



GENERAL ASSEMBLY ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ASSEMBLEIA GERAL جمعية عمومية

#CODESRIA14

Creating African Futures in an Era of Global Transformations:

Challenges and Prospects

Créer l'Afrique de demain dans un contexte de transformations mondialisées :

enjeux et perspectives

Criar Futuros Africanos numa Era de Transformações Globais:

Desafios e Perspetivas

بعث أفريقيا الغد في سياق التحولات المعولمة :

رهانات و آفاق

**Electioneering, Electoral Violence and Fear of Crime: The Odds in
Mainstreaming Gender in Nigerian Politics**

Adediran Daniel Ikuomola



CODESRIA

08 - 12 June / Juin 2015

Dakar, Senegal





Abstract

The history of electioneering in Nigeria has been characterised by violence, electoral irregularities and various criminal activities. However the continuous campaign for women to be active in the democratic process has yielded little compare to the increasing number of women heading key positions in other domain. This paper therefore seeks to examine fear of crime and electoral violence in Nigeria as major factors mainstreaming women out of politics. Specifically the study investigates factors endangering women from politics, the trend and pattern of women's participation in election over the last decade among forty-five (45) key women leaders in the formal and informal economy. The study is anchored on Kanter's Glass Ceiling theory which explains women's roles in leadership. Collection and interpretation of data for this study were basically qualitative, involving the use of interviews and content analysis. Nocturnal arrangements and secrecy of political meetings were major sources of fear hindering women from actively engaging in politics. Thus the study recommends a constitutional approach that will stipulate a reasonable, minimum and special security placement for women politicians at little or no cost in mainstreaming gender in Nigerian politics.

Keywords: Women, politics, violence, security, empowerment





Introduction

The collective consciousness of women regarding the feminine mystique, which saw women's identity restricted to the roles of wife and mother are gradually fading off as more women are liberating themselves in the workplace especially in civil and corporate organisations. However the same cannot be said for women's involvement in politics. Currently statistics indicate that out of the 109 senators in Nigeria only six are women, while out of the 360 members of the House of Representatives only 26 are women, and in the State Houses of Assembly where there are more than over 1000 lawmakers across the country, only 53 of them are females. These figures represent only 5 percent which is grossly inadequate. By implication there are some states of the federation with no single female lawmaker either at the state or national levels. In Kano state with over 4million women for instance there is no single female senator or member of the house of representative from the state neither is there any woman in the state house of assembly. In Lagos state with over 4million women there is no single woman senator and only two out of the 24 members of the House of assembly are women (International Foundation for Electoral System, 2008; TMG, 2009; Sunday Punch, 2010).

Over the last two decades, much attention has been given to women's leadership and their roles in politics (Tedrow and Rhoads, 1999). One reason is that the literature on women's participation in leadership generally reveals women are less likely than men to participate in upper levels of administration, and fewer in heated political atmosphere (Warner and DeFluer, 1993). In the Nigerian political terrain like most countries in the developing world, however, there are growing number of women in the formal sector and a great increase of women in senior-level positions between 1986 and 2006 (Best, 2006). Yet little existing research explores completely what may be at work in shaping women's career paths especially in the area of political participation, which has been abysmally poor. Past research has shown that biological and cultural factors are major hindrances placing women at disadvantage points in politics. Less emphasis has been placed on the fear of crime and electoral violence most often subsumed under the traditional argument of women socialisation into the private domain as key issues undermining women participation in electioneering.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the fear of crime and electoral violence in Nigeria as major factors mainstreaming women out of politics. Specifically, the study investigates factors





endangering women from politics, the trend and pattern of women's participation in election over the last decade.

Research Setting and Methodology

The study setting comprised of two states (Oyo and Lagos). Respondents were drawn randomly from both the informal and formal sector, forty-five (45) key women leaders in the informal economy and six (6) key women in selected Non-Governmental Organisations. The NGOs include Campaign for Change (C4C); Food Basket, Live Above Poverty Organisation (LAPO), Civil Liberty Organisation (CLO), and Today's Woman (TW). The interview guide was used for data collection and the interpretation of data was done using content analysis supported by simple statistical explanation. The study is anchored on Kanter's Glass Ceiling theory which explains women's roles in leadership, which suggests that females aspiring leadership positions would normally face several additional barriers to career advancement than their male counterparts. These barriers include not being a good fit within cultures dominated by males, being excluded from informal interactions where critical information is shared, not receiving appropriate mentoring, lack of critical developmental assignments that leads to advancement, more reliance upon formal processes for promotional opportunities (Van Velsor & Hughs, 1990), and not being allowed chances for mobility (Adler, 1984).

