

POLITICS, EDUCATION, AND FEMINISM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The popular view that the best place for women is in the "Kitchen" stems from the fact that womanhood in Nigeria is seen as nothing more than an infidel and a second-class citizen. Women have been grossly misrepresented as a result of this trend, from the level of the home to the larger society. The patriarchal aspect of Nigerian society is a key characteristic of a traditional society. Men can rule women because of the formation of a set of social connections with a material foundation. The average Nigerian woman is therefore discriminated against, mistreated, and kept permanently as domestic help; she is also viewed as a misfit in society and a potential target for prostitution, forced marriage, street hawking, and other forms of trafficking. Therefore, the supposed irrelevance of women's place in society has just made the average woman into a lesser good. This study aims to investigate into the politics, education and feminism. This study shows that the major militating factors against women participation in politics include; lack of democratic culture among Nigerian populace, and the general mind-set about the nature and ability of women. This paper therefore, proffered strategies for addressing the issue of empowering women politically via education.

Keywords: Politics, Education, Feminism

INTRODUCTION

Women constitute about half of the population of the Nigerian State and are known to play vital roles as mothers, producers, managers, community developers/organizers etc. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Yet their participation in formal and informal structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use of societal resources generated by both men and women are made, remains insignificant. The Nigerian society has been patriarchal in nature which is a major feature of a traditional society (Makama, 2013).

The patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structurally unequal position in families and markets by condoning gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and legal adulthood, by tacitly condoning domestic and sexual violence and sanctioning differential wages for equal or comparable work. Tradition or culture and religion have dictated men and women relationship for centuries and entrenched male domination into the structure of social organization and institution at all levels of leadership. Patriarchy justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and inheritance (Salaam, 2013).

It is a well-known fact that women participation in Nigerian politics has been peripheral and trivial. This situation has impacted negatively on Nigerian march to development. In Okoh's (2002) view, "men have always dominated the Nigerian political science. The attempt by women to penetrate this male domain has yielded minimum success as a result of the unwritten laws which favour men over women as leaders (Odionye & Ofoego, 2016).

Morrison, (2012) has however cautioned at the disadvantages of discrimination is practiced" In order words, he is stressing the fact that any society; Nigeria inclusive where colour, race or sex deny a section of the population to opportunity to share in the benefits provided by the state, or where a segment of the society is able to arrogate to itself the privileges of grater socio-economic and political opportunities in such a society, economic and social progress will be at best painfully slow. In modern times too, the analysis of the concept of development as Furtado, (2017) pointed out presupposes that societies are more developed to the extent that there is greater participation in decision making process and no one group completely dominates another. From the above views expressed by Okoh, Morrison and Furtado, to really articulate and get to the root of women marginalization in Nigerian politics and look for a way forward, it is pertinent to x-ray their involvement in politics in the three main periods in Nigerian history. These include the pre-colonial era, the colonial and the contemporary Nigeria politics (Odionye & Ofoego, 2016).

This position of women in society in relation to men and the subordination, oppression and marginalization of women has attracted the attention of scholars, activists, feminists and development workers for a very long time. The issues relating to what is also known as gender inequality has become very prominent in the last few decades. The paper examines patriarchy and gender inequality; dimensions of gender inequality and discrimination that excludes women from governance and politics which is detrimental to national cohesion, progress and development and attempts to address these issues and the rights of women in Nigerian society in the 21st century and beyond.

The concept of Equality

The issue of inequality between men and women in politics was long enunciated by Locke, the British political philosopher. Mangena (2010) quotes Locke to have stated that "only the male person is capable of establishing managing and controlling democracy, because it rests on rationality a quality which female lacks" Locke's theory on women has effects even in modern times and has further led to the marginalization of women in politics. However Mill, (2012) another political philosopher in a contrary view states that "if the principle of democracy true, we ought to act as if to ordain that to be born a girl instead of a boy any more that to be born black instead of a nobleman shall decide the persons position throughout life" Mills' argument indeed demonstrates the potential quality of women with men in politics. The assumed superiority of male sex over the female sex has further been debunked by Ango, (2012) as he noted that after studies by endocrinologists, it is now proven that male intelligent quotients is not higher than females. Thus Nigerian women like their male counterparts have the natural capacity and potential to participate equally in politics. In addition, in modern times women leaders worldwide like Margaret Thatcher, Britain, Angela Merkel, Germany, Elle Johnson Sir leaf, Liberia have consistently proved that they are capable of controlling democracies. In a related manner Article 1 of the universal Declaration of Human Rights state that "all human being are born and free and equal in dignity and right. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Article 7 also states that all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of law. If the above assertion is accepted by all nation, Nigeria, inclusive, why then are Nigerian women discriminated against when it comes to politics?

