

Review

An assessment of gender inequality in democratic politics in the fourth republic in Nigeria (1999-2003)

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Nigeria has been a patriarchy society where roles of women are restricted. This study revealed that women were underrepresented in the various political assignments such as presidential election, National assembly election, Ministerial Appointments, Federal House of Representative, Gubernatorial Election, State House of Assembly, Chairmanship and Councillorship Election at the local government level in the fourth republic. This study assessed gender inequality in democratic political participation in the fourth republic in Nigeria. It contends that socio-cultural beliefs of the people posed a quagmire to women political participation in Nigeria. It further suggests that there is need to encourage women's education, changing traditional and cultural beliefs towards women within Nigerian political landscape for the overall national development.

Key words: Democracy, politics, gender, inequality, participation, election.

INTRODUCTION

Gender imbalance is a global phenomenon which hinders women to participate in democratic politics. In the global politics, there are very few women who were able to rise to the top political positions. Gender inequality has been the major problem facing women within the global political space. Nigeria has been a patriarchy society in which roles of women in political process are restricted. The patriarchic system of traditional and socio-political system belittles the role of women in politics which called for male domination in Nigerian democratic politics, the political parochialism of Nigerian society discouraged women political participation and the adversarial imbalance has continued to rage their political flourish. The nature, custom, tradition and cultural backgrounds of Nigerian political nomenclature totally sideline women from participating in democratic politics which places full embargo on women's political survivability. Women are always treated as second class citizen in their various domains in Nigerian political settings.

In Nigeria, women are always considered as

subordinate with little recognition in political participation. The marginalization of women in political participation is as old as far back before the arrival of British colonialism in Nigeria. Women are seen as home maker, child bearer etc. There are very few women in Nigerian politics due to socio-cultural tradition of Nigerian political landscape. In the colonial era, there are very few women who were appointed to the political offices of Nigeria due to social values inherent from traditional political terrain of Nigeria. Those women who forced themselves into politics are always considered as irresponsible and promiscuous in the society. In traditional political system, women are not recognized to participate in politics; they rather prefer to be responsible for the home building and these various challenges hamstringing the survivability of women in political participation. The scriptural justification for men domination is also rooted in both Bible and Quran which placed women to be subordinated to their husbands in all occasion. The bible emphasizes that women should succumb to their husbands in every activity. This has a

great implication on the global political process. Only very few men can allow their wives to participate in politics, even those that force themselves to participate in political party meeting are always subordinated to the men folk; women constitute the lower percentage of political party membership in Nigeria. In sharing political party post, women are always relegated to take unrecognized position such as women leader, welfare officer, auditor etc. Also, the Purdan system in the Northern Nigeria serves as impediment to women in political participation as a result of religious factor. Religious problem is more pronounced as a major threat for women's political participation in the Muslim dominated region in Nigeria where politics is considered as no go area for women. The marginalization of women in democratic politics has been a major threat to Nigerian nascent democracy. Efforts have been made to rescue women from gender inequality at the local and international level. The United Nation has just mandated all its members to raise the status of women in political allocation of elective and non-elective post; it mandated every country of the world to allocate 30% of its political post to women folk. Various conventions and committees have been inaugurated to limit discrimination against women in the global political terrain. International Conference on Women in Beijing held in China, international Women's Year Conference held in Mexico City in 1975, and United Nation Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are advocates assigned with the responsibility of ensuring gender equality in the global political decision making. During the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo administration, the political status of women increased but was still underrepresented in comparing to the population of women in Nigeria. This administration encouraged women to participate in politics which raised the hope and aspiration of women in democratic politics in Nigeria.

According to Ehanire-Danjuma (2005), only a few women in the world have been able to attain the highest political office. These include Corazon Aquino and Gloria Arroyo of the Philippines, Ertha Pascal-Trouillot of Haiti, Isabel Peron of Argentina, Lidia Geiler of Bolivia, Mary Robinson in Ireland, Golda Meir in Israel, Indira Ghandi in India, Margaret Thatcher in United Kingdom, Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, Khaleda Ziaur Rahman in Bangladesh, and Siramavo Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, to name a few. Siyanbola and Adetowubo, in Ademiluyi and Adedamola (2010:55) noted that Nigeria is yet to get there. In almost all societies, women and men differ in their activities and undertakings, regarding access to and control over resources, and participating in decision-making. In addition they are involved in social and political activism. In the family, gender roles restrict male participation in domestic chores and child-rearing while limiting women participation in decision making. In the view of Harriman (2006:18), women can be leaders. Women have leadership qualities. We fail to recognize women as leaders

