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Abstract

Nigerian women have encountered a number of problems while venturing into politics. There is large scale discrimination from the men folk, both in voting for candidates and in allocating political offices. This paper examines women political participation in Nigeria and the challenges facing them. In analyzing the issues raised, the paper utilizes the nature of society, political, socio-cultural, and economic approach to feminism. To scientifically investigate the issues of feminism and political participation in Nigerian, the descriptive surveys as well as direct observation were employed. Combinations of clustered and simple random sampling method were used to draw a sample of seven hundred and twenty (720) respondents from the six geo-political zones of the country. The paper observes among others, that lack of adequate finance is a crucial hindrance to effective female participation in Nigerian politics. Large portions of the Nigerian female population are not as financially strong as their male counterparts. Yet, family responsibilities and childbearing also hinder women from participating effectively in partisan politics. The paper submits that the prospects of Nigerian women in politics are bright as some of the obstacles highlighted above are already being removed. However, a quiet but significant social revolution is necessary among women if they are to attain the desired position in Nigerian politics. It concludes that the need to educate women and their female children which is invariably a source of political, economic and social power cannot be over emphasized.

Keywords: Discrimination, Empowerment, Gender, Political Participation, Marginalization

Introduction

At both the national and international levels, there is a growing academic interest in the level of participation of women in politics. The 'third wave' of globalization emphasizes the issue of democratization, women and human rights which dominate world interests in Africa. African women, especially in Nigeria are exploited and marginalized. Despite, the fact that women constitute about 56% of the total population (NPC, 2011), they are discriminated against in the political process. It would appear that the marginalization of Nigerian women is more pronounced in the democratization processes. Women in Nigeria constitute more than two - thirds of the country's 70% adult non literate population

while they hold less than 5percent of the important decision making positions (UNDP HDI, 2009). The present national assembly in Nigeria has an appallingly low average of 0.05 percent of women in both Senate and House of Representatives. This limited conception of the political relevance of women is responsible for their political marginalization. While it is important to increase the number of women in public offices, the more fundamental question raised is about the character of democracy in Nigeria. Is it gender sensitive?

The current campaign for women political consciousness in Nigerian history is not a new phenomenon; however, the dimension may be the difference. Perhaps, a little step back to history could be of immense help to the

present generation of women revolutionaries. Before the advent of British colonisation, Nigeria women had access to political participation and played prominent roles in decision making in the Nigerian society. This was witnessed during the invasion of Ife and Igalaland; many women activist such as Princess Inikpi of Igalaland and Moremi of Ife sacrificed their lives to save the people from further carnage (See Uhuo, 2011).

In Hausaland, women's access to political participation is exemplified by the emergence of Queen Amina of Zazzau, a renowned military and political leader who was reputed to be a formidable woman who personally led her army to the battlefield and succeeded in saving her people from extermination (Olojede, 2009; Mohammed, 1985). Queen Kambasa of the Ijo and Queen Owari of Ilesa were said to possess the same attributes. Elsewhere in Yorubaland, Madam Tinubu, who later became the Iyalode of Egba and Iyalode Efunsetan of Ibadan made history because they were able to assert themselves and had their points of view carried out. After the Second World War, Lady Oyinkan Abayomi founded the women's party and campaigned for the expansion of opportunities for women. In 1946, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti's lead Abeokuta Women Union projected and promoted special interest of women. Yet, in 1929, in the present south east Nigeria, there was the famous "Aba women riot" during which over 50 women lost their lives fighting injustices against women (See Uhuo, 2011; Irabor, 2011; Olojede, 2009; Mba, 1989). The riots were a testimony to the political vigour of women as well as women's capacity to mobilize. Though long, the incident still remains fresh in our memory. These are some examples of bold steps taken by women to have their views reflected in the way and manner the society is governed.

However, the present generation of women revolutionaries prefers to be more fashionable than selling their ideas; showcasing their costly jewellerys and clothes, paint their lips and fingers, seating where cameras can easily pick their faces. The current crop of women politicians would prefer contracts at the expense of their integrity than engage in issues

that could liberate women and reposition them for greater and brighter political involvement. They prefer "a dash" of the latest cars in town than sit down and articulate on ways of bringing positive change to the society in which they constitute majority of the poor and vulnerable to all sort of domestic violence (See Irabor, 2011; Uhuo, 2011; Amor, 2007).

The marginalization of women in the parliaments' leadership manifests deep bias in their in-house politics. Besides competitive elective positions, women have also been reduced to sideline actors in appointive posts at all levels of governance. At the federal level, Obasanjo's second term cabinet has only 6 or 12 percent women out of 49 ministers, the rest were men. Only three of the six were given substantive cabinet posts. None of the three was put in-charge of key ministries such as Petroleum, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs and Defence. One of the three, (Mrs. Mobolaji Osomo) was sacked by the President for administrative impropriety on government's housing scheme, thereby reducing women slots to 5 or 10 percent ministers. And out of 11 Senior Special Advisers to the President, only 1 or 9.1 percent was a female. Appointment to ambassadorial positions and into the 36 states' cabinets and boards of public parastatals and corporations at the Federal and State levels are also lacking in gender justice and consciousness (See Ajayi, 2005).

