

Review

Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects

Damilola Taiye Agbalajobi

Department of Political Science, College of Management Sciences, Redeemer's University (RUN), P. M. B. 3005, Redemption city, Ogun State, Nigeria. E-mail: lola2kid@yahoo.com. Tel: +2348057006670.

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Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country and are known to play vital roles as mother, producer, time manager, community organizer and social and political activist. But despite the major roles they play and their population, the society has not given recognition to these and to the fact that they are discriminated against. This is due to some cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. Nigerian women have therefore over the years become target of violence of diverse form based on their positions in promoting transformative politics. The research methodology is termed qualitative research and with the use of secondary data gathered from university libraries, news print and journals. This paper will therefore examine the theoretical perspective of the discrimination and inequality suffered by women; secondly, access the current status of women in politics and the various efforts made by them for their political empowerment; thirdly, identify problems women face in their quest to participate in politics and lastly suggest possible measures for their political empowerment.

Key words: Women's participation, political participation, political process, patriarchy.

INTRODUCTION

According to Afolabi et al. (2003), women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies women assume five key roles: mother, producer, home-manager, community organizer and socio-cultural and political activists. Of these roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by women movements attributed to historical gender discrimination and inequality. Hitherto the emergence of these movements, gender roles was divided between the male and female sexes. These roles can be broadly classified into- the productive and the reproductive gender roles. Whereas the productive gender roles were mainly associated with the male sex, reproductive gender roles were exclusive to their female counterparts.

This societal reality was deeply rooted in the cultural beliefs and values of societies in the world. "...from those societies we might want to call most egalitarian to those which sexual stratification is most marked, men are the locus of cultural value. Some area of activity is always seen as exclusively or predominantly male and therefore overwhelmingly and morally important" (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974: 20-22). 'As a consequence, women had for long suffered various forms of gender discrimination,

inequality and exclusion, especially in the area of politics'. The movement for alleviation/eradication of gender discrimination is also a multiple consequence of this system of beliefs and cultural values and norms.

These societal beliefs, as well as ethnic and most times religious doctrines and norms, have turned into self fulfilling prophecies. Sex role socialization assign distinct and often unequal work and political positions to biological sexes turning them into socially distinct gender -economists see this as the sexual division of labour. This concept is central to the Nigerian political system where sexes are assigned to different complementary tasks, now inherent in the labour market and the political scene (sector).

THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, there has been raging debates over the participation or desire of women in Nigerian politics. Some argue that: Women are regarded as weaker sexes are social constructs owing to social value, norms and beliefs, which have neglected their meaningful contributions and have placed them in a subordinate position

to men in the nation's political system. This 'sexual division of labour' in the political system is often traced to the onset of colonialism in Nigeria. Their Western cultural notion of male superiority reflected in their relations with Nigerians. The 1922 Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution disenfranchised women and limited the participation of adult male to the wealthy. This is not to say that there was no existing element of gender inequality in traditional state and stateless societies in Nigeria but that the colonial order made gender discrimination more pronounced. In traditional Yoruba states, for example, women held high political offices like the *Iyalode*, *Iyaloja*, *Iyalaje* and even the office of the *Oba*. But at the establishment of the colonial order, women became estranged to these rights politically, but in the Yoruba Kingdoms they could still perform their traditional roles.

The political enfranchisement of women in Nigeria politics seems to have maintained on the surface a level of gender equity politically, because it is assumed that constitutionally there are not barriers to women's participation. But what exactly is/are the problems and prospects women encounter in their quest to participate in politics? Women movements can be said to have been largely responsible for increase in political participation of women. Kira Sanbonmatsu recognized an important variable responsible for the increase in women participation other than women movements. In her study, she concluded that "women would be even more supportive of electing more women to public office if they were knowledgeable as men about the extent of women's under representation" (Sanbonmatsu 2003:367).