Literature Review

Kanter's Glass Ceiling Theory of leadership

Among other things, Kanter's theory develops the idea that in highly skewed political positions, minority-group members, (emphasis on women) are at a particular disadvantage because of a number of social behaviours exhibited by majority members (men). For example, because minorities are very salient to members of the majority, majority-group members may exaggerate the differences between themselves and the minority and view minorities in terms of stereotypes. In response, minority members are posited to experience increased social isolation, performance pressure, and pressure to conform to role expectations defined by the majority. As groups begin to move toward less extreme distributions, these effects are predicted to become less exaggerated. Kanter also argues that as sex ratios become more balanced, minority members can become 'allies, can form coalitions, and can affect the culture of the group' (1977: 966). A typical example is the formation of women wings in every political party in Nigeria, a coalition in support of the dominant political parties.



Thus, in more balanced groups, members of the minority have the potential to influence management practices in ways that enhance their opportunity for success. While there have been studies that support the view that as minority representation increases, majority attitudes and behaviours toward minorities also improve (Konrad et al., 1992). It is at this level that Kanter's (1977) ideas about coalition formation and cultural change have particular relevance and has the greatest possibility of contributing to our understanding of the glass ceiling. If, as female representation in lower-level appointive positions increases, female politicians (1) become less salient to the male majority and therefore experience less isolation and performance pressure, (2) can form coalitions and support networks, and (3) are seen as critical organizational resources, this should influence female political career advancement in a positive way. The application of the social contacts perspective to the glass-ceiling phenomenon leads to the prediction that, over time, opportunity for women will improve as more women choose to enter previously male dominated political hierarchies. That is, as general societal values become more favourable regarding the appropriateness of women in political positions, more women will pursue competitive political career paths. As female/male ratios in lower-level political positions increase, women should experience less isolation and social pressure, begin to form coalitions and support networks, and become more acceptable as candidates for key political positions and not as appointees alone. This suggests that, as female representation in lower-level appointee political positions increases, it is just a matter of time before female representation in senior-political positions also will increase.

Women and leadership style

Although verbal and written evidences exist of supports for women to participate more in politics, a significant counterbalance often works against women: like most organizations in the world, are distinguished by their traditional bureaucratic structures and instrumental leadership conceptions (Amey, 1999; Amey & Twombly, 1993; Twombly & Amey, 1994). Instrumentalism is a functionalist doctrine stressing rational thoughts and strategic action. Implicitly, people and ideas are often situated as tools for organizational leaders to use in working toward increased efficiency. Instrumentalism as an organizational orientation has been found to be associated more closely with masculine ways of leading than feminine ways (Ferguson, 1984; Gherardi, 1995; Iannello, 1992).

Similarly Kanazawa (2005) has noted that men tend to rank financial reward and power positions much higher in their preferences for leadership, and strive for such positions; hence they are the ones who are more likely to succeed in achieving them, whereas “women have better things to





do'' which are less violent and aggressive in nature. Relational organizational constructs seek to include diverse groups, share power, build coalitions, as well as advance individual and community development. Consequently, women who enact more egalitarian or relational styles of leading are likely to face marginality within their organizations and to be marked as "outsiders" (Brown & Geis, 1984; Kanter, 1977; Wahl & Vocante, 1993). As Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) noted in their study of women in the academy, they often become "outsiders in the sacred grove." Osaghea (2001) has also noted that, in Nigerian politics and in the core clandestine political meetings, women are sidelined because of the pre-conceived belief that women cannot keep party secrets. Similarly as shown in past studies the accusation of women as lacking the guts necessary in politics has been linked with the relational use of power whereas men are more likely to embrace instrumental ways (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Moreover, studies suggest that most cultures expect women to use more nurturing behavioural styles (Williams & Best, 1990) and treat them harshly when they do not (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1998). All of these contribute to putting many women outside the political terrain in Nigeria.