The composition of the National Conference on Political Reforms constituted by former President Obasanjo was deeply gendered. The 400 - delegate Conference has only 30 or 7.5 percent women (The Editor, 2005). Of the total number, federal and state governments selected 366 delegates. The chief executives at both levels of government were all men. The discrimination against women in the conference's composition could therefore, be expected. The Conference was to re-construct the nation's future politics. We therefore, assumed that the final decisions of the conference were skewed against women since they suffer adequate representation in the dialogue. The outcome did not redress the plight of women regarding their marginalization.

It is against this backdrop, that our discussion here would be centered on the issue of women participation in Nigerian politics. The paper therefore, examines the extent to which, women get involve in party politics as well as the extent (or otherwise) to which they are respected and accepted as equal stakeholders in the democratization project. Although, there are recurrent debate on the level and extent of women involvement in Nigerian politics; however, in this paper attempt is made to limit this debate within the context of 1999 to 2011 general elections because of its democratic longevity in the history of the country. The aim is to establish the continuities and changes obtainable in the struggles undertaken by women in the recent past targeted at altering the male - partisan political space. This is done through an empirical analysis of women participation in politics as well as their voting pattern and status in decision making in different sectors and parts of the Nigerian state.

In the light of this development and for ease of reference, the paper is structured into the following six sections. The first section is the introduction; the second chronicled the conceptual and theoretical issues central to the discourse. Section three interrogates the interface between Nigerian politics and gender issues while section four is the methodology as well as critical analyses of the surveyed data on electoral behaviour of women in 2011 general elections and discussion of findings. The fifth highlighted the challenges facing women participation in politics while sixth examines the way forward and the concluding remarks.

Feminism and Political Participation: Conceptual and Theoretical Explorations

While feminism takes many forms and cannot be characterized in any seamless way, it nonetheless encompasses the struggles of women to secure their economic and political agency. From the Women's Suffrage Movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, feminism is typically associated with particular historical moments when a coalition of women succeeds in bringing issues of gender equality, sexual

oppression, and sex discrimination into the public arena. However, feminism has been defined as advocacy for social equality for men and women. Feminism is generally opposed to patriarchy and sexism (French in Igube, 2004).

Also, Abdulkadir (2003) define feminism as an ideology which seeks to assert the principle that women should have political, economic, and social rights equal to those of men. It is a movement that entrenches these rights through the emancipation of women, liberating them from class and gender exploitation and oppression. Feminism is a phenomenon of the 20th century, although its root could be traced to the 18th century Europe. Feminist ideology insists that society should recognize claims of women for rights (legal, political, social and economic) equal to those possessed by men (Lerner, 1993; Ezeigbo, 1996). Feminist ideology contends against the subjugation and oppression of women. Feminists advocate for equal rights for men and women in all spheres of life.

Ezeigbo (1996) rightly argued that feminism is often misunderstood. In some people's mind, feminism conjures up visions of aggressive women who try to be like men, dress carelessly and abandon essential feminine attributes. Feminist ideology means agitation for women's economic, social, legal, political, educational rights which will lead to their empowerment vis-a-vis development. Indeed, the concept has been defined as a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women (Adadevoh, 2001). Its concepts overlap with those of women's rights. An examination of the above definition shows that feminism is also a movement or advocacy which campaigns for women's rights and interests. Iwuchukwu (2006) also define feminism as the belief in the importance of gender equality, invalidating the idea of gender hierarchy as a socially constructed concept. Feminism is mainly focused on women's issues, but because feminism seeks gender equality, some feminists argue that men's liberation is therefore a necessary part of feminism, and that men are also harmed by

sexism and gender roles. Feminist scholars have always presented meticulous exposition on sexual inequalities and patterns of feminine science, all of which focus on questions of different oppressions and injustices (Adadevoh in Nwagwu and Ifeanacho, 2009).

Yet, the concepts “feminism” connotes different meanings to different people. It also evokes different emotions depending on the issue at hand (Igube, 2004). In whatever form or manner feminism displays or distinguishes itself, what is constant in all its shackles is the determination of every group to uplift womanhood and strive towards liberation and emancipation of women (Ezeigbo, 1996).

Theoretically, the subject matter of the paper could be predicated on several platforms. These include political culture, quantitative approach, sociological, feminist t, and the nature of society theories. While other theories may be relevant in their right, we anchor the paper on an eclectic approach of nature of society theory to politics, quantitative and feminist theories. This is because of advantages they present in analyzing the issues raised in the paper. These advantages include the nature of society theory enable us direct our search light to those corporate culture that could inhibit women participation in politics while the quantitative approach guides us in quantitative analysis of women in politics. Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. While providing a critique of these social and political relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Politics is grounded in the nature of society in which it takes place. Dudley (in Osaghae, 1997) made one of the elaborate attempts at explaining the political behavioural and institutional patterns of societies in terms of Weberian postulations on individuals and collective values embedded in their culture. The central thrust of Dudley's perspective is on the impact of the country – wide premium placed on the male-female role in politics.

Nigerian feminists have contributed to the political and socio-economic development of

the Nigerian woman. They have achieved this through the formation of women liberation movements such as: Women in Nigeria (WIN). This organization originated from the interest generated in Women's affairs by the First Annual Women in Nigerian Conference held in 1982. Members of WIN believe that the liberation of women cannot be fully achieved outside the context of the liberation of the oppressed and the poor majority of the people of Nigeria (Igube, 2004). He further noted the objectives of WIN to include: Promoting the study of conditions of women in Nigeria with the aim of combating discriminatory and sexist practices in the family, work place and in the wider society; Defending the rights of women with reference to the Nigerian constitution and United Nations Human Rights Conventions; Fighting against sexual harassment and abuse in the family and other spheres; Forming links and working with organizations and groups fighting sex and class abuse; Ensuring for women equal access to education; Information dissemination on women issues; Fighting against poverty among women, ensuring equal access of both men and women to economic opportunities; and Fighting for social justice (Igube, 2004).