because the barriers to our leadership are deeply rooted in our society, in cultural institutions and in women themselves. Women are considered and sometimes consider themselves unequal to men at home and in the work place. They accept assigned roles accordingly. Chinsman in Chukwuemeka and Eze (2011:220) explained that women had also exhibited appreciable managerial and organizational skills in their roles as mothers, homemakers, character molders and sustainers of humanity. Their supportive roles through engagement in pottery, weaving, spinning and other socio-economic activities were indispensable to the existence of their families and societies by extension. Women constitute the foundation of any society. One cannot talk about society without talking about the family, nor can one talk about the family without talking about the women; their ingenuity serves and sustains the family.

Gender equality issues are usually approached from a social, anthropological, or political angle. However, the costs of inequality are usually borne at the economic level. A few studies have established a connection between women's participation in labour force and women's political participation. Other factors identified in the literature as the determinants of women participation in politics include social and political relations in a society, patriarchy, male domination, political parties and culture of formal political structures, subordinate status of women, economic factor, constitutional provision, wrong socialization of women, and educational status among others (Bari, 2005 in Ademiluyi and Adedamola, 2010:55).

Nigerian women have about the worst representation of 5.9% in the national legislature when compared to most other African countries, e.g. Uganda (34.6%), South Africa (43.2%), Ethiopia (27.7%), Cameroon (20%), Niger (12.3%) and DR Congo (8.0%) (Daily Times, May 18, 2012). For Nigerian women particularly in areas of political participation women are not there yet. In Nigeria, women's participation in governance is still very, very low; we are still about 7%, the lowest in the world (Vanguard Newspaper, January 21, 2013). The participation of women in Nigerian politics has, over the years, been less than encouraging. The nation's political landscape is agog with activities. Each day, more aspirants are coming out to declare their intentions to contest the 2011 general election. As most of the aspirants are men, this is fuelling the question: Where are the women in the scheme of things in the country popularly called the giant of Africa (Nigerian Tribune Thursday, 07 October 2010). In similar vein, Ehanire-Danjuma, (2005) posited that the low participation of women in political and decision-making structures is a reflection of limited acknowledgement of the fact that democratic process becomes inclusive when also the gender dimension is taken into account. With few or no woman being involved in party politics issues, this poses as a challenge and narrows the chances of getting many women in decision-making structures. Women have

proved their strength and competence in our societies in all spheres even in male dominated professions but the rise of women to lead several professional male dominated environments gives us hope and their achievement is a pointer to the capability of the Nigerian woman. Three of such male dominated professions: The Nigerian Medical Association, The Nigerian Bar Association and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria have been led by female presidents (Gusim, 2012). Despite the relative improvement in women political participation and representation between 2003 and 2007, such improvement does not reflect women's numerical superiority (Inter-Press Service, Tuesday, July 23, 2013). Nigerian women have encountered a number of problems while venturing into politics. There is large scale discrimination from the men folk, both in voting for candidates and in allocating political offices (Fatile et al., Oteh, 2012). It is against this background that this study assessed the level of gender inequality in democratic politics in the fourth republic under the political leadership of Former President Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999-2003) in Nigeria. Despite the fact that United Nations and various international Organizations advocated for women's involvement in political decision making in the world over, there is still low level of women participation in Nigerian politics; therefore, this study also explored the various factors responsible for gender imbalance in political participation in Nigeria while solutions are proffered against future occurrence.

Gender inequality and democratic politics in Nigeria

Democracy is the government that encourages political participation from all segments of the society. It upholds equality of both men and women in political contestation; it is the government that accommodates participation of people in all ramifications for the political leadership of the country. Democracy has thus been recognized as the only legitimate system of government through which a society could be governed without fear or favour of any gender. The achievement of democracy entails equal participation of both men and women in the allocation of political offices. Democracy draws people from every profession such as agriculture, law, marketing, medicine, just to mention a few. Democracy proclaims gender equity in the political nomenclature; however, the Nigeria political history reveals that women are always considered as political supporters, praise-singers of election winners. In the fourth republic, men dominate every political offices namely, the ministries, House of representative, National Assembly, State House of Assemblies, and other political paraphernalia. Men constitute the largest percentage in democratic political decision making in Nigeria. In 1999, 2003 and 2007, very few women were elected into political offices; the female folk are the minutest in the political occupation of Nigeria. In the party system,

women are not giving chance to survive the political leadership; their roles are always restricted, as it was once noted that:

Women occupy politically non-significant positions in political parties' executives – national women leaders, welfare secretaries (perhaps an extension of their caring roles), auditors, etc (Daily Times, May 18, 2012).

