AN ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN WOMEN’S SCORE CARD IN 2015 POLLS

Eme, Okechukwu Innocent  
Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
E-mail: okechukwunnct@gmail.com and okechukwu.eme@unn.edu.ng

Richard Amaechi Onuigbo  
Department of Political Science, Enugu State University  
Email: ifeifeonuigbo@yahoo.com

Abstract
The objective of this paper is to critically review the recently concluded 2015 general elections in the country and to assess how women who contested in elective positions fared. This is because Women participation in politics in Nigeria is a thing of concern to development experts and gender activists who have continuously advocate their active participation to help address their continuous low record of representation. The result of the just concluded 2015 elections in the country has however, not shown improved women representation in elective positions in the country. This came in spite of the 35 percent affirmative action and the huge campaign of the Women for Change Initiatives aimed at providing a soft landing for women in the elections. It surveys in retrospect activities of women in the pre and post-2015 politics in Nigeria using questionnaire and interviews to source information. The results suggest that women do not often receive the support and mentoring they need to compete with their male counterparts in politics. The study concludes by positing that voters do not fully appreciate the benefits of having a mix of men and Women in government, often saying that women are over-ambitious when they aim for any position higher than a seat in the Senate. It also offers recommendations towards solving the identified traditional and social factors that inhibit women from political office.

Keywords: Female Representation, Gender Parity/Disparity & 35% Affirmative Action, 2015 General Elections, Political Fortunes.

Introduction
The number of women elected to public offices in Nigeria may not increase significantly after this year’s election, analyses by Sogbesan(2015), Eme et.al(2014a&b), women rights activists have shown. These scholars’ analysis show that in the 29 states where gubernatorial elections were held, the representation of women seeking the office of governor and deputy governor stood at 87 out of the 380 candidates (22.9 per cent) that ran for the positions. In the contest for Senatorial seats, 122 women out of 747 candidates, representing 16 per cent, were cleared by the Independent National Electoral Commission to run in the March 28 election.

The number was not better in the contest for the lower chamber of parliament. Two hundred and sixty seven women out of a total 1774 candidate ran for seats at the House of Representatives, representing 15 per cent (Sogbesan, 2015:2). At a Twitter conference organised by The Nigerian Women Trust Fund, and supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) and Voices4Change, Ayisha Osori, the Chief Executive Officer of the Fund, painted the picture even
more vividly. Ms. Osori was one of four panellists at the conference themed, “2014 Primaries: What the Numbers tell us,” which sought to “analyse the performance of women in the 2014 party primaries with an eye on the 2015 general elections and what this entails for women’s political participation in Nigeria”.

In her analysis, she indicated that the North Central geo-political zone had 43 and 20 women who emerged after the primaries to contest for seats in the House of Representatives and Senate respectively. The North East had the lowest number of women candidates from the geographical zones, had 16 women for the House of Representatives and eight for Senate, while the North West had 24 women for the House of Representatives and nine for the Senate. The South East, with the highest number of female candidates, had 84 for the House of Representatives and 29 for Senate. The South West had 66 women running for seats at the House of Representative and 34 for the Senate, while the South- South boasts 36 for the House of Representatives and 21 for the Senate. In her analysis by political parties, Ms. Osori said the Mega Progressive Peoples Party had the highest number of women vying for seats, with 30 women contesting for the House of Representatives and 16 for Senate. Labour Party had the least numbers; 15 for House of Representatives and seven for Senate.

While the Peoples Democratic Party had 19 women for the House of Representatives and seven for Senate, the All Progressives Congress had 26 women for the House of Representatives and seven for the Senate. In all of these, Enugu State had 34 women contesting for seats in the National Assembly, the highest of all the states. Edo, Katsina, Taraba and Kano states, on the other hand had the lowest numbers with one woman from each state. Ms. Osori summarises the concern of many gender advocates thus:

At the end of the day – if we have only an average of 15 per cent (National Assembly) contesting, then we are sure to fall below 35 per cent. Nigerian women have not had it smooth in terms of representation in top public offices. At present, in the Senate, none of the principal officers is a woman, and only eight of the 109 Senators are women (Sogbesan, 2015:2).