She also went further to distinguish their 'descriptive' representation from 'substantive' representation. Descriptive representation referred to the representation of their respective constituency, whereas substantive referred to representation based on gender (the prioritizing of the pursuit of women interest by female representatives). Thus, is women's participation actually substantive – for the pursuit of the interest of women; is women's participation actually descriptive – for the pursuit of the interest of their constituency; or is women increase in political participation a movement in itself? This study is aimed at evaluating women's participation in politics; those factors responsible for increase in participation and those that hamper participation. This study is also to determine if substantive representation is fundamental to women participation or not. Finally, this study is to determine other intervening variables that affects women's increase in political participation and informs their intention to do so.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

"If half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain

in serious jeopardy. We still have a long way to go and the United States must remain an unambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women's right in every country, every region, on every continent." Hillary Clinton.

Undertaking an academic exercise such as a discussion on women's participation in Nigerian politics will induce creating new, or agreeing to existing conceptual frameworks in gender and politics. Political participation here entails various variables of participation but basically voting in elections, contesting elective [public] offices. This is quite different from representation. Representation is basically entails elective/public offices held in relation to other representation. For instance, the increase of votes cast by women in elections from 10 to 40% of total votes cast in eight years signifies a form of increase in participation. But when the number of women holding public offices, when compared to men, is relatively low there is under-representation. That is, there may be an increase in participation of women and yet under-representation of women in politics; or there could be high-representation of women in politics and yet low-level of participation, depending on the standards used to measure participation, however, the former is rather common. In his work *The Objectives of Man and the Nature of Their Political Relations*, Chapman (1993:11) was able to discover that:

"Men are the major determinants of political actions and inactions generally concerned with the perpetuation of power of the state...when women compete with men for access to political power, they do so on the terms already established by men for competition among themselves. The success of women in politics like that of any group cannot be achieved within a system without displacing or replacing the existing elite. And a change in values which cannot occur independently in the socio-economic as well as political relations, without clear involvement of women in the political process through holding of various offices (positions) and make known their own ambition through consciousness and effective involvement in the political scene a condition which if absent allows or facilitates the political elites dominated by and govern women remain the same".

We will agree that the male predominated political environment has preconditioned the environment that their female counterparts compete with them in. Consciousness and involvement of women changes the values to enable a freer-for -the-women political environment. That is "...the fact of women's under-representation, if made known to the public, could shape political behaviour" (Duerst-Lahti and Verstegen, 1995).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Throughout recorded history in all part of the world, women

have been subjected to domination by men. This is as a result of persisting cultural stereotype, abuse of religious and traditional practices, patriarchal societal structures in which economic, political and social power are dominated by men and the role women have historically played as the followers of male political leaders.

This form of discrimination is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one. The only difference is that, it has lasted for so long in this part of the world as other developed nations of the world are moving towards gender equality and equity. Women are unjustifiably discriminated against in many ways. For instance in some courts and police stations in Nigeria today, women who propose to stand for sureties for accused persons who have secured bail routinely disqualified simply because they are women.

In spite of the fact that world over today, democracy has become a vital tool for attaining sustainable development; the impact of the definition of democracy remains elusive. Political participation which is sine qua non of democracy and allows for diversity of opinion and participation of both men and women cannot thrive by excluding the women folk that constitute half of the world's population.

According to Anifowose (2004) some established democracies like Britain and the U.S., democratic polyarchies, for a long time, were in fact male polyarchies. Even famous advocates of democratic and republican government rejected claims that women should be full citizens. For the most part, they adopted the prevailing view that the proper role of women was marriage, procreation and family, not politics. Thus, John Locke held that "all men are by nature equal, they never recommended that women be allowed to vote and considered it more or less self-evident that in family matters, the husbands have the final say (Anifowose, 2004).

Tracing the historical origin of male domination according to Anifowose (2004) is impossible, but believes that one highly plausible explanation is to be found in physical difference. Men are generally heavier, taller and even physically stronger than women and therefore more capable than women to enforce their will through physical violence and threat of violence. Women on the other hand are vulnerable because of their role of child bearing and nursing. In addition, discrimination and subjection of women is further enforced by custom, traditional, practices, beliefs and the law, behind which stood the coercive force of the state.