Findings and Discussion

Factors Endangering Women from Politics

In the area of politics, respondents were keen in explaining the plight of Nigerian women in past decade, a common response to over two-third of the interviewees shows that their experience can be described as pathetic. Although women make up at least half the electorate in Nigeria, their presence in policy/decision-making positions is very low. A number of factors were mentioned as militating against women's active and effective participation in politics. Many described these factors, as having their roots in women's subordinate position in society, include: illiteracy, poverty, low self-esteem, ignorance, lack of confidence in other women, violent and non-conducive political environment (money politics, intimidation and violence), cultural stereotypes, religious barriers, high registration fees (which most women cannot afford), harmful traditional practices among others.

For some, the chauvinistic tendencies of male rulers of the land have relegated to the background. . Military incursions into politics were mentioned, emphasizing the fact that, especially during the years when Nigeria was under military rule, women were denied women any meaningful participation in politics:





None...I say no single woman was appointed as governor of the many states in the country or a member of the highest policy-making body (the Armed Forces Ruling Council) (Women leader C4C, Lagos).

Explaining further, a woman leader in Ikorodu –Lagos noted that the incursion of the military in government has turned out the present crop of politicians who have directly or indirectly looted the nation’s treasury, and are now better equipped in terms of economic power which women have not been privileged to gain during that era. This corroborates what Mba (1982:304) said several years ago about the political marginalization of Nigerian women, which is still very much applicable:

Nigerian women must come to recognize that politics determines the allocation of all resources in the society, and that their alienation from politics means that their special interest will continue to be neglected.

Currently, Nigerian politics are determined by political financiers who are predominantly males. According to - Pinto-Duschinsky (2001) “the use of money or the use of other material resources including women for political activities are usually within the hands of men”. It embodies the sources or means through which political activities are sponsored in a given country. The concept of political finance has two broad connotations: money used for electioneering (campaign funds) and money used for political party expenses (party funds), which has been referred to as rentier politics. Rentier politics in Nigeria has been characterized over the years by the dominance of ‘electoral machines’ controlled by political entrepreneurs comprised largely of wealthy former military officers and their civilian business cronies, usually male. The major political parties in Nigerian politics today are little more than grand agglomerations of the respective electoral ‘machines’ of the leading political financiers. Many Nigerian politicians are ‘sponsored’ by local and regional power brokers cum political entrepreneurs who finance their campaigns for public office.

Very rarely are women considered by godfathers and political heavy weight as good ‘materials’ to invest their money on. The ‘sponsorship’ is effectively a business transaction in which the patron recovers the ‘investment’ in the form of public works and procurement contracts, prebendal appointments of cronies to public offices and other forms of prebendal activity by the ‘client’ politician on assuming public office (Obiorah, 2004). In some cases where the patron and client failed to define with sufficient precision, the dimensions of the return on investment or the client balks at delivering per the agreed terms, the fallout has led to mass violence and political



destabilization as highlighted by discussants and interviewees in the section below on Anambra and other states.

The biological makeup of the female gender has been evoked as a factor hindering women in political participation. Their roles as mothers and wives have also been culturally influenced and predetermined. Expectation thus is for them to be gentle, providing care for their husbands and children. On the other hand a lot of women have come to see themselves as subjects, which must be provided for, or an object of beauty which must be maintained, which must look good all the time. This situation is deeply embedded in the socialisation process of the girl child in Africa where socio-cultural values and traditions are widely held.

Based on this, the bio-socio factors were evident in most statements from the field as women tend to see these factors as placing them at a disadvantage point:

The society frowns at women keeping late at night, most political meetings and gathering usually run into the mid-nights, especially when one is actively involved and wants to vie for a political post. As a mother, with children and husband at home, it is usually not easy. (Woman leader/Island Club, Lagos).

For another:

[...]if one wants to go far in politics as a woman, then she must have to trade some of her biological rights, if not all, to compete well with men. (Women leader, LAPO - Oyo).