The recently dissolved House of Representatives had only one female principal officer. However, only 24 (7 per cent) of the 362 members are women. These figures are in contrast with the situation in countries such as Rwanda, where women make up 61 of 106 parliamentarians (58 per cent), and Senegal where women occupy 65 of the 150 parliamentary seats (43 per cent).

In Nigeria’s 36 states, there is no female governor, and the country does not appear ready to have a woman as president, although a woman is running for that office this year (Sogbesan, 2015:2). Female legislators did not have it easy in the 2015 elections. Out of the 14 candidates that contested for the seat of the president, the only woman amongst the contenders came out in the 12th position. Just as men have always dominated the National Assembly, the 2015 election result does not present a different picture in the number of women who will represent their constituencies in the next four years. So far, eight women made it to the 109-member senate as opposed to seven elected in 2011. Three of the eight women senators are of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

They are: current member of the senate, Oluremi Tinubu (Lagos Central), incumbent Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly, Monsurat Sunmonu (Oyo Central), and Binta Masi Garba (Adamawa North). The five other women who will be joining the Upper Chamber are from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). They are House of Representatives member, Uche Ekwunife (Anambra Central); former aviation minister, Stella Oduah-Ogiemwonyi (Anambra North); Rose Oko (Cross River North); House of Representatives member between 2003 and 2007, Fatimat Raji-Rasaki (Ekiti Central), and Abiodun Olujimi (Ekiti South). For the House of Representatives, some women were elected on the platform of the APC and PDP. These include Nnenna Elendu-Ukeje,
The gubernatorial elections have so far produced four women deputy governors. They are Oluranti Adebule (Lagos State), Mrs. Yetunde Onanuga (Ogun State), Ipalibo Banigo (Rivers State), and Cecilia Ezeilo (Enugu State).

All of these realities exist despite the National Gender Policy’s promise to support women to occupy 35 per cent of elective positions in Nigeria (Gabriel, 2015). This paper seeks to analyse the performance of women in the just concluded 2015 elections. To achieve this objective, following the introductory section is the contextualization of political participation. The next section discusses the performances of women in the just concluded election. The reasons for their poor performance followed closely. Recommendations and conclusion followed.

The Concept of Political Participation

The concept of political participation is one of those concepts in the Social Sciences that have been subjected to several interpretations and meanings by scholars and practitioners (Chukwuemeka and Eze, 2011). Norman and Verba (1975), have defined political participation as consisting those legal activities by private citizens, which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and the activity they undertake. This definition emphasizes conventional political participation and excluded unconventional politics such as illegal political protest, political thuggery, politically motivated terrorist attacks, hijack of ballot boxes etc. Political participation has also been conceived as activities of citizens designed to influence government decision making. This definition, in a wide sense, comprises all the activities of individual and groups, conventional or unconventional that target decision making process with a view to impacting a change.

Axford, et. al. (2002), have observed that the definition of political participation is far from being straightforward and that one problem of the various definitions is that they are more or less exclusive. They argue that the perception of political participation as a voluntary action through which people seek to influence the making of public policy, excludes those form of participation that is coerced. Thus, they defined political participation as a term that denotes the action by which individuals take part in the political process. Parry, Moyer and Day (1992), suggested that political participation consists of taking part in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies. This conception, however, did not take into account the passive form of politics such as discussing political issues with colleagues or making joke about a politician and his political activities. Wan Asna, et. al. (2011), associated political participation with some demographic factors and argues that voting in general election is the most common type of political participation. Nancy (2004); and Brewer (2003), considered citizens participation in decision that affect them as being imperative for democratic consolidation in any society. In a similar perception, Strange (1972) has contended that efficiency in public administration is strengthened and enhanced by citizens’ participation in the political process.

Krauss (1971) has also stated that in a merit system, electoral, legislative and differential political behaviour varies with hierarchical structure and length of service or income of bureaucrats, while in the patronage system, party preference is a significant predictor. Vivien, Lawrence, and Gerry (2006) hold the view that political participation is shaped by locally distinctive “rule-in-use”, notwithstanding the socio-economic or level of social capital in an area. The “rule-in-use” refers to the institutional rules that frame participation. They further stated that the level of participation is related to the openness of the political system, the practice of a “public value” orientation among local government managers, and the effectiveness of umbrella civic organization. Verba,
Schlozman and Brady (1995), conceptualised political participation as activity that has the intent or effect of influencing public action, either directly or indirectly by influencing the selection of political decision makers. Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995), Goetz (2003) and Chukwuemeka and Eze (2011), have identified political activities to include: voting; campaigning for a party or supporting party work through other means; protest activities; getting involved in organizations that take a stand in politics, and serving in a voluntary capacity on local governing board.