Politics

The nature of politics is an important factor for the inclusion or exclusion of women in politics. Vicky Randall defines politics as an "articulation, or working out of relationships within an already given power structure", which is in contrast with the traditional view of politics that defines it as an activity, a conscious, deliberate participation in the process by which resources are allocated among citizens. This conception of politics restricts political activity only in public arena and the private sphere of family life is rendered as apolitical. This public-private dichotomy in traditional definition of politics is used to exclude women from public political sphere and even when women are brought into politics they are entered as mothers and wives.

Male domination of politics, political parties and culture of formal political structures is another factor that hinders women's political participation. Often male dominated political parties have a male perspective on issues of national importance that disillusions women as their perspective is often ignored and not reflected in the politics of their parties. Also, women are usually not elected at the position of power within party structures because of gender biases of male leadership. The society frowns at women keeping late at night, most political meetings and gathering usually run into the mid-nights, especially when one is actively involved and wants to vie for a political post. As a mother, with children and husband at home, it is usually not easy.

It important to also mention that most successful women in politics are those with supportive husbands, those who have become husbands, those without husbands, and those who are through with childbearing, those who have mingled with the military, daughters of past politicians/leaders. Specific names were mentioned, including: Dora Akunyili (supportive husband) Iyabo Obasanjo (divorcee and daughter of the past president), Condoleezza Rice, (single lady), Sara Jubril (widowed), Hillary Clinton (wife of former president). These names were mentioned by the majority of the respondents sampled. It goes a long a way in showing that women are actually in the known about the trend of women participation in politics irrespective of the odds against them.

Politics in Nigeria has been described as a terrain meant for the hardened (Akinola, 2009), and where candidates cannot fund elections themselves without recourse to godfatherism (Soyinka, 2004). Godfatherism involves a patron-client or servant-master relationship which cannot be free of violence, especially in the area of controversies where a candidate fails to comply with earlier agreed negotiations and contracts. Politics of godfatherism hardly favors women. No women can stand the resultant consequence of not yielding to the godfathers' demands, as we have seen in Oyo and Anambra states.

Electioneering in Nigeria has been characterized by violence, electoral irregularities and various criminal activities. However, the continuous campaign for women to be actively involved in the democratic process has yielded little compare to the increasing number of women heading key positions in other domain. The larger democratic framework and level of democratization also impact women's political participation. Secular democracies in Europe and also in some of the developing countries have created relatively more space for women's participation in politics as compared to countries where religious orthodoxy has been shaping politics and democracy. Adherence to discriminatory gender ascriptions persisted after the end of colonial rule in Nigeria. Ake (1996) claims that the surrogate post-independence political elite deliberately weakened women organizations hitherto involved in active agitation for liberation by enhancing the militarization of the polity, and increasing

the statist of the economy. As observed by Mama (1997), gender blindness has meant that until recently the differential impact of colonialism on African men and women has not been taken into consideration.

Education

Education as a concept has a wide meaning and application. Any broad definition of education however should take into account the formal education. In its broad sense, it not only enables a person to develop his intellect and acquire skills, but also his morals. These qualities are necessary for combating problems of life and to fit the individual into the company of his fellow human beings. A related but radical view on education which is also relevant to this paper is expressed by Harrison and Mayer (2017) when they contended that; "Education is the key that unlocks the door to modernization. Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. Rather it means teaching them to act, to think and to behave as they were not accustomed to act, think or behave before (Odionye & Ofoego, 2016).