In sum, the key point is that discrimination against women has its root in the nature of our societies which celebrate men as being unique, stronger and fit for the public space while women are feeble and weak and meant to stay within the confluence of the private space. This has gone a long way to affect women's perception of politics and has therefore lead to a very low level of political interest, knowledge and activity of women in politics

CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

The 1979 Nigerian constitution guaranteed the rights of women to participate in active politics; however, the last decade has witnessed a relative increase in women's participation. This is only when we measure increase in participation with certain standards like the number of women who vote in elections; the number of public offices held by women; number of women related policies implemented by government etc. Over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in women's participation in politics in Nigeria considering these standards, yet there is inherently a pronounced level of under-representation of women in politics when compared with their male counterparts.

Women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the following ground; that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. Secondly that all human beings are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life. The right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. The 1999 Nigerian constitution by virtue of Section 40 states the following:

Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests: Provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this Constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition.

Section 42(1) of the same constitution states further that:

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

This further confirms that you can go to court to seek redress if as a woman your franchise is violated and that the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Section 77 of the Constitution also states:

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every Senatorial district or Federal constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Chapter shall return a member who shall be directly elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives in such manner as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly. (2) Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of

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

From the foregoing, it appears that there is nothing in the constitution, which excludes the participation of women in politics in Nigeria. Yet when it comes to actual practice, there is extensive discrimination. Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in the 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections held in the country. Men dominate most public offices till date. Female gubernatorial candidates have emerged but none has ever won and same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women yet they remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts.

Following two decades of military rule statistics reveal that women only secured 3% representation in contested positions in 1999, 4% in 2003, while in 2007 they made with only 6%. Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in past three general elections held in the country between 1999 and 2007. The result of the survey shows that no woman was elected as governor of any state in the federation. We only had few women as members of Houses of Assembly across the country and as members of the upper house (Senate) and lower house (House of Representative) of the National Assembly.

This survey shows a poor representation of women in the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections. In 2003 in States like Adamawa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Oyo, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara, no woman was elected as member of the State House of Assembly. In states where women were elected as members of House of Assembly, they were very few.

According to the figures collated from the database of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), records shows that a total 7160 candidates (men and women) contested in the April elections. Of this number, only 628 women participated. Out of the 25 candidates that participated for the office of the President, only 1 is a woman while 5 women contested for the office of the Vice President.

From the table we see that there are 9 female senators out of 109 Senators and 25 women in the House of Representatives of 360 members. There are 54 female members of the State Assemblies. This is two percent improvement of the 2003 general elections.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOW PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

Gender roles – Patriarchy

The family is the main institution of patriarchy (Kate Millet,

1970), which is an important concept in explaining gender inequality. Literarily, it means “the rule of the father”; more broadly, it refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women. This is inherent in most African families. Giving men a higher social status over females has crept into public life, which reflects in state activities. The family plays an important role in maintaining this patriarchal order across generations. The socialization of children to expect and accept different roles in life has created a social mechanism for the development of values that engender the several forms of discrimination against the female sex. The greatest psychological weapon available to man is the length of time they have enjoyed dominance over women, who have taken it for granted especially in the area of politics that often continue to stereotype women and justify their subordination.

Virility deficiency – women’s conception of politics

Some consensus has been of the belief that Nigerian politics is based on high political virility – those who have all it takes to compete in the turbulent environment; those who possess the wherewithal to take it by force when force is required; those that can march violence with violence. This consensus belief that men possess the superiority strength, competitiveness, are self reliant and are prepared to tussle in political endeavour, whereas women are considered too passive to engage in politics and governance. This consensus is also constructed by societal norms and values, which through socialization has defined different gender roles according to biological differences. Women’s perception of politics as a dirty game and continued fright at the thought of violence has further alienated them from mainstream politics.