Various highlights and comments from the bio-social points suggest that most women do not want to lose their feminine attributes in terms of roles, shape and beauty. On the other hand, the expectation of women as a moral custodian was also highlighted as a factor checkmating their political ambition. For instance the emphasis on marital responsibility was a criterion for women to be seen as capable for political positions, which goes to say that only married women should seek political offices. Thus for female candidates' marital statuses as a precondition for elective office exerts further pressure on women who have to prove themselves far beyond the men to be accepted. As one interviewee explained:

[...] the situation is that bad that virtually all political meetings are scheduled at nights... I mean late nights... It seems as if it is deliberate to keep women out of politics. Most times the meetings are far from home and venues are kept secret, you are only told



the area where it would be held, which means you should be prepared to hang around a hotel, and most times political meetings are in the hotel conference hall... for a woman you are seen as a prostitute especially when you are not accompanied by your husbands and before you know what is happening there are various allegations here and there, saying that you are now befriending one politicians just because one is into politics, after a careful thought of all these I have decided to relax for a while, I have lost a lot, I was almost losing my family too.... (Female officer, Today's Woman, Lagos).

Due to perceptions that woman's roles are best expressed in the domestic arena or at most in subservient positions to men, the political terrain in Nigeria is made difficult, particularly for women who not only aspire to leadership positions but also compete with men over these. Thus, findings from this research showed that women meet with stiff gender stereotypes as their political activities and behaviour is put to question. Stigmatisation as prostitutes, as intruders and stereotypes of various labels were pinpointed as major forms of attacks launched on their moral conduct, for which many have suffered damaging rumours that largely discredit their character. Such stereotypes, sociologists and criminologists believe have the potential of causing psychological damages and behavioural changes (Tedrow and Rhoads, 1999; Okunola, 2006), and may also affect marital and familial unions. These, opponents from the same party would likely use to gain advantage over women in politics; a situation most politicians have perfectly strategized. Conversely, the flagrant display of moral misconduct from male politicians does not attract sanctions, in some cases; it is celebrated and generally expected. Such misconducts are not used to gauge the suitability of the male aspirant for public office, thus reflecting separate criteria for men and women.

Trends and Patterns in Women's Electoral Participation over the Last Decade

Increases in women's electoral participation in Nigeria show that more women ever than before are aware of and becoming more interested in politics with specific emphasis on holding positions (being in government). Interestingly, women actively involved in vying for political positions are fewer in number compared to those seeking to enter government by nomination or appointment. However, Nigerian society is in dire need of active women, from the grassroots, vying for elective positions. This will no doubt enrich the democratic process, and Nigerian women are gradually beginning to recognize this need. They are also recognizing that the battle to free themselves from the negative traditional and cultural practices that subjugate them should not be left to policy intervention by the rulers of the land, who are predominantly male. Gender power relations are evident in the supportive roles women play in politics as 'mobilisers' of other





women (Ikpeme, 2003). The delineation of roles along gender lines is climaxed in 'women's wing' or the creation of 'women leaders' in most political parties, giving credence to the assertion that politics is a 'man's game'. The creating of the women's wing is a consolation that furthers empowers male politicians. Most women perceive this as pushing them away from mainstream politicking and the decision making process in party politics:

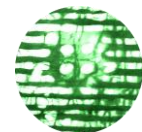
A careful look at the political scene will tell us that women's wing of any political parties are usually headed by wives and siblings of past and active politicians in government (Officers, Food Basket Organization -Ibadan).

The consciousness of women at such levels of politicking and their potentials both as leaders in partisan politics and for advancing the cause of the generality of women may be quite limited. Most women interviewed complained that men usually do not give them the chance to express their views in the same political gathering. Particular reference was made to a scenario that ensued between the women's wing of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the National Vice Chairman in 2003 in Imo state where the National Women's Leader (PDP) was called a "street woman" by the vice chairman for holding and expressing a contrary opinion (CLO, Officer, Oyo).

Recounting some of their experiences, the issue of female candidates being asked to step aside because of the preconceived belief that women contestants would not deliver or succeed in securing the much needed victory for their parties was described as the reason for the incessant replacements with male candidates who most often were also said to have been in the party much earlier than the women. This was common experience as observed and reported in the 1999 and 2003 election years (Kyari, 2003; Jinadu, 2005; Sha, 2005). It was noted that pressures from the party chieftains were heaped on popular and active female politicians to step aside for or handover their victory to their preferred male candidates (Transition Monitoring Group, 2003).

