

AN ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN
NIGERIA FROM 1999 TO 2015

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Abstract

Women constitute a substantial percentage of the country's population, yet they occupy a secondary place in relation to men counterpart politically, economically, socially and culturally. The paper uses patriarchal theory in order to have an insight into women political participation in Nigeria. This paper adopts secondary method of data collection, which involves the use of textbooks, Newspapers, magazines, internet materials and other documentary evidence. The study reveals that women have huge population, but they are not heard politically in terms of elective and appointive positions in Nigeria due to certain structural and cultural impediments, ignorance, and poverty. In the light of the above findings, the paper recommends that government should provide conducive environment to encourage women participation in decision making process of the country. This can be achieved by making sure some positions are reserved for women since they don't have the economic power, strength and education to compete with their male counterparts. The family should establish a family democratic system where the children particularly the women will be thought the act of decision making and express themselves on matters that affect them in the family and society at large. Also government should by way of law prohibit all forms of cultural practices against women to boost their confidence and performance in politics in Nigeria.

Key word: Women, Family, Election, Political participation

Introduction

The global political economy in recent times has been dominated by conversations around women political participation as the entire world is moving towards adopting democracy as the most acceptable form of government where the citizens irrespective of their gender have the right to take part in the governing process of their country. These conversations were informed by the incessant and continued global neglect, segregation and marginalization of women in the political sphere of nations. The UN General Assembly in 2011 acknowledged the fact that "women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from political sphere, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low level of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women." Women have huge population worldwide, but they are marginalized.

The neglect and marginalization of women in the political scene is worst in the developing countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa where women are treated like inferior creatures due to some structural and cultural constraints. Nigeria being a developing country has poor records of women

political participation. In fact, there was a near absence of women in the political sphere of the country in the 1963 First Republic, 1979 Second Republic and 1993 aborted Third Republic. And the Nigerian 4th Republic which was ushered in on the 29th May, 1999, after nearly twenty years of military rule, one issue that have also dominated the political scene is women participation in the democratic process of the country. The present democratic dispensation, like all the successive ones, has skewed participation in governance against women. In other words, male monopoly of power did not only continue to exist but has also become consolidated...The involvement of women in political participation in Nigeria differs in 'time' and 'space' (Gairoonisa, 2008).

During the pre-colonial era, the involvement and recognition of women in the political affairs of Nigerian societies were quite visible. Different kingdoms and empires which later transformed into Nigerian state involved women in leadership positions in family, food production, religion, warfare and politics despite the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian societies. There existed a political structure that incorporated the involvement of women such as the 'Iyabo' or Queen- Mother in Yoruba land, 'Umuada' or eldest daughters of lineages in Igbo land, 'Sarauniya' or Queen in Hausa land, and 'Torkwasi' or Queen in Tiv land (Ali, 2019).

The emergence of colonial rule in Nigeria has served to undermine women political participation. This is because colonial administration at the inception introduced the British single-sex model of administration as was practiced in other British colonies to the detriment of women (Sofola, 1998). The administrative and educational policies of the colonial administration were gender bias, giving preference to the male counterpart. As a result, the male became more sophisticated and advanced politically, economically, educationally and administratively. This according to Awe (1998) led to "the domestication of women. They were not to function in the public domain like the men." The loss suffered by women in the colonial era and the institution on ground shaped women orientation, behavior and conduct in later years (Ako-Nai, 2005).

However, the trend of exclusion of women in the democratic process continued even after Nigeria got her independence from the British on the 1st October, 1960. In the First Republic women were completely missed out and this is worst in the Northern part of Nigeria not until in the Second Republic which began in 1979; and the long time of military interregnums contributed greatly to the suppression of women in the political process of Nigeria. This is because military administrations are by their nature, male-dominated, hence, the exclusion of women (Awe, 1992). Lewu (2005) posits that:

Political instability arising from frequent and uncoordinated changes of government hinders effective political participation of women. Prevailing intra-party politics makes it difficult for women to get party nominations 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 party executive level impacts negatively on them as decisions and shadow elections of candidates are made at that level. Some parties even use to refuse the candidature of women. Thus, after campaigning with their resources, they are dropped at nomination level in favour of male candidates.