Our political system is patriarchal in nature, and most of the parties are established by men who merely accommodate the women. Also a lot of the women do not have the financial capacity to operate in most of these political party, because our political system has been highly monetized (Vanguard, January 21, 2013). The nature of Nigerian politics also discourages women's participation. Political meetings are often held late at night on an ad hoc basis, making attendance difficult for women, who face greater personal risk in travelling alone at night and often have to arrange for assistance to care for families. Women who do attend such meetings have, according to numerous anonymized sources, been labeled as prostitutes. More generally, politics is considered to be a 'dangerous' pursuit in Nigeria and female politicians are frequently considered of dubious moral character, given their desire to be involved in this profession (Denney, 2011). The Nigerian women seem to have been active participants in the development of their societies and have excelled politically, economically and their successes are sometimes recognized and rewarded by their societies in view of the titles bestowed on such women (Omoniyi, 2012). In Nigerian politics, the issue has always been that a woman politician still has natural roles as a wife, mother, daughter and mother or daughter in-law here in Nigeria. Over the years, women's participation in Nigeria politics has been appalling; they were not recognized in the Nigeria politics. The men tend to adhere strictly to the popular saying that the position of women ends in the kitchen or in household. Women were so neglected in the sense that they were often regarded as weak gender in decision making as well as - (Chiejina, 2011).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Tables 1-6 reveal that in 1999 Houses of Assemble election, women constitute 1.2% while the men folk comprise 98.8%; in 2003, women were 4% while men constitute 96%. In 1999, the Houses of representative accommodated 3.6% of women while the male counterparts comprised 96.4%. In 2003, Women were 6% while men were 94%. In 1999, the National Assembly comprised 2.8% of women while men constituted 97.2%. In 2003, women were 3.7% while men took 96.3%. The local government chairmanship election in the fourth republic revealed that out of 774 local governments in Nigeria,

Table 1. Analysis of women political participation in Nigeria in the fourth republic women in the State Houses of Assembly and National Assembly (1999-2003).

Houses of Assembly	Total No of seats	Men	Women	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
1999	978	966	12	98.8%	1.2%
2003	951	912	39	96%	4%

Source: The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report (2008), New York, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women adapted from Arowolo, D. and Aluko, F. (2010) pg 584-585.

Table 2. Analysis of women political participation in Nigeria in the fourth republic women in the State Houses of Assembly and National Assembly (1999-2003).

Houses of Representatives	Total No of seats	Men	Women	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
1999	360	347	13	96.4%	3.6%
2003	339	318	21	94%	6%

Source: The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report (2008), New York, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women adapted from Arowolo, D. and Aluko, F. (2010) pg 584-585.

Table 3. Analysis of women political participation in Nigeria in the fourth republic women in the State Houses of Assembly and National Assembly (1999-2003).

Senate	Total No of seats	Men	Women	Percentage of men	Percentage of women
1999	109	106	3	97.2%	2.8%
2003	109	105	4	96.3%	3.7%

Source: The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report (2008), New York, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women adapted from Arowolo, D. and Aluko, F. (2010) pg 584-585.

women were able to occupy 8 local government councils chairmanship while men took the rest of the 766 local governments. It also revealed that male governors constituted 36 plus 1 in FCT while women were nowhere to be found; male deputy governors also comprised 36 while women took only 1. In the presidential political domain, men comprised 145 while women only constituted 26 in all political paraphernalia. The overall assessment of the political gender reveals that women were totally marginalized in the fourth republic in Nigeria. Many key political offices were allocated to men folk with little recognition of the women folk during the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo in the fourth republic in Nigeria. In comparing the political regimes, the administration of Obasanjo raised the level of women's political participation but still under-represented in Nigerian political space. From the foregoing, it is axiomatic that there is gender imbalance in distribution of elective and non-elective positions between the sexes in the fourth republic in Nigerian democratic politics.