In Nigeria there seems to be no critical understanding of the difference between “a visible agenda for women and an impacting agenda for women.” (Nkoyo, 2002:29). While severally, emphasis is laid on women’s numerical strength, translating such into the attainment of power has been difficult as women are perceived as “supporters club, team of cheerers and clappers” in contrast to their male counterparts. Women politicians seek offices on the premise of being different; most believe they must do what men are doing to succeed. And the meekness of women is not to their advantage in political tussle.

Lack of economic incentives (Financial backing)

Women’s historical experience of discrimination puts them at a disadvantage economically. Political campaigns are expensive and require solid financial backing for success. Over the years, sexual division of labour and job opportunities offered on sex basis has given men productive gender roles, enabling them to possess more purchasing power over their female counterparts. As an

implication, the Nigerian labour market has about 75% of labour being supplied by men. This economic disparity favours men to the disadvantage of women. Only few women that are affluent possess the economic power to bankroll political campaigns.

Societal value assumes that political activities are masculine and this makes it worse as financiers and sponsors of politicians prefer male candidates over female ones, since they believe they stand a better chance. Most success achieved by women in politics has been through women movements that sponsor women political aspirations financially and otherwise. Women dependence on men financially made manifest through wife's dependence on their husbands in families reveals the extent of financial incapacitation of women in Nigerian politics. As a result, women political aspirations have been grossly hampered by lack of financial bedrock to sustain their endeavor.

Discriminatory customs and laws

The customary practices of many contemporary societies are biased by subjugating women to men and undermining their self-esteem. The overall impact of gender bias, cultural norms and practices has entrenched a feeling of inferiority in women and placed them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their male counterpart in the socio-political scene even in urban centers.

These socially constructed norms and stereotype roles make women overplay their 'femininity' by accepting that they are 'weaker sexes', overemphasizing the dainty nature of their sex and regarding exceptional achievement as masculine. For example, most customs often prefer sending the male child to school over the female, who is expected to nurture siblings and to be married off. This marginally increases the illiterate women and stiffens their competition with their male counterparts in politics.

Lack of affirmative action quota

Affirmative Action is usually a measure intended to supplement non-discrimination; it is a broad term encompassing a host of policies that seek to support weak groups in society. They include policies where deliberate action is used to stop discrimination. A policy process of this kind allows for rules that have the objective of enhancing equal opportunity for individuals and the improvement, in the situation of marginalized groups. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This convention has variously been described as the "Bible of women empowerment" and "Women's International Bill of Rights." Since its adoption it has become a reference point for the women's movement in the demand for gender equality.

The Convention "reflects the depth of the exclusion and restriction practiced against women solely on the basis of their sex by calling for equal rights for women, regardless of their marital status in all fields – political, economic, social, cultural and civil. It calls for national legislations to ban discrimination, recommends temporary special measures to speed equality in fact between men and women" (UNESCO, 1999:6). The Convention provides that:

Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved. - Article IV, CEDAW.

The 1999 Constitution made provision somewhat similar affirmative action to supplement non-discrimination of contending parties. The Constitution provides that:

"the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also command loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or any of its agencies."

It is not the use of Affirmative Action that seems to be the problem but the practical effects and its linkage to fundamental ideas of fairness and justice. By the same token there can hardly be a stronger argument for gender based affirmative action than equal representation in a country where women who constitute about half of the population have been continuously sidelined in public life to the extent that they have never held more than 15% of both appointive and elective offices (See Table 1 for statistics of elected positions).

However, the Constitution was not explicit in ensuring equal representation on sexual bases. Unlike the constitutions of some African countries, notably South Africa and Uganda, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria takes no cognizance of the disadvantaged position of women and has no provision for gender equality. Apart from the general reference to nondiscrimination on the basis of sex etc, there is nothing in the constitution that is aimed at redressing the disparities that exist along gender lines in Nigeria. On the other hand, the Federal Character Principle, which is meant to ensure equitable representation of states and ethnic groups in national appointments, actually places women at additional disadvantage by implying that they

Table 1. Comparison of women representation in 2003 and 2007 general elections.