Yet, another organization worthy of mentioning that has identified itself with women's liberation movement is the organization known as Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA). Sani (2001) posits that WRAPA was registered in 1999 and is a non-governmental, non-profit making organization set up with the aim of promoting and improving social justice especially for women. WRAPA renders services to women in areas of legal aid and counseling, access to education for the girl-child, adult literacy and civic education towards sensitization and mobilization for the uplifting of their fundamental human rights and advocacy for law and reforms in that regard (Igube, 2004). A critical analysis of all the above discussed women organizations suggest that they are all geared towards women emancipation as well as increased involvement in politics. However, in spite of all the previous efforts and current effort of the First Lady Dem Patient Goodluck

Jonathan through her pet project – Women for Change and Development Initiative (WCDI) to effect same, it is of knowledge that women are yet to translate their numerical strength to electoral victory.

The Interface between Nigerian Politics and Gender Issues

In Nigeria, many women register as party members but do not regularly participate in party meetings and caucuses where important decisions are taken. They dreaded such party congregations because of fear of violence and the nocturnal character of the meetings, which they believe, only dirty and irresponsible women can attend (Mainman, 2002). Consequently, most female politicians vying for political offices in Nigeria, do so in relatively unknown and unpopular political parties. For instance, in addition to the unpopularity of the parties, in 2003, only one of the three women Presidential contestants, Dr. (Mrs) Sarah Jubril, was relatively heard of before the election, others were politically unknown personalities.

Realizing the gender injustice that marked the 2003 People's Democratic Party (PDP) primaries, women leaders in the ruling (PDP) petitioned the then National Chairman of the party and physically protested to former President Olusegun Obasanjo (Olojede, 2009). Obasanjo merely affirmed that the socio-cultural context of Nigeria was not supportive of women's participation in governance (WRAPA in Ajayi, 2005). However, it was not a surprise that women were marginalized in the primaries. All the then parties' national and state chairpersons are men, while men also dominated the executive members. It's however, regrettable to note that despite the 2003 PDP women protest; the subsequent 2007 and 2011 general elections and the recent 2012 PDP National Convention have not change the status quo.

Prior to the elections in Nigeria, women often seen to dominate campaign rallies. Women often made such political fora very much lively and colourful as they were the most active in terms of adorning the occasion with beautiful attires, dancing, shouting party slogans and singing endlessly the praises of

electoral candidates and party leaders who are invariably men. Nonetheless, despite the active participation of women in the electoral processes, women marginality has been sustained in the elections as they remain victims of traditional gender violence and discrimination (Ajayi, 2005).

In spite, of all the inter-sex violence and discrimination on women, they still have ample electoral opportunity to acquire power and effect change by virtue of their greater (60 percent) electoral capacity. However, at the end of the elections, women voters hardly convey their electoral strength to political victory by not voting women contestants in elections (Ajayi, 2005). Instead, they sustained their traditional electoral behaviour of overwhelmingly voting for the opposite gender (male). For instance, in 2003 general elections, none of the three women presidential contestants won. In fact, out of the twenty contestants, women candidates namely Dr. Mrs Sarah Jubril, Mrs. Antonia Ferreira Jorge and the late Mojisola Adekunle Obasanjo came out 6th, 16th and 20th respectively in the overall results. In that order, out of the total valid votes of 39,480,489 cast in the presidential election, they scored 157,560 representing 0.40 percent, 6,727 representing 0.02 percent and 3,757 representing 0.01 percent votes respectively (INEC in Ajayi, 2005), while Olusegun Obasanjo, a male contestant who eventually won the election for the second term scored 24,456,140 representing 61.94 percent of the gross and valid votes casted (Ajayi, 2005.). There were also three women vice-presidential candidates whose parties came out 8th, 14th and 17th in the overall results. Mrs. Antonia Ferreira Jorge had no vice-presidential candidate for the election, implying that no man was prepared to pair with her as a second fiddle. At the state level, the thirty political parties which contested the elections did not field a single woman for the gubernatorial election, implying that all the 36 states' governors were men. There were only two or 5.6 percent female deputy governors precisely in Ogun and Osun States out of 36 states of the federation.

The results of elections to the National Assembly show that women won 3 or 2.8 percent of the 109 seats in the Senate, implying no improvement over the 1999 records. In the House of Representatives, women won 19 or 5.3 percent of the 360 seats as against 12 or 3.3 percent in 1999, implying a slight improvement in 2003. In the 36 state Houses of Assembly with a cumulative total of 990 seats, women won only 24 or 2.4 percent seats compared to 20 or 2.0 percent seats in 1999. When analyzed on state-by-state basis, many of the Houses had no female members while some, such as Ekiti State had just one member. The leadership of both the national and regional assemblies, since 1999, has been gendered. Within the period, no woman was elected as Senate President or Speaker of House of Representatives. An attempt in 2011 to elect Mulikat Akande, a female as speaker of House of Representative was frustrated by male dominated chamber even against the wish of the ruling PDP.