Consequently, a good number of NGOs are springing up in different parts of the country to crusade for women's rights and their involvement in active politics. For instance, among the Igbo women respondents in both Lagos and Oyo, it was noted that the culture and tradition of the Igbo have continued to subjugate the Igbo woman, unlike their counterparts in the West (Yoruba):

In terms of the trend in politics in Nigeria, more women in the West have dominated politics compare to those of us from the East, this is because once an Igbo woman gets married she is tied to the whims and caprices of her husband. This is usually not the



case among the Yoruba, because their tradition gives more room for female emancipation. Igbo men are too rigid and do not find it funny when their wives aspire too high. However, only few men can tolerate their women venturing into politics. It is also true that they have acquired more education than any other part of the country (Igbo women leader, Clothing line, Dugbe).

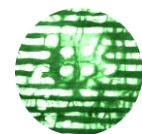
A female head of Food Basket, one of the NGOs sampled in Oyo, opined that:

Our Society is still very much patriarchal, the gospel of female emancipation is working especially in the area of the girl child education; however when it comes to active participation in electioneering the battle is still on. It is in this regard that those of us in the NGOs have intensified our efforts to realise our vision of a society where equality of rights and opportunities exist and a world where all women will enjoy their human rights irrespective of inhibiting social cultural values, and traditional beliefs.

The work of such NGOs is very crucial. There is the need for them to pull in the same direction – and this is why networking should form an integral part of their activities. There could be the tendency to work at cross purposes in the competition for scarce funding from donor agencies.

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

The society is so patriarchal to the extent that if a man dies in politics or electioneering process, he is better honoured than a female in a similar situation. The society will praise him and not her. This to a large extent has discouraged a lot of us from participating in electioneering, in such a case our children are left motherless, who will then cater for them? It is easier for a man to remarry, than for the woman. When it comes to the decision, of participating in politics, all odds must be weighed because the woman has a lot to lose than the man in politics (Shop Owner, Sango, Market, Ibadan).





Fear of Crime and Electoral Violence in Nigeria as a Major Factor Keeping Women Out of Politics

Politics in Nigeria has been described as a terrain meant for the hardened (Akinola, 2009), and where candidates cannot fund elections themselves without recourse to godfatherism (Soyinka, 2004). Godfatherism involves a patron-client or servant-master relationship which many of the sampled respondents agreed cannot be free of violence, especially in the area of controversies where a candidate fails to comply with earlier agreed negotiations and contracts. Oyo and Anambra states were recalled by over 77 percent of the interviewees:

I do not see myself serving two masters, first at home, my husband is there, and to win election, it is expected to have a godfather who can manipulate the election. Elections are not just manipulated, but with conditions: for a lady, it is either to befriend the godfathers, or to share state resources when one gets into power. Despite that, godfathers prefer having a godson to a goddaughter. Politics of godfatherism does not favour women. No women can stand the resultant consequence of not yielding to the godfathers' demands, as we have seen in Oyo and Anambra states (Female head, Lapo, Ibadan).

The scenario highlighted above is still fresh in the case of series of anomalies in Anambra, Edo, Delta and Ekiti and other states where election results were contested at Tribunal and Appeal courts years after elections have been concluded (IFes, 2007). Godfatherism is not a new concept in politics. However, it became popular in Nigerian political space in the 1960's, and early post-independence leaders became godfathers (Mamah, 2007). The handiwork of godfathers was visible at the return to civil rule in 1979, but military regimes that characterized the 1980's obstructed its activities. The 1999 civil rule ushered in another form of godfatherism, which reached its climax during the wanton destruction of lives and properties that witnessed the violent confrontation between a godfather (Chris Uba) and governor of Anambra state (Chris Ngige; Sunday punch, 2010).

This level of violence represents a new dimension to the practice of godfatherism in Nigeria. This has also created a psychological effect on women participation in politics as highlighted above. Other respondents also narrated the issue of having to belong to various occult groups for protection, and oath taking rituals. Conditions most women tend to be afraid of. It is imperative to state here that the degeneration of godfatherism in Nigerian politics today was actually sowed by some of the builders and champion of Nigerian federalism, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi



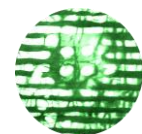


Azikwe and Ahmadu Bello, who became godfathers after independence. Godfathers are usually lionized, respected, idolized and worshipped. Although people tried to exaggerate their achievements, and their persons were made to look more than ordinary but their brand of godfatherism added value and experience to governance in the past unlike the situation in their decade (Fawole, 2001; Akinola, 2009).