In other words, education teaches new ways of thinking, seeing and doing things in an ever- changing modern society. In specific term, education as we intend to argue in this paper would in addition to improving the intellect and providing skills change existing attitudes, modify the behavior of the individuals for adequate adjustment in the society. It will in essence re-orientate gender norms and stereotypes in Nigeria for effective women participation in politics. Education is a key factor in building women's capacity in politics. With good formal education women would be empowered economically in terms of good jobs and income and this in turn would help them compete favorably with their male counterparts in politics. Because there appears to be a link between one's economic power and his/her political power. Apart from formal education women also need functional education that would help to develop whatever skills they are working with presently. In essence there is the need for them to acquire scientific and technological knowledge that would enhance their output present field of endeavor to boost their economic status (Odionye & Ofoego, 2016).

There should be re-education and re-orientation of our men on the issues of patriarchal culture and stereotyping of sex role in the country. Patriarchy as a system recognizes the superiority of men over women. It has resulted in giving male preference over women in social and political sphere. It has equally led to the unacceptability of women by men as leaders. However, our analysis of the concept of persons, equality of human beings and justice have proved that the discrimination against women based on patriarchal system amounts to injustice and a breach on their fundamental human rights. What is needed now is re-educating and re-orienting our men on the issues through our educational system and the mass media as gender stereotyping is learned and can change over time. Our men should be sensitized towards our indigenous cultural values concerning the status of women. Nigerian world view is rooted in philosophy of holistic harmony and communalism. This philosophy forms the African social order and the dual sex system of socio-political organization which was based on complementarity of both sexes before the colonial era. When there is this change in mind set, Nigerian women will take their rightful position in Nigerian politics (Odionye & Ofoego, 2016).

Feminism

The radical feminists argue that women's subordination is not rooted in relations of production but in specific relations of reproduction and sexuality. They contend that housework can be looked at as reproducing and not producing labour power. Firestone, a radical feminist argued that "unlike economic class, sex-class sprang directly from biological reality: men and women were created different, not equal' (Firestone, 2012), The position of the radical feminists have been criticized for putting too much emphasis on reproduction and sexuality. It gives the impression that women are subordinated mainly because of their role of giving birth to children. But we do know that the subordination of women goes beyond reproduction. Some scholars have pointed out that it is curious that feminists should 'succumb to such blatant biological determinism' (Jackson, 2009).

The postmodernists contend that women subordination results from the cultural construction of who a man or woman is. They argue that the use of word and language affect our psyche on the definition of men and women. They point to the effectiveness of the capacity of language to shape our thoughts and desires. Postmodernist conceptions of why women are oppressed has been criticized for neglecting the social context of power relations and failing to recognize the systematic oppressions of gender, class and race (Walby, 2012).

Factors that Dilapidate Women's Efforts at Participating Actively in Nigerian Politics

A number of factors have been identified by Ogundipe (2005), Osokoya (2008) and ICEHD (2010) as militating against women quest for political participation in Nigeria. They include the following;

1. Patriarchal culture and stereotyping of sex roles which has permeated the government, religions and the society subordinates women. The prolonged military rule in Nigeria which alienated women and distributed political position along patriarchal lines stereotyping of sex roles in the family and public life, which has led to the unacceptability of women for leadership roles by men
2. Lack of formal education which has led to high prevalence of poverty among the women folk. This is mainly due to their unequal access to formal education with their male counterpart. Another is unfavourable inheritance customs and lack of access to credit facilities.
3. Lack of political awareness and solidarity among the rural women as most women organisations and NGOs do not actually reach this all-important grass root political structure.
4. Women's lack of confidence and poor self-esteem which results from years of internationalization of debilitating social norms.
5. Lack of effective and comprehensive national programme to ensure gender equality in Nigeria.
6. Political violence and intimidation which scare the women folk

Politics, education and feminism.

Lack of political awareness and solidarity among the women folk has been identified as one of the banes to their political emancipation. It has been suggested by ICEHD, (2010) that women should strive and understand themselves and present a formidable united force. Women organizations and various NGOs should enlighten and sensitize especially the rural women about what women would gain if they politically conscious and active. Nigerian

Women should capitalize on their numerical strength, empower themselves politically and avoid the "pull her down syndrome." For women to succeed politically they need to harness the cultural institutions that empowered women in the pre- colonial period. This could be done through group networking. They should mobilize themselves and carry one another along (Odionye & Ofoego, 2016).

Decades of internalization of debilitating cultural norms has led to women's lack of participation in politics. Women have thus come to accept their subjugated position as the norm and it has sapped their energy to achieve even in politics. This situation stresses the need to re-educate them on this negative mind sets. They should be enlightened the more on their human rights. Women should be motivated by the great heights attained by the few women who have served and who are serving currently in Nigerian government these women have proved their mettle in politics.