Scholars, however, have not reached a consensus on what constitute conventional and unconventional political participation. Conventional participation has been viewed as a relatively routine behaviour that uses the established institutions of representative government especially campaign for candidates and voting in elections. On the other hands, unconventional participation is a relatively uncommon behaviour that challenges or defies established institutions or dominant culture. Conventional political participation has been associated with activities such as voting, letter writing to policy makers, contact with representatives, working on campaign, and campaign contribution. Newton and Van Deth (2005), on the other hands, identified some unconventional participation to include: demonstrations, boycott, sit-ins, use of violence, burning draft card, bombing government buildings etc. Besides, it is our view that political activities such as falsification of election result, political thuggery, hijack of ballot boxes, political assassination, burning of political party’s building or candidate’s campaign posters and other forms of electoral malpractices and violence are forms of unconventional political activities.

Therefore, political participation as can be inferred from the above analysis, involves a wide spectrum of activities that take different forms depending on the political culture of a given nation. Whether an activity is conventional or unconventional also depends on a nation’s political culture, legal framework and socialization process. Thus, in the context of this work, we are concerned with what we considered conventional activities such as registration as voters, membership of a political party, voting in elections, running for political positions, and participating in political debates. This restriction to conventional political attitudes is informed by the fact that the political education programme of the National Orientation Agency in Nigeria is geared towards promoting political consciousness of the citizens for their active participation in acceptable forms of political activities.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

To explicate the asymmetry between men and women in the public sphere, it is proper to once again refresh reader with the fact that the basis of politics is value production and allocation. In this connection, the economic base becomes the fulcrum on which other aspects of the society rest. The dominant category at the economic base determines the character of the superstructure of society, which includes politics, religion and law. The point being made is that the superstructure is an embodiment of the interest of the dominant group in the society. The male sex, which is not coterminous to any socio-economic group, remains at bottom, dominant over women. In a dialectic materialist perspective, the development of instruments of production enabled man to achieve some form of surplus in production over and above man the wanderer. The woman who was an equal partner to man the wanderer joins the settled existence, which was a result of the man’s improvement of his instruments of production. Besides, she shared the life changes offered by the man’s effort and thus become subject to him in a settled family life (cf Engels, 1977). The extrapolation of the man’s authority in the family to the macro level of the public sphere produces patriarchal order, male-centered or androcentric world. The resultant male dominance leads to the privileging of the male over the female. To reinforce the male dominance, women are put at a distance from the sphere of politics and the notion of impropriety of female authority in the public sphere is propagated. Unfortunately, women are socialized into the acceptance of this worldview.
and more often than not, they partake in its reproduction in the training of children into gender specific roles.

The male dominance of the substructure is evidenced by the sorting of women into low paid jobs (Semyonov and Kraus, 1983). But beyond the control of the economy, androcentrism is strengthened at the superstructure almost to point that it seems to be independent of the economy. There is for instance a gradual overcome of the sorting of women into economic irrelevance because expanded training opportunities can now enable them to earn living in hitherto male dominated economic environments and consequently become economically empowered as men. But there is a rigid encumbrance to the translation of the economic empowerment of the women to political power or achieving leverage with men in political participation. What explains this is pervasive androcentrism in the male dominated gladiatorial level of political participation. It is only where expediency permits that some functions of marginal importance are conceded to women at this level (such as leadership of women wing of political parties, appointive positions in government etc). The consequence of this is inequality within democratic equality.