Nigerian political elites, godfathers, and average Nigerians are power-hungry because access to power means access to a lot; hence, it would be analytically incorrect to ascribe avarice only to godfathers. Godfathers, as displayed in Anambra state, can be hostile to people's interests and extremely violent without respecting government and its institutions. Political power seekers played into the hands of the godfathers because of their own weakness and acute desperation for power. The godsons erroneously believed they could disengage from the godfathers who were always on 'their neck', and eventually use state power to gain independence from the godfathers and their political machineries. In Oyo, the strongman of Ibadan politics, late Chief Adedibu felt that governor Ladoja was an ingrate who wanted to wipe out his political hegemony in Ibadan politics, while Ladoja claimed that Adedibu was too greedy to be appeased. In the words of a female respondent:

Just imagine if governor Ladoja were to be a woman... she would have been crushed. Moreover, no woman in her right senses would participate in such a heated political drama, no matter how juicy or attractive politics may look (Female discussants at the CLO office, Lagos).

The Nigerian styled Patron-Client relationship nearly truncated Nigerian puerile democracy in June 10th, 2003. A self-confessed godfather, Uba employed thugs and Nigerian police to abduct his godson, Chris Ngige, who was the elected governor of Anambra State. Ngige's sin was his refusal to allow Uba to nominate all political appointees, take the largest share of state's allocation, and instantly pay him a sum of N2.5 billion; the claimed cost of installing Ngige as governor (Onwumere, 2007). Their loyalists embarked on a battle of 'iron' and 'steel'. The State became a war zone, innocent lives were lost, houses were set ablaze, and Anambra state became ungovernable for weeks. It was not a case of two parties fighting, but a desperate godfather (Uba and his 'troops') consuming everything at their reach when it became clear that his investment was gone down the drain. The only solution the federal government proffered was the threat to declare a state of emergency in the state.



The dust had nearly settled when the self-professed “strongman of Ibadan politics”, Adedibu formally declared an unconventional war against his godson, Ladoja, governor of Oyo State (The Punch, April 5th, 2007:16). The bone of contention has always been disagreement over allocation of money, political appointments, and the resulting consequences were similar with the Anambra saga. In Ilorin, the ‘institutionalized’ godfather of Kwara State politics, Olusola Saraki confronted his godson, Lawal Mohammed who he installed as the governor of the state in 1999. He allowed Lawal to complete his tenure before replacing him with his own biological son, while his daughter ended up in the federal legislative House (the Senate). The manifestation of godfatherism at its climax in Oyo and Anambra states necessitated people’s fear, including politically-minded females, about such violence undercutting the hard-fought Nigerian democracy.

Revealing the widespread belief that Nigerian men see politics as a do or die affair, one respondent remarked that:

[...] in this country men prepare for election as if there are going to war, all their arsenal are put into place to ensure victory at any cost, even though it involves taking the life of their brothers, wives or other relatives...the slogan is that victory must be ensured (C4C, Lagos).

For another:

The 2003 election was so tensed that I have sworn never to participate in any voting exercise, talkless of actively participating in election for a particular position. My children are still young. I will not want to fight war that I would not be remembered for.....the money and resources politicians place on ground in last election alone is more than what would have been needed to prosecute a successful war (CLO, Ibadan).

This goes to show the murky side of politics and women’s lack of faith in the democratic process in Nigeria. The will of the people cannot find expression and flourish in the face of so much money directed solely at achieving victory. Elective offices become mere commodities to be purchased by the highest bidder, and those who literally invest merely see it as an avenue to make profits. Politics becomes business, and the business of politics becomes merely to divert public funds from the crying needs of the masses for real development in their lives. It also goes to further impoverish women in society; so long women continue to constitute the bulk of the poor in Nigeria (Okunola and Ikuomola, 2010).



It is as a result of this imbroglio that most NGOs encourage women to participate in elections, especially in the aspect of vote casting, but also to venture into active politics, albeit with straight warning that it must be with their husbands consent and approval, so that their homes and family are kept intact.

As one respondent explained: We have had cases of women being thrown out of their matrimonial home. A particular case of interest presently is that of a particular woman who was sent parking because she went to cast her vote in the last election without her husband's approval. After that particular incidence, our campaign strategy on women empowerment through political participation was modified, to include husbands' approval, and advocacy (CLO, Surulere, Lagos).