SN	Position	No. of available seats	No. of women elected and % total in 2003	No. of women elected and % total in 2007
1.	Presidency	1	0	0
2.	Senate	109	3 (2.27)	9(8.26)
3.	House of Representatives	360	21 (5.83)	25(6.98)
4.	Governorship	36	0	0
5.	State House of Assembly	990	38(3.84)	54(5.45)

Source: Gender Audit and IPU PARLINE database (2003 and 2008).

can only represent their states of origin. Where culture does not permit a woman to represent her place of birth, she loses a golden opportunity. There have been many cases where a woman's state of origin disallows her appointment and the husband's state also refuses to endorse her. In many of these instances the government plays safe by appointing a man instead. And this has continued to consolidate women's under-representation in national politics.

Other factors

- i. Inadequate knowledge of written and unwritten rules protecting women's political rights.
- ii. Religious Doctrine: Some religious doctrines militate against the active participation of women in politics and position of authority. As Millet puts it: "patriarchy has God on its side" that is, Christianity portrays Eve as an after thought produced from Adam's spare rib. Furthermore, it is held that the origin of gender discrimination began from their sins. Islamic doctrines strictly bar women from some political endeavour – public speaking etc. – that can facilitate their political ambitions.

In recent times, however, there have been a number of movements to the commitment, both to the personal and social change of women in their status in public life. Through series of women enlightenment, emancipation and conscious raising of groups on women movement, women subordination in politics have been reduced to an extent. Women through several of these platforms have played influential roles and this has further spurred more women in to politics.

FACTORS LEADING TO THE GROWTH OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Women Empowerment Programs

Sand Brook and Halfari defined women empowerment as a multi-dimensional process involving the transformation of the economical, political, social, psychological and legal circumstances of the powerless with its aim of

dismantling the cultural, traditional and social norms, which disvalue, disempower and dispossess women with its central objectives tied to the needs of women to opportunities, facilities, skill acquisition and position of authority, especially within the political sphere. This recent development accords women the opportunity to develop their individual talent and contribute more meaningfully to societal development, helping subvert cultural as well as the societal norms which have been of disadvantage to the women folk.

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

Activities of UN and other International Organizations

The principles, policies and actions towards ending gender inequality in Nigerian politics have been advanced and undertaken with the influence of international organizations by both government and non-governmental organizations. On its part, the United Nations (UN) has fostered several Declarations and Conventions aimed at ending all forms of political discrimination among women. Among such documents that prohibit women discrimination are:

- i. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- ii. The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- iii. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Following conferences in Copenhagen, Nairobi, Vienna, Cairo and Beijing, women participation on development

has become a recurrent issue as women access to decision making and full participation in public affairs is now recognized as a fundamental condition for democracy and for attaining sustainable development, as true democracy is characterized by full and equitable participation of women in both formulation and implementation of decisions in all spheres of public life. And no state can claim democracy if half of its population are excluded from decision making processes.

The UN also has programs and agencies dedicated in uplifting the status of women in political affairs, e.g. the 4th Conference of Women held in Beijing, China in 1995, with the theme “Equality Development and Peace Contriving Strategies” towards active liberation and empowerment of women with its overall aim at annulling those practices and values that discriminate against women; taking steps to increase the number of women representation in legislative bodies around the world; the improvement of women’s social, economic and political status, which is essential for the achievement of both a transparent and accountable government; ensuring and encouraging the women towards realizing their abilities and utmost importance in the political and social development such that they will be significantly represented in the decision making bodies in every organization; politically educating and empowering women to take active part in the political process as party members, leaders, voter and candidates.