The present democratic dispensation which is tagged as 4th Republic is expected to liberate women and give them the opportunity to participate actively in the democratic process of Nigeria. This is because women now are well educated, well informed and well organized, but they are still

treated with disdain. They are subjected to gross inequality on the basis of three recognized dimensions of inequality- class (economic situation), status (social position) and political power, women occupy a secondary place in relation to men, a position comparable in many aspect with the minorities (Efem, 2008).

The above situation is very disturbing for the nation's democratic experiment as less attention is given to women political participation. Therefore, the objectives of the paper are to examine women political participation, forms of participation, factors militating against women political participation in Nigeria and the way forward.

Clarification of Concepts

Women

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary " A woman is an adult female human." Therefore, women are adult female human and they constitute a substantial percentage of human race. Records show that Nigeria's population is estimated to be about 140 million people, and out of this population figure 68, 293, 683 million are women, about 70 percent of this population is in the rural areas and most of them are women. A good number of Nigerian women participated in political campaigns, rallies, symposium, conferences; they participate as electoral officials during elections, vote during election; a few of them contest for elective positions and a few of them are given appointive positions.

Family

Family is the basic unit of the society and it is the primary agent of political socialization of a child. And the family as agent of socialization comprises of fathers, mothers, uncles, nephews, nieces and other relatives who inculcate certain values into the children, such values like respect for elders, patriotism, humility, hard work and dedication to duty. The activities in the family translate into activities in the state because the state is merely an embodiment of family activities. Any decay at level of the family affects the state, the children take to the state what the family give to them and take back to the family what the state give them. Omodia, (2006) posits that the level of Nigeria's economic and political development could be said to be a reflection of the underutilization of family values for national development while repudiating those practices that are inimical to social growth. Such practices include the discrimination against the female child in homes as regards participation in decision making, right to qualitative and quantitative education, right to inheritances to mention a few.

However, the neglect and political discrimination against the women in the Nigeria due to certain cultural and structural obstacles have adversely affected the social, economic and political development of the women in the country. And because of the patriarchal nature the Nigerian state families become static, autocratic, and uninformed. This autocratic tendency has contributed greatly for the neglect of the women in the family and the state at large. Omodia (2006) argues that thus, the history of women in the Nigerian politics has been characterized by low participation of women in seeking competitive political offices due to their experiences in the family where they are often neglected to the background and discriminated against both socially and economically. Therefore, to promote women political participation in Nigeria the family should design a family democratic structure where the children particularly the women will be thought the values of decision making and express themselves on matters that affect them in the family and the state levels.

Election

Elections are the processes and procedures by which citizens of a democratic country select either through direct voting or indirectly those who will represent them in the parliament and other positions in the government (Johnson, 1994). Ujo (2004) describes election as the procedure that allows members of an organization or community to choose representatives who will hold positions of authority within it. Election is an institutionalized procedure for the choosing of office holders by some or all of the electorate and as such, it is a defining characteristic of modern democracy (Saka, 2008).

Thus, election is what distinguishes democracy and authoritarian form of government, as it involves the freedom of choice of both government and leaders. Election refers to the act of selecting or choosing candidates for an office through voting. It is a process or means which the electorates choose their representatives into government positions (Nwankwo, 2002). As in all democracies the electorates have constitutional mandate to choose their leaders in free and fair elections without legal, social and political obstacles. It is therefore a democratic right to give their mandate freely to political parties and candidates of their choice (Agwu, 2005).

Election is related with the concept of franchise or universal adult suffrage. Franchise or universal adult suffrage is in practice, voters are eligible to vote when they satisfy the following conditions: the voter must not be a criminal in the prison or a lunatic, the voter must be a citizen of Nigeria, the voter must attain the age of 18 years before he or she can be allowed to vote, the voter must have registered during the registration period to obtain voters card to enable him or her cast his or her vote on the day of election, and the voter may be required by law to reside in a place for a certain number of years, where he or she wants to vote.