Being Tough as a Requirement for Women in Politics

The issue was raised that, for any woman to venture into Nigerian politics, as in other domains hitherto controlled by men, they must be battle-ready to unseat the dominant group and existing norms. This reduces the number of women willing to participate and ensures that those who do are particularly aggressive. To this effect, Baxter and Lansing (1993) found that women generally have different opinions than men regarding war, peace, child care, the poor, and education; yet, when in leadership positions, their behaviour resembles that of their male counterparts. This finding and the evidence that women do, in fact, tend to enact toughness likened to men was widely discussed as important for any woman that would want to succeed in Nigerian politics. According to one respondent:

One has to be smarter and tougher than the average woman to be able to withstand the stress and demands of politics, these are characters someone like Dora has over her colleagues, and overtime she has mastered the game, even better than some men. In most cases too, for a woman to become a politician she is expected to have more qualifications, or have made a mark elsewhere before she can be considered. It is a pity that there are few women with such guts and qualifications to venture into politics (LAPO, Ibadan).

Toughness has been explained in negative terms by most scholars and researchers who have written on Nigerian politics (Elaigwu, 2005; Akali, et. al., 2006; Akinola, 2009). The interviewees tended to conceive of toughness in terms of being violent as well as withstanding

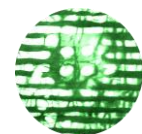


violence, a tolerance of electoral malpractices, and the willingness to bring down any opposition where necessary. In one of the respondent's remarks she said: "only few women can be found to fit into the expectations and behaviour". The intimidation and male dominance of the political sphere involves criminal acts of various kinds ranging from psychological torture, bodily harm and threats are often used to scare women out of contestable positions. This, the Sunday Punch, (2010:17) reported as creating fear and sudden withdrawal of female politicians from the local levels where they have hitherto appeared and contributed more in elective positions. A particular case in reference was that of a female serving senator, (Eme, Ekaet), who reported being subjugated to threats during her campaigns. She noted that though she is a wife to the former secretary to the government of the federation, chief Ufot Ekaete, she found her home town agog with a piece of news that her husband was not in support with her aspirations. In her words: "Initially I was afraid because I knew what that meant in politics. So I went to stakeholders and stated my side of the story, in fact my husband publicly had to declared that he supported me, and that is was all blackmail" (P:17).

For another respondent:

[...] violence, scheming, threats, armed robbery attacks by thugs and all sorts of debasement are used as psychological warfare to torture and push us out of the game. Before now it used to be our husbands at home now we are gradually overcoming that, but violence keeps occurring every other day when election period gets nearer, violence erupts during and after elections which lead to loss of lives, properties and corruption of innocent youths as it takes money to involve unemployed youths in perpetuating such acts. Not only that the injustice netted out to us 'weaker vessels' are unimaginable. For instance there are women who are not allowed to register, some have their voters cards taken from them or are told who to vote for, and some were prevented from contesting even after successful primaries (Female Market Leader, Tinubu Square, Lagos).

These factors exacerbate the exclusion of women from active politics and enhance the disproportionate influence of political entrepreneurs thereby reinforcing their popular disempowerment.





Conclusion

This study has shown that, in today's political atmosphere in Nigeria, women are becoming more sensitive to political issues as well as gradually overcoming the hitherto traditional barriers hindering them from participating in politics. However, the fear of crime and violence netted against politically active women continues to be a serious challenge. This helps to explain the phenomenon of women seeking appointment rather than competing against men for positions. Findings also indicate that a high sense of apathy has developed among female political aspirants. This, if not checked will hinder the struggle for equity, justice and fair play in the quest for female emancipation and democracy in Nigeria. If Nigerian society is able to ensure a free and fair internal democracy among the parties without the involvement of thugs and violence, with financial assistance, encouragement by family members and the society at large, more women will invariably secure positions in subsequent electioneering exercises in Nigeria. At least they have the numerical strength to achieve this. The entire nation waits to see the emergence of female governors, more female senators and members of the House of Representatives as well as other offices both at the federal, state and local levels. It is imperative to state here that a constitutional approach that will stipulate a reasonable, minimum and special security placement for every woman involved in politics at little or no cost at all levels of government irrespective of the positions should be ensured. As this will go a long way in instilling confidence in female politicians which further bring more women into active politics.





