

Assessment of the Constraints to Women Education and Its Implications on Their Participation in Politics in North Western Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *Women constitute a larger percentage of the illiterate group in n Nigeria. This could be attributed to the fact that in most families, parents prefer to send their sons to school, instead of their Daughters whom they feel would eventually get married and thus get incorporated into another family and by implication a larger percentage of the girls remain uneducated and unexposed. Girl-child access to basic education, especially in northern states, has remained low. The importance of women education in enhancing the education of their children is succinctly put in the old adage which states that "to educate a man is to educate a person, but to educate a woman is to educate a nation" The participation of women in politics may influence equalization of educational opportunities, quotas for female participation in governing bodies, legislative reform to increase focus on issues concerning women and children, financing gender-responsive budgets to equally take into account the needs of men and women,. Therefore there is need to analyses constraints affecting women participation in politics and their consequences in retarding development of women education. This paper therefore is to appraise some constraints to women education and implications to their political power play in North West Nigeria. In doing this, the paper discusses how women had fared in the traditional societies for educational struggle and how that had helped in the definition of their political status. The paper also attempts a historical overview of the participation of women in the political arrangement in North West Nigeria. It tries to probe into the political future of women in the country to determine whether there are opportunities for improvement or not. The paper finds a great deal of role stereotype against women by tradition and absence of practical steps taken by both political parties and government towards political achievements. It opines that more women should be given opportunities for education for participation in the politics of the country. This can be achieved through laws that are deliberately aimed at removing the barriers against women and genuine practical approaches.*

KEYWORDS: assessment, politics, constraints, women, political participation, education.

INTRODUCTION

Women are home makers and centers of the family, they are also custodian of social, cultural and fundamental values of society and permanent change are often achieved through them. In fact full community development is not possible without their outstanding cooperation and effective participation (Omruyi et al 2008). Under international standards, both men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to everything worldwide, most especially to participate fully in all aspects and at all levels of political processes. Globally, women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies, women assume some key roles, which are: mother, producer, home-manager, and community organizer, sociocultural and political activists. Of these many roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by women movement.

In line with global trend, Nigerian women constitute nearly half of the population of the country. But despite the major roles they play with their population, women roles in the society are yet to be given recognition. This is due to some cultural stereotypes, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. In Nigeria the awareness about the role of women in development of a nation came up in 1980s. The International Conference on women in Beijing in 1995 enhanced the effective participation of women in politics in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, about 51 percent of women are involved in voting during elections. Despite these, women are still under represented in both elective and appointive positions. Available statistics revealed that overall political representation in government of Nigeria is less than 7 percent (Agbalajobi, 2010). This shows that Nigeria has not attained 35 percent affirmative as prescribed by the Beijing Platform of Action.

Literally political participation entails, voluntarily taking part in politics. Political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly, in the formulation of public policy (Alapiki, 2004). Political participation is an encompassing social activity, which cuts across political systems and societies. Whether the society is a liberal/democratic society or an autocratic, dictatorial system, someone must take political decisions and citizens must participate in the activities of the state either directly or impliedly. Though, the extent of participation varies from one political environment to another and from society to society, there are major factors that determine active political participation. These factors, which often times include; education, illiteracy, cultural orientation, gender difference, the government, etc. determines the extent of political participation in every political system and society. In Nigeria, before now, and even up to this day, gender is a major determining factor of political participation. There are various factors that impedes women participation in politics, as the odds against women participation in politics are more than those against general mass citizens' participation. Some of the factors that counts against women politician participation impliedly

creates an enabling platform for the monopolistic control of men in the political arena. Participation should be encouraged across board in a democratic state. Democracy demands from the common man a certain level of ability and character, rational conduct and active participation in the government (Apadorai2004, in Global journal of human social science. Vol xiv version 1 2014).

Falade (2014) also captures it thus;

‘In a political system, the citizens can be involved in the political process and decision making by joining a political party, voting during election, participating in general campaign, community affairs and other political activities’.

There are also other factors that deter and restrict mass political participation which creates apathy and political Luke warmness amongst citizens. Violence is a major militating factor against political participation in Nigeria. Violence puts fear into many eligible voters who, ordinarily could have participated in choosing their leaders by voting. Nigerian politics has been characterized with violence right from the First Republic in 1963 to date as there is hardly any election in Nigeria without a record of violent activities reported across the country.

Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions this is a growing concern to many Nigerians. However, concerted efforts have been made by government and non-governmental organizations to increase the level of participation of women in politics, in line, with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. However, in Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively. The under representation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in our society, much of which were obvious from pre-colonial era till date. However, the re-introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women political participation both in elective and appointive offices in Nigeria. The focus of this study is on the participation of women in politics, their contribution to Girls Education and the constraints confronting them in some selected areas of North Western Nigeria. The zone covers catchment areas for the Federal College of Education (Technical) Bichi, Kano State.