Political Participation

Political participation is the involvement of the individual at various levels of government activities in the political system. The political activities may range from non involvement to office holding. Popular participation presupposes that every citizen has the right to participate in the political process in whatever capacity he deems fits (Henry, 2008). According to George Katab cited in Ali (2000) "the movement toward greater participation is linked with the concept of 'citizenship' the aim is to rehabilitate the ideal of citizenship and to extend the practice of citizenship into as many areas of life as possible". Some authorities viewed that participation has an integrative function that it increases the feeling among individual citizens that they 'belong' to their community".

J.S. Mill sees "an 'active' public spirited type of character being fostered within the context of popular participatory institutions. Mill sees this quality as much developed by participation existing before hand and thus, the political system has a self sustaining character". He further argued that "where the individual is concern solely with his own private affairs and does not participate in the public affairs, then the self regarding views suffer as well as the capacities for responsible public action remains underdeveloped".

Theoretical Framework

The paper uses the patriarchal theory as the theoretical framework of the study. The rationale behind this theorization is to have an insight into the subject matter of women in political participation in Nigeria. The issue of dominance of the male actors still common in the traditional or primitive societies like Nigeria, where someone's birth determines the role he or she plays in the

society. The male actor is the man, the father and the head of the family; he gives instructions and directions to the family or the entire household.

The patriarchal theory is associated with Sir Henry Maine, who in his book the "Ancient Law" (1861) and "Early History of Institution", proclaimed the supremacy of male actors over a group. Maine patriarchal theory is built on the following assumptions that: (i) the unit of primitive society was the family in which descent was traced through male and in which the eldest male parent was absolutely supreme. (ii) The single family broke up into more families, which held together under the head of the first family-that is expansion into tribe. (iii) An aggregation of tribes makes the State (Appodorai, 1971).

However, the major preoccupation of patriarchal theory is the proclamation of the superiority of the male folk over the female folk in the family, descent is traced through the male child; he is the head of the family; he exercises absolute dominion and takes virtually all major or important decisions in the family and the female child is relegated to the background. The right of the male child (father) is held to be his right to govern his family. In the light of this, all forms of activities, including political activity is spearheaded by the male child and this scenario is extended to the State (Ali, 2019). This created a situation where the male child is given more attention than the women child and they are trusted and entrusted with the political power and authority to decide in the country.

Omodia (2006) observes that:

One could understand the socio-economic and political discrimination against the female child in families and by extension the state based on the understanding that the modern state emerged from the background where economic and political powers were entrusted into the hands of the male child rather than the female child.

The patriarchal theory creates the kind of family system that is anchored on the supremacy of the male child and the relegation of the female child in the family. The theory is gender bias and does not give room for women liberation. The theory does not consider and accommodate the interest of the girl child or women as equal stakeholder in running the activities of the family and the state. The theory is equally static as it does not move with time because society is dynamic, things change constantly. The kinds of states we have today that are antagonistic to women political participation are direct consequences of patriarchalism. This is because the state is a combination of families and patriarchal authorities are converted into the state. And the state politics becomes patriarchal, a man affair and the women are alienated in the political sphere. In Nigeria there is near absence of women in politics and governance due to the patriarchal nature of the country.

An Overview of Women Political Participation in Nigeria

Globally, women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally... In line with global trend, Nigerian women constitute nearly half of the population of the country (Oloyede, 2017). Yet women are relegated to the background in relation to men counterpart politically, economically, socially and culturally due to some certain cultural, structural, and religious abuses. This situation has engendered in recent times many studies on gender and feminism, like gender and development, feminist theorizing in political science and international relations, political economy and other disciplines of the social science and the humanities (Efem, 2008)

Nigeria women are critical stakeholders in the political economy of the country. It is on record that women are responsible for the reproduction of the labour force and production of about 70 percent of the nation's food supply, but have access to less than 20 percent of the resources available in the agricultural sector for instance land, inputs and credits; they constitute less than 18 percent of workers in the formal sector and most of them are lower cadre staff such as the cleaners, clerical and secretarial staff (African Women Leaders Project, 2007). And record shows that 6 percent representation in contested offices in 2007 despite their population and huge representation at political rallies and campaigns.