References

- Agina-Ude, A. (2003). Strategies for Expanding Female Participation in the 2003 Elections and Beyond. *The Nigerian Social Scientist* vol.6 no.1, March 2003, pp 3-7 (quotation on p. 4).
- Akinola, O.A. (2009). Godfatherism and the future of Nigerian democracy. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3 (6), pp. 268-272.
- Alkali, A. (2004). Federalism and Democratic Governance, in H. A. Saliu (ed.) *Nigeria under Democratic Rule (1999-2003)*. Ibadan: University Press PLC. Vol. 1. Pp. 45-57.
- Best, S. (2006). Opportunities and Challenges of Institutional Gender Strengthening in African universities: A case of the University of Jos, Nigeria. Paper presented at an international conference on “Change in Climate? Prospects for Gender Equity in Universities”, the Australian Technology Network (ATN) Women's Executive Development Programme (WEXDEV), Adelaide, Australia.
- Elaigwu, J. I. (2005). Crises and Conflict Management in Nigeria since 1980 in A. M. Yakubu, R. T. Adegboye, C. N. Ubah and B. Dogo (eds.) *Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria since 1980: Causes and Dimension of Conflict*. Kaduna: Nigerian Defense Academy. Vol. 1.
- Ikpeme, B. (2003). Are Nigerian Women Really in Politics? *Women in Public Life* 5 no. 7-9, July-Sept.
- International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES). (2008). *Money and Politics in Nigeria*. (ed.) Victor A.O. Adetula. International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES). (2007). A Nigerian Perspective on the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary elections: Results From Pre-and Post-Election Surveys (August 2007).
- Jinadu, L. A. (2005). Defining Electoral Mandate in Ibrahim, Jibrin and Egwu Sam (2005) *Nigeria Elections 2007: Defending the People's Mandate*, Abuja: Global Rights.
- Kanazawa, S. (2005). Is 'Discrimination' Necessary to Explain the Sex Gap in Earnings? *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 26, 269-287
- Kanter, R.M. (1977). Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed sex ratios and Responses to Token Women. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82, 965–90.
- Konrad, A.M., Winter, S. and Gutek, B. (1992). Diversity in Work Group Sex Composition: Implications for Majority and Minority Members. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, Vol. 10, 115–40.
- Kyari, T. (2003). Strategies for Controlling Political Violence and Regulating Campaigns, Jega, A et.al (eds.) *Strategies for Curbing Election- Related Political Violence in Nigeria's North-West Zone*, Kano: Centre for Democratic Research and Training.
- Mba, N.E. (1982). *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*. California: University of California Institute of International Studies.





- Obiorah, N. (2004). Political Finance and Democracy In Nigeria Prospects and Strategies for Reform. Centre for Law and Social Action (CLASA) London.
- Okunola, R.A. (2006). The limits of General Criminal law: A Study of Traditional Institutions in Crime Management in Rural Nigeria. PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan – Nigeria.
- Okunola, R.A. and Ikuomola, A.D. (2010). Child Labour in Fostering Practices: A Study of Four Areas in Surulere Local Government Area Lagos State. *Indian journal of Social Science Research* Vol.5(1):107-126.
- Osaghae, E. (2001). Exiting from the Existing State in Nigeria, In Bekker, S.B., Dodds, M., and Khosa, M, (eds.) *Shifting African Identities*. Human Sciences Research Council.
- Pinto-Duschinsky, M. (2001). Handbook on Funding of Parties and Election Campaigns: Overview. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- Sha, D. P. (2005) Too Much Politics, Too Little Democracy: Assessing the Quality of Nigerian Democratic Transition Projects. *Nigerian Journal of Policy and Strategy* 15, No 1 and 2 December, Kuru: National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies.
- Sunday Punch*, (2010). 2011 Poll: The Hurdles ahead for Women, September 12, Pg. 17.
- Tedrow, B. and Rhoads, R.A. (1999). A Qualitative Study of Women's Experiences in Community College Leadership Positions. *Journal of Community College Review* 1999 27: 1-19.
- Transition Monitoring Group (2003) Do Votes Count? Final Report of the 2003 General Elections in Nigeria, Abuja: TMG.