Women and 2003 General Elections

The 2003 general elections presented women a good opportunity to navigate their way to power. Besides their demographic strength, which, according to the 1991 census, is at parity with that of men, women commanded a greater electoral standing than men as they constituted 60 percent of the registered voters for the election like what obtained in the 1990 local government elections and the 1999 general elections. However, compared to the 1999 general elections, women voters recorded 5 percent improvement in their turnout in 2003. In the party primaries, women were systematically discriminated against and subjected to the usual feminism by men. The unjust elimination of women from the primaries ensured the domination of the competitive posts by men in all the parties. For instance, of the 20 contestants for the presidency, only 3 representing 15 percent were women. Apart from the fact that the three parties that nominated them were in the minority and relatively unpopular parties without a nationwide membership spread, they were not known to have campaigned for electoral victory beyond the immediate domicile of the women aspirants (Ajayi, 2005).

At the state level, in the 2003 to 2007 terms, only 2 or 5.6 percent women were elected as speakers of their respective Houses of Assembly namely Anambra and Ogun States out of 36 states of the federation. However, the Anambra State Speaker, Mrs Eucharia Azodo was impeached barely three months of her election; implying that there was then only 1 or 2.8 percent female speaker out of 36 states of the federation. In 2011, with the exception of Oyo State no other state has a female speaker or deputy.

Women and 2007 General Elections

The 2007 general elections witnessed an increase in the number of women who contested and won election. Out of the 109 senators, only 8 were women while 27 women were in the House of Representatives out 360 members. The story is the same in the 36 states houses of assembly, women were in minority and there was no single female speaker. Out of the 36 State Governors none was a woman while only 3 occupy the position of deputies precisely in Imo, Lagos and Plateau State respectively with additional 1 in Ekiti State in 2010 totaling 4 following the sack of Governor Segun Oni by the appeal court in Ilorin (See Ajayi, 2005).

In spite of the high turnover of the Senate presidency, which changed five times between 1999 and 2007, no woman was deemed fit to occupy the position. Indeed, in 2007 Mrs. Patricia Ette was elected speaker House of Representatives which was short lived as a result of corruption charges leveled against her. However, the current house (the 7th National Assembly) surprisingly dropped the corruption charges against her without any explanation to Nigerians notwithstanding she is no longer member of (Green Chamber) the parliament. Yet, there is one common feature of all the women who contested and perhaps won at the 2007 polls. An attempt to situate this within the context of bourgeoisie (political god fatherism) basis has been instructive.

A cursory look at the pattern of women who contested the 2007 election revealed that most of those women who contested and won are those who have powerful political connections with powerful politicians by reasons of birth or

marriage (Olojede, 2009). Maryam Ali, who contested the 2007 senatorial elections in Delta North Senatorial constituency, is the wife of the then National Chairman of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), (The Punch cited in Olojede, 2009). Zainab Kure, representing Niger South Senatorial Constituency, is the wife of the former Niger State Governor. She was at the time referred to as political “green horn” (Saturday Punch cited in Olojede, 2009). Emen Ekaette is the wife of the former secretary to the Government of the federation. She represents Akwa-Ibom on the platform of the PDP. Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello is the eldest daughter of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo; she represents Ogun Central Senatorial Constituency. Gbemisola Saraki-Fafowora, who represents the PDP Kwara Central Senatorial Constituency, is the daughter of the strongman of Kwara politics – Dr. Olusola Saraki (Olojede, 2009). We also have Benny Lar who represents Langtang North and South at the Federal House of representative on the platform of PDP. She is the daughter of Chief Solomon Lar who was the first National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

A review of women participation in politics in Nigeria from 1999-2007 reveals that the number of female legislators in the state Houses of Assembly also increased from 21 to 116 between 1999 and 2007. At the executive level, women were not fared badly, between 1999 and 2007; women recorded one executive governor, one state house of assembly speaker and held many Ministerial appointments, special advisers and other political positions. These can be viewed as an arithmetic progression. With the high level of participation and awareness in government, women are challenged to lift up the society above its present moral state.

Women and 2011 General Elections

In the 2011 general elections, an increased number of Nigerian women defied the odds, stepped into the murky waters, aspired and contested for party’s primaries; many lost and only few emerged as candidates, however, fewer of them emerged as winners. The number and percentage of women who were

successful at the polls in 2011 was less than the figures in 2007, 2003 and 1999.

There were only 2 female presidential candidates/aspirants in the person of Mrs. Ebith Ndok of the United National Party for Development (UNPP) and Dr. (Mrs) Sarah Jubril of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), who lost at the party’s primaries. However, it is doubtful if Mrs. Ndok eventually participated in the election given issues she had with the administration of justice system (anticorruption agencies) in the country. There were four (4) female vice-presidential candidates although at the time of writing this paper it was unable to verify if their parties also adopted President Goodluck Jonathan as a consensus candidate, suffice to say that none of the big five (5) political parties (ACN, ANPP, APGA, LP and PDP) had a female vice-presidential candidate. In addition, All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP) adopted Jonathan Goodluck as their flag bearer (See Irabor, 2011).