A woman participation in politics is an endeavor that should be encouraged in Nigeria, not only because of their huge and overwhelming population but also their input is required for the overall economic and political development of the country. Women are always noticed in all political activities like rallies, campaigns, votings, and conferences among others. They are seen in crowd but they are not heard enough at the end of the day. The issue of women active participation in terms of contesting elective positions becomes a mirage in Nigeria. Some ardent women advocates are of the view that there should be increasing active participation of women in politics; another set of people agree that women should be given opportunity to participate in elections; while some are of the opinion that women have no business in politics, hence should be confined to house or domestic chores. This last opinion was highly criticized as being archaic.

The Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission provided some data in all the geographical zones of the country: That in 1999, women recorded only 3 percent representation in contested offices. In 2003, the figure rose to 4 percent and 6 percent in 2007. Only 909 females contested elections in 2011. This represents about 9.1 of the over 10,000 candidates. The breakdown of women political participation across the geopolitical zones is as follows:

South West recorded 15.5 percent of the 2116 candidates in the election;

South East recorded 11.9 percent of 16.11 candidates in the election;

South South recorded 10.5 percent of the 1624 candidates in the election;

North central recorded 8.5 percent of 1371 candidates in the elections;

North East recorded 4.2 percent of the 1187 candidates in the election.

North West recorded 2.3 percent of the 2088 candidates in the election.

Across the States, the FCT had the highest number of female candidates with 24 percent followed by Ekiti (20.9 percent), Osun state (20.5 percent), Lagos state (17.8 percent) Kogi state (17.0 percent), and Ebonyi State (16.0 percent). On the contrary, Bauchi and Yobe recorded 1.1 percent and 0.8 percent respectively while Jigawa did not record a single female candidate.

Across the political parties, APGA had the highest number of female candidates representing 12.2 percent of the 640 candidates it fielded at the election. Labour party, ANPP, PDP and CPC ranked next in that order with 91 women representing 11.7 percent of 775 candidates, 77 women representing 6.6 percent of 1293 candidates, 84 women representing 5.6 percent of 1510 candidates and 64 women representing 5.5 percent of 1167 candidates respectively.

From 1999 to date, no woman has been elected as a president or a governor of a state in Nigeria, though a few contested and won elections into National Assembly and State Assemblies but the

level of representation is still very low. This is clear in all states of the federation. In 2003, there were no female members of House of Assembly in the following states: Adamawa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Oyo, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara states. This shows that in all political zones of the country, women are underrepresented. Subsequently in 2007, 2011 and 2015, some women contested and won very few seats in the national and state assemblies but it is not enough because of their number, they need more representations. In 2011 only one contested for president, PDP, and she could not survive the party primary, she got one vote despite the large number of women that attended the primary election. In 2015, 5 women out of the 14 persons contested the vice president position while 14 contested for president (Ali, 2019).

The national women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7 percent in the elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent, Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent and West Africa Sub Regional Average of 15 percent (Oloyede, 2017). In Nigeria, about 51 percent of women are involved in voting during election. Despite these, women are still under represented in both elective and appointive positions. Available statistics revealed that overall political participation in government of Nigeria is less than 7 percent (Agbalajobi, 2010). However, Nigeria has been showing low level of women political participation in elective, appointive and administrative positions. This scenario has become a subject of concern by the civil society organizations, and women groups for the nation not able to meet up with the 30 percent affirmative action reached at Beijing. The table below captures wholly women elective positions in Nigeria, 1999 -2015.

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Vice President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	8(7.3)	109	7(6.4)	109	8(6.4)
House of Reps	360	12(3.3)	360	21(5.8)	360	23(6.4)	360	26(7.2)	360	19(5.3)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
Deputy Governor	36	1(2.8)	36	2(5.5)	36	6(16.7)	36	3(8.3)	36	4
State House of Assembly	990	12(1.2)	990	38(3.8)	990	52(5.9)	990	62(6.3)		
SHA Committee Chairpersons	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887	----		
L.G.A Chairpersons	710	9(1.2)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	----		
Councilors	8,810	143(0.02)	6,368	267(4.2)	6,368	235(3.7)	6,368	----		

Source: Hundred Years of Nigerian Women, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013.