Obstacles to women's political participation in Nigeria

There are various problems facing women in Nigerian democratic politics. These numerous challenges have

posed a great threat to the women's encouragement to contribute their quotas to overall development of Nigeria society. These challenges shall be examined in this section of the paper.

Financial constraints

Finance is a major factor for the survivability of every organization. It is the bedrock upon which successful institution rests. Firstly, to understand the financial problem of women in Nigerian politics, we have to fathom the type of politics we are playing in Nigeria. Politics in Nigerian parlance could be understood within the framework of monetization. Any political contestant must have prepared to acquire all the necessary whirl wither to make him or her successful in the electoral contest. Majority of Nigerian populace believe in power of money rather than political integrity and capability to deliver good governance. Monetization determines a lot in electoral contest in Nigerian politics and this has hindered women to fully engage in democratic contest in Nigeria. The cost of running electoral contestation in Nigeria is too exorbitant for women to bear; this includes; party nomination form, election campaign, gift, people mobilization and money for political party leaders etc. The great

Table 4. Statistics of local government chairmen in the fourth republic.

State	Male	Female
Abia	17	0
Adamawa	20	0
Akwa-Ibom	31	0
Anambra	20	1
Bauchi	20	0
Bayelsa	8	0
Benue	22	1
Borno	27	0
Cross Rivers	18	0
Delta	25	0
Ebonyi	13	0
Edo	18	0
EKITI	16	0
Enugu	17	0
FCT	5	1
GOMBE	11	0
IMO	26	1
JIGAWA	27	0
KADUNA	22	1
KANO	44	0
KASTINA	33	1
KEBBI	21	0
KOGI	21	0
KWARA	16	0
LAGOS	20	0
NASSARAWA	12	0
NIGER	25	0
OGUN	20	0
ONDO	18	0
OSUN	29	1
OYO	33	0
PLATEAU	16	1
RIVERS	23	0
SOKOTO	33	0
TARABA	16	0
YOBE	17	0
ZAMFARA	14	0
TOTAL	774	8

Source: Nda (2003) *Women in the Power Equation of Nigerian Politics*. Lagos: Data and Partners Logistics Ltd. Adapted from Arowolo, D. and Aluko, F. (2010) pg 586-587.

financial allocation always discouraged women to surface in democratic contest due to large political coverage before they can emerge as winners of the election.

Poverty

Poverty has adverse effect on political participation of

women in Nigeria. Majority of women are wallowing in abject poverty, larger percentage of women are living in houses which are unsuitable for piggery or poultry. The large segment of our society cannot afford three meals square a day let alone embark on electoral contest that will cost millions of Naira. Women are always considered as the most vulnerable to poverty in developing nations of the world. It is only microscopic few that excluded from this vicious cycle of poverty in Nigeria, hence, this limit women's political participation in democratic politics in Nigeria.

Poor quality of education

Many schools fail to provide a safe environment for adolescent girls, who fear corporal punishment or worse forms of violence, bullying or humiliation. Girls' exam results are falling; the reasons for this need urgent investigation. Poor quality teaching is one explanation, but this does not fully explain why girls are performing less well than boys. The challenge is how to improve the culture of teaching and learning for all, including girls from the poorest families. Persuading girls and their parents to delay marriage and childbirth will be an uphill task until education is both more attractive and less expensive for parents (British Council, 2012).

Culture and religion

Culture and religion are also inhibiting women to participate in politics. The socio-cultural and religion values impede women to fully involve in political participation, especially in the northern Nigeria where Purdah system is more pronounced. Cultural and religious factors hamstring women to get their full mandate in political decision making. Religion dogmatism plays a vital role in discouraging women from politics.

Nature of Nigerian politics

Politics in Nigeria is always considered as do-or-die affairs. The nature of Nigerian politics does not justify fair play in the system. Political campaign always resulted into clashes of one political party and the other which may end up to blood bath. Many politicians have been attacked during political campaign in Nigeria. The violent nature of Nigerian politics always discourages women to participate in electoral contest. Nigerian political system is patriarchal in nature, and most of the parties are established by men who merely accommodate the women. Many political parties in Nigeria prefer to allocate political posts to men rather than women candidates and this have an implication on women's survivability in politics.

Table 5. Gender statistics on state governors and deputy governors in the fourth republic.

