89.5% of the respondents agreed that making elections less violent will likely encourage women participation in politics. Furthermore, Nwabunkeonye (2014) recommended that every society should capitalize on measures that encourage the female gender to contest political positions. Some practices were pointed out as areas of deliberation and they include: reexamination of differential practices which do not favour women; greater emphasis on economic empowerment, promoting the needs to financially support women from family level up to communal levels, proper use of the media, sane political spaces and equal representation in government, among others.

Eme, Onyishi and Nwaoha (2014) proposed a triad strategy for women empowerment; a friendly legal framework; positive role modeling for gender image; and lastly, advancement of women agenda and support of party activities. Wader, Dahiru and Imam (2015) suggested that it is essential to strengthen the capability of women in the political and social spaces by supporting them with funds and also meeting their moral needs, so as to drastically reduce and eliminate the exclusion of women from political affairs in our society. These findings tally with our findings which presents up to 68.1% of our respondents agreeing that subsidy of financial campaign costs would promote women political participation.

Conclusion

From every indication, the massive resistance faced by women in political spaces is mostly fueled by cultural and religious sentiments. The 1999 transition from a military regime to a democratic government has greatly improved the stake of women in politics more than any time post-independence. Even though there is still high marginalization of women across various economic sectors, there are rapid improvements which continually change from year to year. This is quite glaring, especially when one compares the proportion of men to women in the political space.

With due considerations, these are challenges identified in this study; lack or inadequate finance, socio-cultural discrimination, violence, low self-esteem and poor educational background among others. Irrespective of these challenges, women have made considerable in-road into the political landscape of the country since 1999. In this present time, we have observed the massive efforts channeled towards women activism and the springing up of advocacy groups, the increasing number of educated women, the very positive disposition of successive government towards the empowerment of women while stimulating their interests in the affairs of political contests which has altogether positioned women as key players in the bright prospects of a democratic Nigeria.

These are the recommendations based on the findings in this study: there should be a cause for continuous revision of legislations and tilting them to the favour of women, and protecting them from abuse, disposes them to financial empowerment and allocation of meaningful quotas to them. In all of these, women leadership organizations, government representatives and other relevant stake holders should continue to prioritize fair and equitable avenues for women to hold political positions by strengthening of affirmative actions that support this cause. In conclusion, everyone must understand that politics need not be reserved for a particular gender, but rather the creation of an enabling environment that is safe for both men and women to compete on equal grounds. When this is achieved, we create a society that gives proper representation to all, and not one that places individuals at a disadvantage by virtue of birth or naturalization in a particular culture, gender or tribe, since we have very little control over them.

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