The above situation does not go down well with the Nigerian women, and even in the appointive position they have been relegated to the background. Only few of them take part in democratic process, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from the Western part of the country became the first female Federal

Parliamentarian in 1960 and in 1961 Mrs. Margret Ekpo contested and won election into the Eastern House of Assembly; in 1983 only Ms Franca Afegbua was elected into the Senate. From 1979, 1993 and 1999 to date the record of women political participation is low and the condition is even worse in the Northern part of Nigeria. In the Second Republic only Mrs. Jenat Akinrinade and Mrs. Adenike Egun Oyagbola were appointed Federal Minister, and Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the first woman Permanent Secretary. In the aborted Third Republic, Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpeyong emerged Deputy Governors of Lagos and Cross Rivers States respectively; and Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele for Senate and Mrs. Florence Ita Giwa for House of Representatives and a handful of women won elections but none of them were elected as President, Vice President and Governor.

During the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar (June 9, -May 29, 1999), there were two women in the Federal Executive Council: Chief Mrs. Onikepo Akande (Ministry of Commerce) and Dr. Laraba Gombo Abdullahi (Ministry of Women Affairs), (Kolawale, 2013). In 1999 and 2003 out of 130 federal boards of public corporations only 7 (5.6 percent) were women. During the period, out of 47 cabinet ministers appointed only 7 were women which represent 14.89 percent. One woman was appointed as Director-General of a government regulatory agency. Special Advisers and Senior Special Assistance were 2 women respectively. Six (6) were appointed as Special Assistant, 8 women as permanent secretaries and one woman as special assistant to the Vice President. In 2011 more women were given political appointment, 12 women were appointed as Minister out of 42 which represent 30 percent and 4 women out of 20 as Special Advisers (Oloyede, 2017).

There is a need for the women advocacy groups, civil societies and individuals to continue to advance for gender equity in politics in Nigeria and this would have contributed to reasons we begin to see women aspiring for the position of the president, vice president and other elective posts for the forthcoming general elections.

Factors that Determine Women Political Participation

Internal Factors

The internal factors are in the person or the actor. These factors are personal status, education, sex, wealth and religion that oriented the person toward political participation. Education is one of the ingredients of democracy. People need to be educated about the government, its policies and programmes (Ali, 2017). If a person is educated, he will be in a position to understand his society better, and free himself or herself of all sorts of primordial sentiments. Almond and Verba (1953) posits that "the more stimuli about politics a person receives the greater the likelihood he will participate in politics and the depth of his participation".

External Factors

The external factors are related to the nature of the political environment itself; political institutions and structures, the pattern of political values and beliefs. Here the ruling class or elite are the constituent of ideology. They use the machinery of state to control others. Their attitudes to political participation are to maximize participation. But others may actually see participation as a threat to political power. Mass participation means more demands on the political system and political disturbances would be caused by the failure to meet these demands (Idris, 2000)

Normative factor

By normative factor it is understood that a respondent to the value usually positive which the electorate perceives the act itself to have. There can be little questions that very broad parts of the mass public respond to the norms of citizen duty which are so much part of the ethos of liberal

democracy. Positive values like accountability, rule of law, due process, credible elections, and good governance could spur women to participate actively in the democratic process of the country.

Instrumental factor

Equally common on conceptions of liberal democracy is the idea that electorates participate for instrumental reason of wanting to influence the action of the government. Although a long series of studies have shown little the ordinary voter knows that responses to perceived differences in the general policy image of the parties for their candidates are among the motives for participation. It is obvious that two forces governing the electorates two choices whether to vote and how to vote come together and many other factors which may lead the voter to prefer one party to another becomes forces of inducing him to participate. Thus, explanation of different levels of participation offered by Lipset and his colleagues (1954) cited in Idris (2000) relied heavily on the assumption that electors will have used their ballot for instrumental purpose.