S/N	State	Governor		Deputy governor	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	Abia	1	0	1	0
2.	Adamawa	1	0	1	0
3.	Akwa-ibom	1	0	1	0
4.	Anambra	1	0	1	0
5.	Bauchi	1	0	1	0
6.	Bayelsa	1	0	1	0
7.	Benue	1	0	1	0
8.	Borno	1	0	1	0
9.	Cross-river	1	0	1	0
10.	Delta	1	0	1	0
11.	Ebonyi	1	0	1	0
12.	Edo	1	0	1	0
13.	Ekiti	1	0	1	0
14.	Enugu	1	0	1	0
15.	FCT	1	0	1	0
16.	Gombe	1	0	1	0
17.	Imo	1	0	1	0
18.	Jigawa	1	0	1	0
19.	Kaduna	1	0	1	0
20.	Kano	1	0	1	0
21.	Kastina	1	0	1	0
22.	Kebbi	1	0	1	0
23.	Kogi	1	0	1	0
24.	Kwara	1	0	1	0
25.	Lagos	1	0	0	1
26.	Nassarawa	1	0	1	0
27.	Niger	1	0	1	0
28.	Ogun	1	0	1	0
29.	Ondo	1	0	1	0
30.	Osun	1	0	1	0
31.	Oyo	1	0	1	0
32.	Plateau	1	0	1	0
33.	Rivers	1	0	1	0
34.	Sokoto	1	0	1	0
35.	Taraba	1	0	1	0
36.	Yobe	1	0	1	0
37.	Zamfara	1	0	1	0
Total	37	37	0	36	1

Source: Nda (2003) *Women in the Power Equation of Nigerian Politics*. Lagos: Data and Partners Logistics Ltd. Adapted from Arowolo, D. and Aluko, F. (2010) pg 586.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Women should be encouraged to go to school; this could be achieved through active participation of government in giving larger percentage of scholarship to the female folks.
2. Media should continue to sensitize the general public in the area of gender equity so as to avoid socio-cultural

- traditions of Nigeria society. This could be done through radio, television, newspapers and traditional rulers.
3. The importance of women's contribution to future economic growth needs to be disseminated.
4. Banks should make provision for women to borrow money for their businesses.
5. Women organization should be consulted and involved in the design of government policies and programmes.

Table 6. Gender statistics of fourth republic presidency.

S/N	Office	Male	Female
1.	President	1	0
2.	Vice-president	1	0
3.	Senior Minister	25	4
4.	Junior Ministers	15	3
5.	Head of Service	1	0
6.	Secretary to the Govt of the Federation	1	0
7.	Chief of Staff to the president	1	0
8.	Special Advisers	14	2
9.	Deputy Chief of Staff	1	0
10.	Permanent Secretaries	40	8
11.	Director Generals	3	0
12.	Senior Special Assistants	11	0
13.	Chief of Protocol	1	0
14.	Deputy Chief of Staff to the Vice President	1	0
15.	Deputy Chief Press Secretary to the VP	1	0
16.	Personal Assistant to the President	1	6
17.	Principal Secretary to the President	1	1
18.	Special Assistants to the President	20	6
19.	Special Assistants to the Vice President	4	1
20.	Accountant-General of the Federation	1	0
21.	Auditor-General of the Federation	1	0
	Total	145	26

Source: Nda (2003) *Women in the Power Equation of Nigerian Politics*. Lagos: Data and Partners Logistics Ltd. Adapted from Arowolo, D. and Aluko, F. (2010) pg 587.

6. Tax law should be reviewed in order to limit the percentage placed on women folk

7. All levels of government should give 50% of public service employment to women.

8. The Independent National Electoral Commission should conduct a focused drive on female voter registration and run specific voter education campaigns for women during elections.

9. Nigerian civil society organizations should advocate and promote gender balance and orientation for political parties.

The government should also review the Nigeria 1999 constitution which will stipulate gender quotas for all the political parties in Nigeria in order to give women a chance in Nigerian democratic political contest.

Concluding remarks

Having assessed gender inequality in Nigerian democratic politics in the fourth republic, it was observed that women were not fully represented in Nigerian democratic politics during President Olusegun Obasanjo administration in the fourth republic. Gender imbalance has

pauperized women political fortune in Nigerian democratic politics where the rights of women have been trampled upon. Despite the concerted efforts of United Nation and other international organizations to raise the political status of women, they are not without many problems especially in developing nations in which Nigeria is one. Gender equity is the foundation of good democratic governance; therefore women should be encouraged to participate in democratic politics for the overall national development of Nigeria.

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