Whereas there were thirty-six (36) governorship seats in the Federation, there were three hundred and forty-eight (348) governorship candidates with just 13 or 2.98 percent being women who were all casualties at the polls. It appears some parties agreed to adopt female deputy governorship candidates as there was generally an increase in the number of governorship candidates that had women as their deputy. At least four parties in Lagos State chose women to contest as deputy governors. In 1999, only Lagos State had a female deputy governor in the person of Mrs. Kofoworola Bucknor although she was later removed and replaced by Femi Pedro, a man. However, during the 2007 general election, another woman emerged as deputy governor in person of Mrs. Sarah Sosan. In 2003 the number of deputy female governors increased to 2 representing 5.5 percent, it increased to 6 or 16.6 percent in 2007. In 2011 there is only 1 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) (See Irabor, 2011; Amor, 2007).

Out of the one hundred and nine (109) senators that emerged, only 7 senators representing 6.4 percent are women. Unfortunately with the recent court of appeal invalidation of the candidature of Senator Nkechi Nwogu of Abia State South senatorial district, women senators has further reduced to 6 or 5.4 percent as against 9 representing 8.25 percent female senators in 2007; in 2003 there were 6 or 5.50 percent female senators while in 1999 there were only 3 or 2.75 percent female senators. Female performance in the House of Representatives election was no less different from that of the Senate. Out of the 360 available seats, women won only 19 representing 5.27 percent. This is an abysmal drop in the light of the success recorded in 1999, 2003 and 2007 where the figures were 12 or 3.3 percent, 21 or 5.8 percent and 27 or 7.5 percent respectively an arithmetic progression which was not sustained in 2011 (Irabor, 2011).

The 2011 general elections could be described as the year of “the mighty fallen”. There was indeed the whittling down of the influence of political god fathers as their candidates performed woefully at the elections. However, it seems patriarchy, religion, ethical issues, party intrigues and absence of internal democracy of political parties could be some underlining reasons for the poor performance of women at the polls in addition to the new wave of democratization in the country as well as the awareness by the electorate that they have the final say on who should represent them through their ballots. The fate of Senators Gbemisola Saraki and Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello who respectively contested for governorship and senatorial elections in Kwara and Ogun States are typical examples (See Uhoo, 2011; Irabor, 2011).

Methodology

Basically, there are two major sources of data collection available to this paper. These are primary and secondary data. The primary sources of data were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. They were based on observations of events at the last general elections as well as through the use of questionnaires, closed ended questionnaires to

be precise, where questions are structured in line with the relevant objectives of the study.

In other to elicit women's opinions on their participatory roles in the 2011 general elections and their perceptions about party politics, a total of seven hundred and twenty (720) women were randomly surveyed. The field survey made use of cluster random sampling, which grouped the targeted women population into six geo-political zones namely: North East, North West, South East, South West, the Middle Belt and the South South.

Each zone comprised of six states to make a total of 36 states of the Nigerian Federation. The Middle Belt has, as part of it, the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The survey employed simple random sampling technique to select three states from each zone. To this end, Bauchi, Gombe and Yola (North East); Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa (North West); Anambra, Enugu, and Imo (South East) States were chosen. Other states were Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo (South West); Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau state (Middle Belt); and Bayelsa, Delta and Cross River states (South South). A total of one hundred and twenty (120) women were chosen from each zone i.e. forty (40) women per each of the three states in the zone given a total of seven hundred and twenty (720). Clustered sampling technique was adopted in geo-political regions and ethno-religious diversities in the country in order to collect a balanced response and ensure representativeness of sampled survey. Yet, equal numbers of women were selected in order to ensure equitable representation and reduce bias. A total of seven hundred and twenty (720) questionnaires were distributed for the survey out of which six hundred and eighty two 682 or 85.7 percent valid responses were received.

Analysis of Surveyed Data

A total of seven hundred and twenty (720) questionnaires of nine (9) items were distributed to the respondents, through frequent persuasion about the importance of responding fully and honestly to the questionnaire, the researchers were able to achieve a questionnaire return of six hundred and eighty seven (687) responses out of the

total distributed. Out of these numbers, five (5) copies of the questionnaire were not properly filled, leaving a total of six hundred and eighty two (682) valid questionnaires yielding a response rate of (85.7 percent) which was used in analyzing the responses below:

Respondents Characteristics’ and Classification

This section deals with the socio-demographic profile of the surveyed respondents such as age, educational qualification and occupational distribution.

Table-1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Alternatives	No. of Responses	Frequency
18 – 30 years	284	41.6
31 years and above	398	58.4
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

Frequency distribution of the age of the surveyed women shows that all were adults. Specifically, 284 or 41.6 percent of the respondents were between 18 - 30 years of age, while 398 or 58.4 percent were above 30 years of age. The essence of collecting information on age was to be sure that only adults of voting age were polled.

Table-2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Alternatives	No. of Respondents	Percentages
No Certificate	36	5.3
FSLC	72	10.6
WASC/NECO	72	10.6
ND/NCE	108	15.8
HND/First Degree	179	26.2
Postgraduate Degree	36	5.3
Postgraduate Diploma	71	10.4
Undergraduate	108	15.8
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

On the educational qualification of the respondents, the surveyed data indicate that

majority of the women, at least, had basic education. Of the 682 valid respondents, only a total of 36 or 5.3 percent of the respondents had no academic qualifications, 72 or 10.6 percent had First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), 72 or 10.6 percent had Secondary School Certificate (WASC/NECO), 108 or 15.8 percent had National Diploma/ National Certificate of Education and (ND/NCE,) while 179 or 26.2 percent had Higher National Diploma/First Degree (HND/1st Degree) respectively. Yet, 36 or 5.3 percent had postgraduate degrees, with another 71 or 10.4 percent who possessed postgraduate diploma. Seventy-two 72 or 10.6 percent were undergraduates. The essence of securing information on the respondents' qualifications was to be sure that they relatively understood what the survey was about and thereby, to some extent, be able to contribute to the gender issues under interrogation.