Central to this thesis is that global patriarchy has given ascendancy to men in politics, authority and decision-making in and outside the family. Under such a male-centred system without a female face, women lack access to politics and decision-making and are highly under-represented at most levels of government. This framework analyses marginalization of women in decision-making and the challenges encountered by female politicians on their way to political participation in Nigeria. It also, contends that the power relations that have prevented women from political activism operate in many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. It argues that the gender uneven electoral politics in Nigeria is as a result of ‘men’ majority in the political party hierarchy, which places them at a vantage position to influence party’s internal politics in terms of selecting or electing candidates for elections, and political patronage. The thesis notes that socio-cultural, economic, political, organizational, legal and political factors have combined to shape the “home-centred” perception of Nigerian women and explains the level of participation of women in political and bureaucratic decision-making positions.

Women’s Performance at the 2015 Election.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) cleared no fewer than 380 candidates to contest the April11 governorship poll in 29 states of the federation. The detailed statistics displaying the comprehensive lists with the age, party and academic qualifications of the candidates on the INEC’s official web site, further revealed that states like Imo, Kano, Sokoto and Zamfara had the highest number of governorship candidates, adding that while Imo and Kano had 22 candidates, Sokoto had 21 and Zamfara had 20. According to the list, states like Enugu had 19 governorship candidates, Delta and Rivers with 18 candidates trailed the top list of states with the highest number of governorship candidates. Jigawa, Yobe, Cross River, Benue, Katsina, Nasarawa and Ebonyi states top list of states with single digit of candidates. The list also showed that Jigawa had four candidates, Yobe and Cross River had five governorship candidates, while others like Plateau had six candidates, Benue and Nasarawa had eight candidates respectively. Ebonyi tops list of states with lowest number with nine candidates.

Further breakdown of the cleared candidates showed that while 25 female candidates were given the nod to battle their male-dominated counterparts, no fewer than 60 females were picked as deputy governors in all the states. Although some states especially the southern part of the country proved to be female friendly, however, some northern states like Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara paraded majorly male governorship and deputy candidates with Zamfara proving to be the worst gender sensitive state with only one female deputy out of the 20 aspirants. There was obvious display of gross violation of the 35 per cent affirmative action as only one of the
major political parties conceded the governorship slot to a female candidate. The breakdown further showed that the political parties in Enugu State proved the most gender sensitive as they paraded the highest number of female candidates. The state has three governorship and six female deputy governorship candidates though none of the major parties were courageous enough to field a female governorship candidate.

Other states trailing Enugu in giving female politicians sense of belonging include Delta, Ebonyi, Niger and Kwara with two female governorship candidates, just as the political parties in Kano, Taraba, Lagos, Sokoto and Rivers states fielded only one female candidate each with the All Progressives Congress (APC) surprisingly picking a female governorship candidate, Senator Aisha Jumai Alhassan, in Taraba State. The Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) had earlier released the list of candidates for the Presidential and National Assembly elections holding on March 28, 2015.

The list of Presidential election candidates has 13 men and 1 woman vying for the number Presidential spot supported by 10 men and 4 women as vice-president. Dr. Comfort Oluremi Sonaiya of the KOWA Party is the only female aspirant to Nigeria’s number one spot. The female Vice-Presidential aspirants are Anthony Faith Ologbosere of APA, Hassana Hassan of the CPP and Arabamhen Mary of the PPN. The National Assembly comprises the Federal House of Representatives and the Senate Elections. There are 1319 candidates contesting for 360 House of Representative slots. The list comprises 267 women and 10526 men. Amongst the women contesting for House of Representatives is Hon. Mulikat Akande-Adeola of the PDP who is currently the House Leader. In the Senate, there are 743 candidates contesting for 109 senatorial slots. The list comprises 122 women and 621 men.

In the past general elections in Nigeria, female candidates consistently performed badly. In 2011 for instance, only 32 women were elected to the National Assembly out of 469 members, which is barely 8% representation. Out of the 109 Senators who emerged winners at the 2011 polls, only 7 (6.4%) were women. The successful candidates were Nkechi J. Nwaogu, Mrs. Helen U. Esuene, Nenadi Usman and Aisha Jummai, all of PDP. Others include Christiana N.O. Anyanwu, Joy Emordi both of APGA and lastly, Chief (Mrs) Oluremi Tinubu. The casualties of the 2011 national assembly elections included Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, Senator Daisy Danjuma and Kema Chikwe. The decrease in the percentage of female candidates that won at the polls is disturbing given the increase in the number of women who contested and the figure dropped significantly when compared to the performance of women in previous elections.