Lack of education has been a strong visible barrier to female participation in the formal sector. The social pressures on females such as early marriages, and other extraneous factors as well as consideration of female education as secondary to that of boys and certain inhibitive religious practices in some parts of Nigeria are the major causes of the high illiteracy rate amongst women. The various Nigerian constitutions guaranteed the rights of women to participate in active politics; however, the last decade has witnessed a relative increase in women's participation. This is only when we measure increase in participation with certain standards like the number of women who vote in elections; the number of public offices held by women; number of women related policies implemented by government etc. Over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in women's participation in politics in Nigeria considering these standards, yet there is inherently a pronounced level of under representation of women in politics when compared with their male counterparts (Nkechi, 2019).

Women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the following grounds; 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. The 1999 Nigerian constitution by virtue of Section 40 states the following: Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests: Provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this Constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition.

Section 42(1) of the same constitution states further that: A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination. This further confirms that you can go to court to seek redress if as a woman your franchise is violated and that the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Section 77 of the Constitution also states: (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every Senatorial district or Federal constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Chapter shall return a member who shall be directly elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives in such manner as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly. (2) Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years

residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to a legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election.

From the foregoing, it appears that there is nothing in the constitution, which excludes the participation of women in politics in Nigeria. Yet when it comes to actual practice, there is extensive discrimination. Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections held in the country. Men dominate most public offices till date. Female gubernatorial candidates have emerged but none has ever won and same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women yet they remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts. Following two decades of military rule statistics reveal that women only secured 3% representation in contested positions in 1999, 4% in 2003, while in 2007 they made with only 6%. Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in past four general elections held in the country between 1999 and 2011. The result of the survey shows that no woman was elected as governor of any state in the federation. We only had few women as members of Houses of Assembly across the country and as members of the upper house (Senate) and lower house (House of Representative) of the National Assembly.

There is a National Gender Policy that commits to ensuring Affirmative Action for women, however, women's representation remains below the 35% target. Suffice to mention that, the manifestos and constitutions of political parties in Nigeria rarely mention Affirmative Action for women, and when they do, their commitments are lower than the bench mark set by regional and International conventions. Women Participation in Nigerian politics is an issue of great importance. Women have been put at the background politically for years; this has engendered a consciousness of women under-representation in public life. In order to improve the socio-political status of women in Nigeria, numerous women Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's), have sprung up. They have embarked on campaigns to encourage women's participation in politics, although in reality, this campaign has not gone beyond the conference halls of hotels and pages of newspapers, that is it has not actually reached the grassroots. One of the strategies is to soften the ground for the female contestants by agitating for some concession. This is called affirmative action. It is aimed at increasing women representation in political offices. The recent election of Park as South Korean president is worthy of mention (CCTV News, 2013) The women advocates agree upon thirty percent affirmative action as the demand. This is to ensure that women constitute a critical minority of thirty 30 percent in all political posts

The relationship between education and politics was long been conceived by Plato in his Republics when he noted that education is the one great thing by means of which the ruler can shape human nature in the right direction to produce a harmonious state (Odionye & Ofoego, 2016).

Addressing Gender Inequality and Oppression Women Empowerment Programmes

Sand Brook and Halfari defined women empowerment as a multidimensional process involving the transformation of the economical, political, social, psychological and legal circumstances of the powerless with its aim of dismantling the cultural, traditional and social norms, which disvalue, disempower and dispossess women with its central objectives tied to the needs of women to opportunities, facilities, skill acquisition and position authority, especially within the political sphere. This recent development accords women the

opportunity to develop their individual talent and contribute more meaningfully to societal development, helping subvert cultural as well as the societal norms which have been of disadvantage to the women folk.

Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics (FONWIP) is an example, whose central objective is to promote women empowerment and eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination against women. It supports women in decision making in both public and private sector. The group organizes seminars on empowerment and inequality among other things. It is influential in its agenda; it requested that government should yield to 30% female representation in government appointments; made several attempts to increase official awareness on gender issues in public policies and conduct of workshops for women who aspire to run for public offices.