Table-3: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Alternatives	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Farmers	36	5.3
Traders	109	15.9
Administrators/Managers	70	10.3
Teachers/Lecturers	100	14.7
Civil Servants	138	20.3
Students	108	15.8
Unemployed/ House wife	121	17.7
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

The occupational analysis of the socio-economic profile of the surveyed respondents shows that the surveyed respondents cut across varied employment. Of the 682 valid respondents, farmers were 36 representing 5.3 percent, 109 or 15.9 percent were traders, 70 or 10.3 percent were administrators/managers, with another 100 or 14.7 percent being teachers/lecturers, 138 or 20.3 percent were civil servants, and 108 or 15.8 percent were students. However, only 121 or 17.7 percent respondents were unemployed/house wives. The merit of the application of the survey instrument is that, the spread of the

questionnaire across the identified trades and professions enabled the study to determine the level of gender consciousness and awareness of women in the various industries where they operate.

Analysis of Operational Data

One of the major issues the study investigated is whether respondents voted in the 2011 general elections.

Table-4: You Voted in 2011 General Elections

Alternatives	No. of Responses	Frequency
Yes	635	93.11
No	47	6.89
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

An analysis of the above table reveals that 635 or 93.11 percent of valid respondents voted, while 47 representing 6.89 percent failed to exercise their franchise rights. The preponderance of as much as 93.11 percent of polled respondents voting in the election shows that women were aware of their rights

to vote and to be voted for in an election, which they actually exercised.

In the 2011 general election, two female and seventeen male candidates contested for the presidency. The researchers investigated which gender the respondents voted for.

Table-5: Voting Pattern

Alternatives	No. of Responses	Frequency
Male	635	100
Female	0	0.0
Total	635	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

The survey results, as shown in the table, show that 635 or 100 percent of the respondents voted for male presidential candidates, while none voted for any of the two female aspirants.

In a follow up question, the researchers queried the respondents who voted for male candidates on the reasons that informed their electoral behaviour.

Table-5: What informed your Electoral Behaviour

Alternatives	No. of Responses	Frequency
Not aware of any female candidate	254	37.2
Ethnic group, zone and same party,	116	17.0
The world is man’s world	36	5.3
Directed by husband	167	24.5
Not ripe for women	19	2.8
Security situation	45	6.6
Men have greater capacity	45	6.6
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

Justifications to their positive included such arguments as: not aware of any female candidate 37.2 percent; belonging to the same ethnic group, zone/region and political party 17.0 percent; the maxim “the world is man’s world”; directed by husband to do so 29.8 percent; Nigeria not yet ripe for female president; for continuity 2.8 percent; the insecurity situation in the country calls for a male leader 6.6 percent, hardworking man; men have greater capacity and capabilities to deliver in office; and men can perform better going by the nature of Nigerian politics 6.6 percent.

Yet, the study examined respondents to know the reasons behind the poor performance of Nigerian women in 2011 general elections.

Table-6: Reasons for Poor Performance in Elections

Alternatives	No. of Responses	Frequency
Candidates popularity	466	68.3
Party platform	180	26.4
Vote buying and rigging	36	5.3
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

A cursory look at the above table indicates that 68.3 percent of them favoured popularity of the candidates as a major determinant of the outcome of elections while 26.4 percent said the platform the female candidates who

contested the election with another 5.3 percent posits vote buying and rigging.

Also, the researchers seek to know from the respondents some of the challenges faced by Nigerian women in politics.

Table-7: Challenges faced by Nigerian Women in Politics

Alternatives	No. of Responses	Frequency
Social prejudice and corporate culture	367	53.8
Multiple responsibilities and lack of internal party democracy	245	35.9
Intra-party politics and devalued economic status	70	10.3
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

An analysis of the table above shows that 53.8 percent respondents favoured social prejudice and corporate culture while 35.9 percent agreed with multiple responsibilities of women and lack of internal party democracy with another 10.3 percent saying intra-party politics and devalued economic status of women.

imperative that we discuss some of the problems and prospects of the findings. Firstly, 93.11percent of Nigerian women who voted in 2011 indicates women are aware of their right to vote and to be voted for.

In addition, the study asked if educational background was responsible for the electoral misfortunes of Nigerian women in politics.

Popularity of the candidates was also a major determinant of the outcome of elections and not necessarily the platform the female candidates who contested the election. This was exemplified in the Anambra Central senatorial election in Anambra State, a traditional stronghold of APGA where Prof Dora Akunyili of APGA (former DG NAFDAC and immediate past minister of information) lost to her strongest opponent Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige of ACN (former governor under PDP) who has an incomparable profound charisma as well as Senator Chris Anyanwu who retain her seat though under the platform of APGA against Ambassador and former Minister of Aviation Dr. Kema Chikwe of the PDP. However, it seems the maxim “one man one vote” as well as the devalued political and economic status of women may have influenced the voting pattern of some of the electorate. Economic status of women has implications for female candidates as many of them are not situated economically with their male competitors and therefore, would not be able to woe voters (Irabor, 2011). In some parts of the country, religion plays a significant role in determining women victory at the polls. This arrogance was showcased in Kwara state where Senator Gbemisola Saraki governorship ambition was

Table-8: Educational Background Responsible for Electoral Misfortune

Alternatives	No. of Responses	Frequency
Strongly Agree	497	72.9
Strongly Disagree	159	23.3
Undecided	26	3.8
Total	682	100

Source: Field Survey December, 2011

The above computation indicates that 72.9 percent strongly agreed while 23.3 percent strongly disagree with another 3.8 percent being undecided.