In the 2007 general elections, 9 (8.25%) female candidates won the senatorial seats. They were Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora (Kwara State), Christiana Anyanwu (Imo State), Zainab Kure (Niger State), Grace Bent (Adamawa State), Joy Emodi (Anambra State), Eme Ufot Ekaete (Akwa Ibom State), Patricia Akwashiki (Nasara State), Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello (Ogun State) and Nkechi Justina Nwaogu (Abia State). In the 2003 elections, there were 4 (3.67%) female senators. Out of the 360 available seats in the Federal House of Representatives, women won only 19 (5.27%). From records, few women emerged members of House of Assembly across the polity and members of the National Assembly. In states like Adamawa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Oyo, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara, no woman was elected as member of the State House of Assembly.

In states where women were elected as members, they were very few. The 2011 election in Nigeria saw some important gains in women’s political participation. Former President Goodluck Jonathan appointed 33% of cabinet positions to women (up from 10% in the last government), including the ministerial portfolios of finance and education. This is in keeping with Nigeria’s commitments to gender equality, encapsulated in the National Gender Policy, which sets the benchmark for women’s seats in Parliament at 35% – 5% higher than the international standard. From 1999-2007 there were marginal but steady increases in political participation of women through election or appointment. Yet in 2011 women gained no more seats than at the 2007 election.
(and they lost many at the Federal level). This was a huge disappointment given that in each past election, there has been approximately a 2% increase in numbers of women elected. In the 2011 elections, after the political primaries, women candidates constituted just over 9% of the total number of candidates contesting the polls.

In the just-concluded 2015 general elections, only 14 women emerged members of the House of Representatives-elect according to data provided in INEC website. The exact numbers of female senators are 7 and those that emerged winners included Binta Masi Garba, Uche Ekwunife, Stella Oduah, Rose Oko, Fatimat Raji-Rasaki, Oluremi Tinubu and Monsurat Sunmonu. Since Virginia Ngozi Etiaba, the female governor who acted for a few months in Anambra State, held sway as the chief executive officer of that state, no female politician has come close to even winning the primaries of her party to run for the position. What could have been a repeat of that feat by Senator Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan, who many Nigerian women had started celebrating as the first elected female governor of Taraba State and in Nigeria.

Senator Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan is a successful woman in her own right. Having served in public service and risen to the position of commissioner of Justice and chief registrar of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court, she cut her political teeth when she beat Jolly Nyame of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), now All Progressives Congress (APC) and became one of four women elected on the PDP ticket to the Senate. She made history when she became the first female to clinch the governorship ticket under the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Taraba State and by that feat, raised the hope of women with the possibility of a woman ever getting elected as a governor or president in Nigeria as is obtainable in some climes. As democracy matures, there has been an increase in the number of male governorship candidates that had women as their deputies. Political parties in Lagos State often choose women to contest as deputy governors. In 1999, only Lagos State had an elected female Deputy Governor in the person of Mrs Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor although she was later removed and replaced by Femi Pedro, a man, as a result of party intrigues.

In 2003, the number of deputy female governors increased to 2 (5.5%), in 2007 it increased to 6 (16.6%). The 2011 general elections produced only a female deputy governor in the person of Mrs Adejoke Orelope Adefulire of Lagos State who contested under the platform of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Some of the female candidates contested against male political heavy weights. A case in point is Plateau State where Paullen Tallen (Labour Party) once contested against political heavyweights such as Joshua Dariye who was governor from 1999-2007. Senator Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora (ACPN) who contested for the governor’s seat in Kwara State had ethical and religious issues to contend with in addition to contesting against the PDP’s candidate which also pitched her against her brother who was the incumbent governor of the State. Quite a number of women in past dispensations won their parties’ primary ticket for the National Assembly and the various States’ Houses of Assembly. In Lagos State, all the female candidates from ACN won at the polls in the election into the National Assembly and the State House of Assembly. Women contested for only 7 (17.5%) seats out of the 40 seats at the Lagos State House of Assembly. Adamawa State which had 23 women vying for political offices managed to produce only three female winners, they include Hajiyia Aishatu, Mrs Wale Fwa and Mrs Wilbina Jackson. The table below captures the position of women in electoral positions between 1999-2015.