Expressive factor

Participation may also be expressive behavior, an act which is undertaken for gratification that is not related to any policy of government. Many writers have commented on the similarity of the psychological involvement of mass participation in political contest and involvement of spectators in sport. Much of the political interest of the electorates is similar to the interest shown by sporting public. The expressive functions of voting broaden the sources of participation to include subconscious or no rational factors (Lane 1959), as in the case of voters whose adult partisan commitment expresses a rebellion against the political belief of their parents.

Factors that Hindered Women Political Participation in Nigeria

Women are special species that need not only to be respected but also dignified. They have huge population, they constitute substantial portion of voters' population, and they are seen politically but they are not heard politically in Nigeria. Their conditions were compounded with our contact with colonial rule, prolonged military rule, structural impediments through discriminatory laws and institutions, high rate of illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, and erosion of confidence. As a result women continue to be largely marginalized from political scene, and other aspect human endeavour. Women are underrepresented as voters, elective offices, civil service and even private sector. Thus, this happens despite their great experience in leadership, agents of change and their right to equal participation in democratic governance.

The first factor that work against women political participation in Nigeria can be traced to colonial rule. Our contact with colonialism threw away the traditional leadership roles played by women during the pre-colonial era. The political structures of Umuada or eldest daughters of lineages in Igboland, Iyabo or Queen-Mother in Yarubaland, Sarauniya or Queen in Hausaland, Torkwasi in Tiv land were relegated by the British colonia rule in Nigeria. Awe (1992) observes that during the pre=colonial period, women were not left out of the political decision-making processes. It must be admitted, however, that virtually in all cases, the men had a constant and greater grip over the political life of their society, but there were various ways in which the women were able to have an input into decision=making. The form of participation differed from society to society, but at no point could the women be ignored. The colonial administration for almost six (6) decades ignored women's traditional political responsibilities through its lopsided administrative and educational policies and laid foundation for none-inclusion of women in political process of Nigeria.

Another factor that works against women political participation is prolonged military regimes in Nigeria. This is because military rule is a form of government that is installed by the practitioners of violence, which is the army. The government is form through the barrels of gums and frequent

intervention of the military in the political process has made it difficult for women to have a say in governance in Nigeria. Military rule is a male dominated government; and Nigerian men contributed to the non-involvement of women in politics because of their chauvinistic attitude (Akinwumi, 1998).

Women find it very difficult participate actively because of the masculine nature of Nigerian politics, where male values are dominant. It is the masculine model of politics that has served to undermine women political participation in the country. Thus, Nigerian politics has been violent and seen as do or die affair. Women become apprehensive of the hostile political environment. Their interests' threatened because of fear of attack and untimely death.

In addition, ideological, psychological and emotional factors tend to undermine women participation in politics. There is general believe that women lack confidence in themselves particularly in politics. This perception is first hinged on the fact that very few of them aspire for elective position compared to their male counterpart. And secondly even the few that have courage to aspire never get the support of their women folk. Thus, the overall pejorative perception of politics as do or die affair or dirty game sent bad and threatening signals that women ought not to participate in politics so that they don't get destroyed or stained.

In another development, there are cultural attitudes to this near absence of women in Nigerian politics. Traditionally, women are perceived to be the property of men. As a result, women are submissive to their husband. The two religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity, reinforced the supremacy of a man (husband) over a woman (wife). Man is the head of the family; he is the commander, the controller of the house. Major decisions are taken by a man with little or no input from the woman. This kind of relationship between a man and woman that is sanction by both tradition and religion has greatly affected women participation in politics in Nigeria. This situation manifested in different way in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba; and other minority traditional societies in Nigeria.