Discussion of Findings

This study highlighted a number of challenges which have varied implication for the attainment of goals and objectives of the Nigerian women in general and women politicians in particular. It is therefore

so difficult to sell to the people despite her father's firm control of Kwara politics.

The above responses are gendered and are merely playing up the traditional biases against women in a sexist society. The respondents believed that men are more qualified, capable and suitable for the tasks of the presidency and or governance than women, and therefore, did not vote for any woman contestant. Yet, another implication of the responses is that many women are still dictated to by men (husband) on what political decisions to take. The responses show that women, not minding the implications for their status in the system, have imbibed the biases and allow them to determine their fate in the electoral system.

The overall implication of the election results, partly from the electoral behaviour of women voters is that, women still preferred to vote for men in elections than their own gender. During 2011 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) primaries where Dr. Sarah Jubril the only female contestant scored one voter (the one she voted for herself) is a further confirmation of the above analysis. A situation akin to same sex violence and discrimination in electoral politics; another is that nothing has really changed for women in terms of converting their population or numerical strength to electoral success despite the varied advocacy for the political empowerment of women.

Challenges Facing Nigerian Women in Politics

Nigerian women have encountered a number of problems while venturing into politics. First and foremost, there is large scale discrimination from the men folk, both in voting for candidates and in allocating political offices. In the political arena, throughout the world, women, according to Walters (2005), face obstacles to equal participation in political decision-making processes. Although female representation at national levels has increased in recent years, progress remains marginal and slow. The advocated ideal of parity between men and women in national legislatures is still a distant goal. Women in Nigeria have always been grossly underrepresented in party membership as well as in the decision-making structure of the party. This emanated from the

exclusion of women from political governance and leadership in the colonial rule which introduced the British single sex model of administration as it was practiced in other British colonies. The basic promise of the colonial gender ideology was based on the principle that women are not to function in public domains as men but to be domesticated.

Corporate culture was yet another problem identified. It was discovered that employers prefer to recruit and promote men rather than women on the premise that women are less achievement oriented and are often distracted from their jobs by domestic duties. Thus, denying them of economic prosperity (Olojede, 1996). However, conclusions in literature on gender recognized that there are few, if any important differences between men and women that affect their job performance. Yet, societal prejudice tends to limit the scope of educational and professional training open to women. Many women tend to follow the traditional expected pattern of acquiring sufficient general education to be able to relate with their educated husbands, bring up their children and obtain employment compatible with their traditional roles.

Also, the conflict in multiple roles of women is another limiting factor, it has been established that multiple roles of women as caretakers of homes and offices workers tend to divide women's attention in different direction with negative consequences on performance at work and promotion. The multiple factors that hinder women's political participation include male-dominated cultures of formal political processes, traditional gender roles that exclude women from the public political sphere, absent or weak networks among women and lack of knowledge concerning public rights and duties, imbalances in access to education and resources, as well as unequal share of the burdens of reproduction. The womenfolk are being discriminated against in leadership and educational policies. This makes them play the role of the second fiddle and suffer many loses (See Olojede, 2009; Walter, 2005; Narayan, 1997).

Yet, political instability arising from frequent and uncoordinated changes of government hinders political participation of women. The prevailing intra-party politics makes it difficult for women to get party nomination to contest elective posts because there are few women party members, even the few party women are unable to capture significant party offices, consequently, the very low level of representation at the party executive level impact negatively on them as decisions and shadow elections are made at that levels. Some parties even refuse the candidature of women and thus, after campaigning with their resources, they are dropped at nomination level in favour of male candidates. 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 *purdah* system (i.e. house seclusion of women) (See Adamu, 1997).

Another problem inhabiting women from active political participation 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 would eventually get married and thus get incorporated into another family (2009). Thus, a larger percentage of the girls remain uneducated and unexposed. However, the ratio of female school enrollment is gradually changing in recent time, for example, in the Northern states we had Bauchi 39.6 percent, Adamawa 41.1percent Benue 44.4 percent, Borno 39.8 percent, Gombe 41.7 percent, Jigawa 35.9 percent Kano 40.3 percent, Katsina 32.6 percent, Kebbi 33.2percent, Nasarawa 38.2 percent, Niger 33.2 percent, Plateau 46.0 percent, Sokoto 20.0 percent, Taraba 29.4 percent, and Zamfara 26.7 percent. The South Western states we had include Lagos 50.2 percent, Oyo 51.1 percent, Ekiti 52.8 percent, Ondo 49.7 percent, and

Osun 50.4 percent. The Eastern states of Abia 50.7 percent, Anambra 52.0 percent, Ebonyi 49.2 percent, Enugu 50.3 percent, and Imo 50.1 percent, while the South-south had Akwa Ibom 50.8 percent, Bayelsa 48.3 percent, Cross River 49.7 percent, Edo 48.8 percent and Rivers 50.7 percent, a National Average 42.9 percent (Obanya in Nwagwu and Ifeanchi, 2009).