Table 1: Comparism of Women Representation in 1999, 2003, 2011 & 2015 General Elections

| S/N | Position | No of Available seats | No of Women Elected & % of Total in 1999 | No of women Elected & % of Total in 2003 | No of women Elected & % of Total in 2007 | No of women Elected & % of Total in 2011 | No of women Elected & % of Total in 2015 |
|-----|----------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|     |          |                       |                                          |                                          |                                          |                                          |                                          |                                          |

23
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Presidency</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>House of Representative</th>
<th>House of Representative</th>
<th>Governorship</th>
<th>Deputy Governorship</th>
<th>State Houses of Assembly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>- 0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.75%</td>
<td>5.83%</td>
<td>- 0%</td>
<td>- 0%</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
<td>12.25%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>12.25%</td>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>12.25%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12.25%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the foregoing, it is evident that only very few Nigerian women have participated and emerged in Nigeria’s political landscape, in spite of the pioneering efforts of women like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti and Margaret Ekpo since the 50s. Today, the number of women in top job is still insignificant. As the 2019 elections approaches it is expected that it is expected that women should begin to build war chest, to advance their agenda and must be ready to support party activities and fund women who are actively seeking political offices. No doubt, the nature of Nigerian politics also discourages women’s participation. Political meetings are often held late at night on an ad hoc basis, making attendance difficult for women, who face greater personal risk in travelling alone at night and often have to arrange for assistance to care for families. Women who do attend such meetings have, according to numerous anonymised sources, been labelled as women of easy virtues. More generally, politics is considered to be a ‘dangerous’ pursuit in Nigeria and female politicians are frequently considered of dubious moral character, given their desire to be involved in this profession.

**Marginalization of Women in Electoral Politics: A Thematic Exposition**

In spite of the guarantees of equality in conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other treaties, to which Nigeria is a signatory, there are glaring inequalities at all levels of decision making. The limited participation of women in the political sphere which was glaring since post independence Nigeria is due to a number of factors such as the socio-cultural determinants, which established women’s domain in the private sphere. The problems hindering women from actively seeking elective offices range from the high costs of contesting elections to cultural ideologies and inferiority complex among others. This is largely due to the sentimental attachment on feminine gender. Although they have been playing crucial role in political life of the country, this has not yielded results in terms of their performances when it comes to elective offices.

Perhaps, the greatest challenge women face in getting elected in Nigeria relates to financial constraints. The costs of running an electoral campaign are high – even more so in the context of Nigeria where politics is highly monetised. Aside from paying for the campaign itself and the materials and coverage that go along with this, many candidates also dispense ‘patronage’, in the form of cash handouts, to voters. Women are at a disadvantage in this regard as they consistently earn less than their male counterparts and are usually not in charge of household finances, limiting their ability to make independent decisions. While many candidates receive donations from patrons, there are few patrons willing to risk their money on female candidates, given the low likelihood of them being elected. As a result, women’s campaigning is frequently smaller-scale, with less
coverage than that of men. This helps to explain the lower success rate of women at the Federal, as opposed to State level. The psyche of the Nigerian man is often predominated by a chauvinistic disposition that decision making is exclusively for the men-folk while women are to be instructed on what to do. The preoccupation that women play the number two role at homes is playing itself out in their political life.

In the words of Oby Nwankwo:

Women were discouraged from seeking political offices by discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office, socialization and negative stereotyping of through the media, reinforcing the tendency for political decision making to remain the domain of men (Nwankwo, 2009:60).

Oluchi Ikemefuna adds:

Women in Nigeria face a lot of odds when they contest with men. The parties often want those who can match violence with violence, those who can coerce people to note for them. Men are widely held to be more prepared to engage in violence than women (Leadership Sunday Editorial, 2010:14).

Thus, the gender specific unevenness of electoral politics manifested itself in the following forms:

1. The persisting social resistance and / or lukewarm acceptance of women’s participation in political leadership. This is in spite of the spectacular performance of the few women who held sway as heads of ministries and parastatals in this dispensation.
2. Culture of electoral violence that tends to be harsher towards female than male candidates;
3. Feminization of poverty that renders women more financially constrained to manage a campaign than men.
4. Lack of adequate political socialization for leadership that manifests itself in women’s exclusion from access to strategic political information and general inability in the art of public oratory and populist campaign and
5. Women’s marginalization in mainstream political party hierarchy and hence. Inability to shape rules of engagement (especially at the nomination stage), which are defined and organized around male norms and values (Nzomo, 2003; Nwankwo, 2009:63).

Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin thinks internal democracy is very necessary in political parties as efforts to get more women in elective positions have not yielded very good results. According to her; there is no internal democracy in the political parties and this has continued to prevent women from having equal political opportunity. Though the present administration of President Goodluck Jonathan has tried to improve on appointive positions for women, it is yet to meet the 35% affirmative action. This was why women delegates at the national conference identified the urgent need for gender mainstreaming and full implementation of the 35% affirmative action. There are, however, efforts going on right now at different levels, engaging political platforms and demanding that political spaces be opened up for the inclusion of more women(Gabriel,2015).

Recommendations

For millions of Nigerian women, taking part in elective politics is not easy, not with the cultural and social inhibitions they are faced with. This study is on the recently concluded general elections in the country and how women in elective positions fared. In an effort to address the challenges identified, the paper suggests as follow:

Women should begin to seek elective positions more; not just appointments. With each woman that rises beyond those limitations identified in the paper, many more get encouraged. Also for women to remain relevant in parties, there is need to review the 1999 Constitution, political
parties constitutions in order to advocate for greater representation at the party levels, support women through actively identifying, training and building capacity to lead, contest, and advocate for women and social issues, and also create affirmative action like quotas to enable them contest. The paper also calls for support for the legalisation of independent candidacy in Nigeria. Independent candidacy frees women (and men) from the tyranny of major political party’s. Finally; women should make efforts to defeat the psychology of patriarchy via education, empowerment programmes, mobilization and networking.

Conclusion

The number of women elected to public offices in Nigeria may not increase significantly after this year’s election, analyses by this study have shown. This is because Nigerian women have encountered a number of problems while venturing into politics. There is large scale-socio-cultural discrimination from the men folk, both in choosing, voting for candidates and in allocating political offices. More often than not, men constitute a larger percentage of the party membership and this tends to affect women when it comes to selecting or electing candidates for elections. Since men are usually the majority in the political party setup, they tend to dominate the party hierarchy and are therefore at advantage in influencing the party's internal politics. Women usually constitute a smaller percentage of political party membership because of the social, cultural and religious attitudes of different Nigerian societies which most often tend to relegate women to the background. As a result, only very few men, even among the educated, allow their wives to come out and participate in politics. In Northern Nigeria, for instance, an important factor inhibiting women's participation is the house seclusion of women.

Another problem facing women is lack of adequate education. Women constitute a larger percentage of the illiterate group in Nigeria. This could be attributed to the fact that in most families, parents prefer to send their sons to school, instead of their daughters whom they feel eventually get married and thus get incorporated into another family. Thus, a larger percentage of the girls remain uneducated and unexposed. Lack of adequate finance is a crucial hindrance to effective female participation in politics in Nigeria. A large portion of the Nigerian female population is not as financially strong as their male counterparts. Family responsibilities and childbearing also hinder women from participating effectively in partisan political activities. During a sizeable part of their adult lives, most women are involved not only in child bearing, but also in child rearing.

Thus, much of the time they may have wished to devote to politics is taken up by their maternal challenges and obligations. The failure of the 35 percent affirmative action puts women representation in the minority thereby relegating issues concerning women and gender equality at the border of our national development. As 2019 elections with each political party strategizing on ways of winning, making gender parity a reality should start through the practice of internal democracy. The achievement of gender parity at party level will automatically ease the way for women in any position they want. It should be part of the manifestoes of the various political parties. In the other hand the Women themselves need to work together like their predecessors by championing a common front and working towards achieving success in 2015 and beyond. They need to help one another, be there for each other in other to hasten their “dream of gender equality.

References

Axford, B. et.al. (2002), An Introduction to Politics, Newyork: Routledge


Semyonov, M. Kraus, V. (1983) “Gender, Ethnicity and Income Inequality” International Journal of Comparative Sociology, XXIV.
Wan Asna et.al. (2011), Some Socio-Democratic Determinants of Political Participation, Singapore: IACSIT press