1. Quotas and Proportional Representation: These are generally seen as a positive action of laws allocating quotas for women to assist in the promotion for gender balance in public life. Quotas are considered as a legitimate means of securing this end. In many countries the exclusion of women in politics is as a result of many reasons financial, cultural, traditional and political. Asserting this fact and the reasons that have made it so implies that quotas should not be seen as discrimination towards men and cannot be branded unconstitutional as most quotas are formulated under neutral basis. The Law (Nigerian) provides for a maximum of 60% and a minimum of 30% representation for either sex, which was implemented as a result of the Beijing Conference. The Conference agreed that 30% of public seat and positions should be reserved for women. Nigeria records an increase of 78% progress in women's election into public offices spanning from 1999-2007. This technique contributes to no small measure in improving female intention to participate in Nigerian politics despite the prevailing political structure and societal norms, as "a woman's experience is needed and necessary in political life and policy making in order to represent the entire society" (Phillips, 2015). "Quotas do not discriminate but compensate women for actual barriers that prevent women from pursuing a political carrier" (Kira, 2013).

2. The Affirmative Action: It is interesting to note that the principle and practice of the Affirmative Action is a universal phenomenon. Several countries of the world have history, one way or the other, showing that the rights of women and the vulnerable are to be respected and sustained. It is therefore of crucial importance for Nigeria to take a cue from best international practices in order to allow a pride of place for women. This will enhance democracy and democratic survival in Nigeria in the current dispensation and beyond.

3. Support Network and Prospective Role Models: Through the identification of aspirants and pairing them with established women politicians, playing mentoring a role and providing capacity building training to young or aspiring female politicians.

4. Building a Coalition of NGOs and Grassroots women associations that coordinates the support and advocacy for women aspirants.

5. Awareness of their political and legal rights and to claim them

6. An enabling environment that allows for women to engage in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way free from political harassments and violence.

7. Establishment of legal funds to enable women politicians challenge electoral malpractices.

8. Identifying and engaging relevant stake holders such as Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties in introducing quota

CONCLUSIONS

The rights of women and female folks in the socio-political space of Nigeria on her democratic agenda has been a matter of public debate and, hence attracts serious concerns by individuals, academic, public analysts and the wider international community as a whole. The plight of Nigerian women, like their counterparts in other parts of developed countries, have been characterized by lack of adequate representation, Lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general; undue dominance of men in the socio-political

scheme of things; Poverty or lack of money or resources; lopsided political appointments and the general imbalances associated with very unjust treatment of the female citizens in its entirety. There is no doubt that this trend negates the collective interests of human fundamental rights and the rights of equality, freedom and personal dignity of women in society. This attitude also falls short of all necessary dictates of the principles of the much-cherished Affirmative Action and the Beijing Conventions on the inalienable rights of women. This tradition also poses very serious threats on Nigeria's path to democratic consolidation and sustainable development in this country. Therefore, in order to address the women question and transform gender relations, there is the need to challenge patriarchy in all its manifestations in domestic production, paid employment, culture and religion, sexuality, male violence and the State; and specifically promote women's rights. On a final note, this paper suggests that any programme introduced should be carefully conceptualized in an innovative, creative and radical manner aimed at eliminating all forms of patriarchy, then we will be on the right path to overcoming the subordination and oppression of women and bringing about human centred development.

In conclusion, it has been identified in this paper that education and re-orientation of our negative mind sets about women are very necessary for women's effective participation in Nigerian Politics. We must use education to cultivate in the mind of the citizenry the democratic principles and culture for the country to move forward politically. There is need for more solidarity and political awareness among women to enable them use their formidable number to overturn the status quo. Further subjugation and discrimination against women in Nigeria is unethical as both men and women are human persons and subjects of equal human rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Women Political Empowerment Offices (WPEO's) which is an arm of Federal Ministry of Women Affairs should intensify its efforts at women capacity-building to empower women in leadership skills to participate in leadership
2. Women organizations to form formidable networking to co-ordinate the efforts of both the rural and urban women towards political participation.
3. There should be a national campaign by the Federal Ministry of Education and National Orientation Agency to change societal attitudes in favour of women participation in politics.
4. More efforts should be made by both the Federal and State governments to ensure increase in women's literacy level, promote their Skills acquisition and other vocational training to empower women financially.
5. The government to promulgate laws and policies for women greater participation in politics.

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