A cursory look on the above figures reveals discrepancy in the proportion of girls enrolled in primary education. The Hausa states have the lowest percentage rates. This agrees with Adamu's (1997) position that "among the Hausas, education is believed to conflict with the control of women's sexuality which exposes them to pre-marital sex. Thus, the girl is forced to marry (*awurendole*) the moment she reaches puberty irrespective of her level of education". There is the fear that anything can happen to her on her way to school and that she could be raped as a lot of pupils have to travel long distances to school.

Lack of adequate finance is yet, a crucial hindrance to effective female participation in politics in Nigeria. Large portions of the Nigerian female population are 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.

Nigerian Women and Political Participation: The Way Forward

The performance of women at the 2011 general elections calls for sober reflection and an urgent need to re-strategize for the 2015 general elections. There is urgent need for internal democracy in the political parties to whittle down male dominated party executives. There should also be examination/assessment of parties' primaries with a view to formulating and implementing reforms that will support a more level playing field.

The establishment of a Women's Political Institute where parties and all female aspirants and candidates would be equipped with relevant skills that underpin the positions should be desirable. The outcome would inform necessary remedial steps aspirants should take to address gaps to reposition them for exigency of electoral campaigns and elective office.

Formal education, bills of rights, various development programmes of different governments have helped in the upliftment of Nigerian women. Nigerian women contribute enough to national development as their contributions could be seen in all spheres of life, even though their contributions to development still leaves much to be desired when compared to that of men. The situation could be improved by raising female literacy in Nigeria. Accidental pregnancy should not make a young lady to drop out of school. Such a victim can still make it academically if she is not discriminated against in the society. In some places in the world, single parents are in key professions through formal education. They are not relegated to the background in those cultures. Government can promote the education of girls by making education free for girls from poor homes (See Nwagwu and Ifeanacho, 2009; Acholonu, 2001; Iwerieber, 1996).

Women in Nigeria should also develop positive attitude to politics. It is by taking up leadership positions that they can institute reforms in favour of women. Nigerian women should learn to assert themselves right from home by fighting discriminatory and sexist practices even in the wider society they should not nurture patriarchy but fight it. Nigerian women need spiritual reawakening in order to rediscover themselves and have lofty dreams that will take them to greater heights (See Madunaga, 1985).

In order to bring about improvement in political participation of women, there is need for women empowerment. Empowerment according to Bergriffswelt (in Acholonu, 2001) means providing resources to people in disadvantaged situations, so that they can strengthen their own capacities in order to

fully participate in the community and to articulate their interests. This requires the full participation of all affected people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions that determine the well-being of societies. Empowerment of women is a 'bottom-up' process of transforming gendered power relations as well as social, economic, legal and political institutions. Increasing women's participation and improving their shares in resources, land, employment and income relative to men, are necessary and sufficient for lasting changes in their economic and social position. This cannot be achieved in the absence of the existence of good gender relations and interaction between men and women.

Concluding Remarks

The issue of feminism and political participation in Nigeria as captured by scholars and social commentators has been espoused with an attempt at clarifying the intellectual "cobweb" surrounding the electoral behavior of women and successes or failure of female aspirants in Nigerian politics. In addition, searchlight was also beamed on the theoretical framework for a better understanding of the concepts under interrogation. Thus, different theories on the concept of feminism have been examined as postulated by scholars. An attempt has also been made to establish the nexus between feminism and gender inequality in Nigerian political space.

It is the position of this paper, that the prospects of Nigerian women in politics are bright. The 2011 census figures update shows that women are almost numerically ahead of men. Moreover, some of the obstacles highlighted above are already being removed. For example, the number of educated women in Nigeria has quadrupled over the years. Many members of this new class are willing and able to participate effectively in politics at various levels. The number of girls admitted into schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities has increased phenomenally. In the northern part of Nigeria, a quiet but significant social revolution is now taking place among women. It may not be very long before education reaches the corridors of the

purdahs. Even nomadic men, women and their children including females are now receiving education which is invariably a source of political, economic and social power.

Yet, the emergence of the Better Life Programme (BLP), in the era of late Dr. (Mrs.) Maryam Babangida as Nigeria's First Lady, the initiation of the Family Support Programme (FSP), in the era of Hajiya Mariam Abacha, the establishment of the National Commission for Women also in Mrs. Babangida's era, later the Ministry of Women Affairs, and the increasing positive role and concern of present Nigeria's First Lady, Dr. (Mrs.) Dem Patience Goodluck Jonathan pet project "Women for Change and Development Initiative" (WCDI), and other women liberation organizations such as Women in Nigeria (WIN), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) etc over women empowerment and increase of women in governance to meet up with the millennium development goal (MDG) target, one may confidently state that women organisations are now beginning to find a rallying point for common action politically, economically and socially.

However, the challenges ahead will truly test the motive of the first lady's pet project Women for Change and Development Initiative (WCDI). Will it take a recess now that President Goodluck Jonathan has won or will it start preparing women for 2015 general elections? The short term objective of getting women to participate in 2011 general elections may have been achieved. Although we acknowledge the fact that Women for Change and Development Initiative (WCDI) may have been instrumental to the increased participation of women at the general elections, however, the electoral success was not in favour of female candidates.

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