Quotas and proportional representation

These are generally seen as a positive action of laws allocating quotas for women to assist in the promotion for gender balance in public life. Quotas are considered as a legitimate means of securing this end. In many countries the exclusion of women in politics is as a result of many reasons – financial, cultural, traditional and political. Asserting this fact and the reasons that have made it so implies that quotas should not be seen as discrimination towards men and cannot be branded unconstitutional as most quotas are formulated under neutral basis. The Law (Nigerian) provides for a maximum of 60% and a minimum of 30% representation for either sex, which was implemented as a result of the Beijing Conference. The Conference agreed that 30% of public seat and positions should be reserved for women. Nigeria records an increase of 78% progress in women’s election into public offices spanning from 1999 - 2007.

In the 4th Republic which started on May 29, 1999 the Nigerian political terrain had witnessed an increase in the number of women political appointees as few women have emerged as Chairpersons of Local Government Councils. Lagos State produced a female Deputy Governor in the person of Senator Bucknor Akerele. In the Senate, there were three (3) women namely Chief (Mrs.)

Florence Ita Giwa representing Cross-River State, South Senatorial District; Mrs. Stella Omu from Delta State and Hajia Khairat Abdul-Rasaq representing the FCT. Twelve (12) women in the House of Representatives; Barrister Iquo Minimah, Mrs. Patience Ogodo, Lola Abiola Edewor, Patience O. Etteh, Dorcas Odurinrin, J.F. Adeyemi, Binta Garba Kosi, Gbenni Saraki, Florence Aya, Linda Ikpeazu, Temi Harrinnan and Mercy Almona Isei. In the Executive Councils, Former President Obasanjo also appointed a number of women in the Federal Executive Council.

In the present administration eight (8) women occupy strategic ministerial posts, they are – Prof. Dora Akunyili the (Min. for Information), Mrs. Felicia Njeze (Min. of State), Mrs. Dlazani Madueke (Defence), Mrs. Agata Jerry (Transport), Mrs. Aishatu Dikku (Min. of State), Mrs. Grace Ekpiwhre (Science and Technology), Fatima Ibrahim (Min. of State of Energy and Power) and Mrs. Bingudu (Min. of women Affairs). From the foregoing it is evident that there has been an increase in the number of positions manned by women in Nigerian political affairs, afar cry from what persisted in the 1950s. This has been made possible due to the quota allocation system as approved by the UN to be implemented in global politics.

It can therefore be seen that the practice of the quota system assists in reducing the low-level of women participation in politics, a veritable solution to male dominated patriarchal society. It also stereotypes the presence of women, which changes the face of decision making, providing opportunities for substantive input. This technique contributes to no small measure in improving female intention to participate in Nigerian politics despite the prevailing political structure and societal norms, as “a woman’s experience is needed and necessary in political life and policy making in order to represent the entire society” (Phillips, 1995). “Quotas do not discriminate but compensate women for actual barriers that prevent women from pursuing a political carrier” (Bunagan et al., 2000).

Other amiable factors which increase women’s intentions to politics include:

- i. Support network and prospective role models: Through the identification of aspirants and pairing them with established women politicians, playing mentoring a role and providing capacity building training to young or aspiring female politicians.
- ii. Building a Coalition of NGOs and Grassroots women associations that coordinates the support and advocacy for women aspirants.
- iii. Awareness of their political and legal rights and to claim them.
- iv. An enabling environment that allows for women to engage in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way free from political harassments and violence.
- v. Establishment of legal funds to enable women politicians

challenge electoral malpractices.

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

Conclusion

Women Participation in Nigerian politics is an issue of great importance. Women have been put at the background politically for years; this has engendered a consciousness of women under-representation in public life. However, the intention of most women to participate in politics is basically to support their female folk, this is their substantive responsibility and it is even on this platform that most women emerge as public office holders successfully. They use the platform of women movement as a veritable platform to seize political power and consolidate the power on this same platform. Be as it may, there is an increase in women participation on these bases and women movements are promising in achieving gender equality and equity.

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