The family play great role for or against women political participation. Our traditional family systems in Nigeria are designed in such a way that women are relegated and their views not recognized in marriage and inheritance. Thus, democratizing our family systems would raise the status of women in Nigeria but the reverse has been the case. The democratic process instituted in Nigeria from independence to date has not recognize family which is the primary agent of socialization, rather attention is given more to secondary institutions like the political parties, civil society organizations, electoral body, legislative, executive and judicial institutions. The inability of the Nigerian state to reform family in line with the principles of liberal democracy of choice making, consent, accommodation of divergent opinions, rule of law, accountability, and due process has cause a lot of harm to the nation's democracy and democratization process. That is one of the major reasons Nigerian democracy has been characterized by autocracy, imposition, zero sum game, sectionalism and violence (Ali, 2019).

The nonchalant attitudes of the Nigerian state in providing for constitutional provisions on gender equality have contributed to this menace. This is despite long standing debate on quota system, and the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the 1995 UN conference in Beijing as well as Beijing platform for Action; which spelt out guidelines for increasing the political participation of women. Nigeria went through a lot of constitutional conferences and reviews that should have been utilized to effect this important change yet nothing is done. This is a conspiracy against the women on the part of the government, and policy makers to keep women under perpetual jeopardy politically, and kill their voices and initiatives. This is not healthy to constitutional democracy, as one sector of the population is relegated.

There is also a challenge of socio-economic issues which has to do with low level of education of

women and high level of poverty. Studies have shown that men are far ahead of women in terms of adult literacy level, primary and secondary enrolments and vice versa in terms of primary adult drop outs. Record also reveals the traumatizing effects of the feminization of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, whereby women have been discriminated against in the occupational structure of employed persons, access to land, credit facility and other financial resources. As a result of this, women lack money required for a vibrant and effective electioneering campaign and mobilization of people to win election.

The preponderance of money in party politics undermines women political participation. Political parties monetized the politics where high interest and nomination fees are charged by them. For example, the People Democratic Party charges 12 million naira for the presidential candidate; All Progressive Congress charges 45 million for presidential candidate and 24 million for governorship candidate for the 2019 general elections. This is quite outrageous and attempt to weed out women and less privileged people not to take part actively in the political process of Nigeria (Ali, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women are special species that need to be respected and dignified politically. They have huge population, they constitute substantial portion of voters' population, they are seen politically but they are not heard politically in Nigeria. Their conditions were compounded with our contact with colonial rule, prolonged military rule, structural impediments through discriminatory laws and institutions, high rate of illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, and erosion of confidence. It is on records that women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from political sphere, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low level of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women." Women are unfairly treated as voters; large percentage of them is seen in campaigns, rallies, voting but they are not heard at the end of the day. They have poor representation in elective offices, civil service and in private organization. This occurs in spite of their huge potentials in leadership, agents of social change and their right to equal participation in democratic governance.

Therefore, in the light of the above the study recommends for the following:

- i. There is need for constitutional provision of an affirmative action for women especially the quota system. The constitutional provisions should be specific and clear allocating at least thirty (30) percent of legislative seats to women in line with the international minimum standard.
- ii. Also the constitution should oblige the political parties to introduce quota system for women in their choice of candidate for all elective positions.
- iii. Education is a key to socio-economic and political development of women as well as increases the visibility of women in political participation. Education is a universal need, only a few women have access to it. There is need to increase the enrolment of women into schools to have access to education to enable them realize their dreams for economic emancipation and political emancipation.
- iv. The family system should be democratized, where a female child decides who become her husband and father of her children. This will give her a sense of belonging and integrate well in her community.
- v. Adoption and enforcement of existing legislations and conventions on gender equity at all levels of governments in Nigeria.
- vi. Government should provide conducive environment to encourage women

participation in decision making process of the country. This can be achieved by making sure some positions are reserved for women since they don't have the economic power, strength and education to compete with their male counterparts.

- vii. Eliminations of all forms of abuses against women and girl child will enhance women political participation in Nigeria.
- viii. Government should by way of law prohibit all forms of cultural practices against women to boost their confidence and performance in politics in Nigeria.
- ix. The two major religions, Islam and Christianity should encourage the worshipers to see girl child training and sending girl child to school as an act of worship.
- x. The family should establish a family democratic system where the children particularly the women will be thought the act of decision making and express themselves on matters that affect them in the family and society at large.

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