Statement of the Problem

Some 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. Over 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 man in the nation's political system. This 'sexual division of labor' 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 Yoriba 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 Yoriba Kingdoms they could still perform their traditional roles (Damilola 2010). The political enfranchisement of women in Nigeria politics seems to have maintained on surface a level of gender equity politically, because it is assumed that constitutionally there are not barriers to women's participation.

Justification for the Study

Nigerian women have contributed tremendously to Nation-building and National Development right from the pre-independence era to contemporary Nigeria, their participation in active politics and the opportunities in their disposal in the political arena has not been commensurate. Though there is a renewed campaign all over the world in democratic and liberal states for gender equity in all aspects of social and political life, not much have being achieved so far especially in third world countries. In Nigeria women involvement in politics is still very much below the international mark. Women are afraid to run for elective position (Omoruyi, 2008). The need for gender equity have been championed by not just democratic states and governments but also by international organizations. Chapter III article 8 of the United Nations Charter of 1945 included a provision for equality between men and women. Equality for development and peace. There have been concerted and renewed efforts by the United Nations from its first world conference on women in Mexico City in 1975 to her subsequent conferences of Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985) to the Beijing World Conference on women in 1995.

Member states in the Beijing declaration, which was tagged Affirmative action, resolved that 35% of all positions in government owned institutions and organizations, should be held by women. As Alapiki(2004) explicitly stated, "the 35% affirmative action provision is designed to be applied at every level of government i.e. federal, state, local government and wards, and within every civil society, village cabinets, political party offices and social organizations". As the call for equity re-echoes, some countries of the world appear to be adamant to this provision of the United Nation's charter.

In Nigeria, there was rekindled hope in the previous administration of Goodluck Jonathan as active women participation in government surpassed the 35% affirmative action bench mark of the United Nations that hope has to be kept alive in the present administration. This situation however seems to be fluctuating; women are now making serious and appreciable impact in the political life of the country, especially since the 2005 Beijing conference and women affirmative position

(Aweni, 2006). Nigerian women have also made significant contribution to national political life in post-independence era, most especially in the second and fourth republic (1979-1983 and 1999 to date). Nigeria produced the first female senator in the second republic (Mrs. Francis Afeghua) and in the final four years of the fourth republic, three (3) women were elected into the senate and fifteen (15) women into the House of Representatives. The fourth republic was a period of re-awakening for Nigerian women. Nigerian women have been proven to be qualified and competent to man any political office, irrespective of the rudiments of such offices. These women have demonstrated commitment to their fatherland in various aspects of National life. Today, Nigerian women, despite their responsibility as home keepers, can compete favourably with their male counterparts in social and political life if given the enabling platform. The low level of political participation of women in Northern Nigeria is becoming alarming. This hampers them from contributing their quota to the development of girl child education. Empirical observations have shown that Northern Nigerian women in position of responsibilities are noted to be hardworking and firm in their decision. Therefore, the significant of this research is to analyses the Constraints to Women Political participation. More particularly in some selected areas in core Northern Nigeria. The benefit of which should be of use to policy makers, women movements, parents and husbands in influencing their decision with regards to women political participation and enhancing girl child education in Northern Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The key objectives of this study therefore are to access those constraints to women education and its implications on their participation in politics in Northwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study will seek to:

1. Identify the Constraints to women education in Northwest, Nigeria
2. Analyze the implication of the constraints .to women participation in politics in Northwest, Nigeria.
3. Identify the focus on educating the boy child rather than the girl child.
4. Identify strategies that could enhance women and girl child education in Northwest, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the constraints to women's education in Northwest, Nigeria?
2. What are the implications of the constraints on women's political participation in North West, Nigeria?
3. Why the focus on Educating the boy child rather than the girl child?
4. What are those strategies that could be adopted towards enhancing women and girl child education in Northwest, Nigeria?

Design of the Study

The study used a survey research design. The study collected data from respondents via a questionnaire, therefore the survey research design is appropriate for it. Other respondents are

Political Office holders and Community leaders including men and women from Northwest Nigeria, comprising of the following seven States: Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara. The area is located in the guinea and Sahel savannah zones of the country. The area has a warm climate with a yearly rainfall average of 330 to 480mm suitable for agricultural production activities. The area has the largest voting strength in Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The study's participants is 17,593,757 women from the entire Northwest, State of Nigeria. Its comprising of 4,453,336 Kano, 2,162,926, Jigawa, 2,853,305 Katsina, 1,838,963 Sokoto, 1,624,912 Kebbi, 3,023,065 Kaduna and 1,637,250 Zamfara. Official Gazzette of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provided the population data.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for the study is 384 consisted of 180 Teachers at Basic Level of Education, 159 Teachers at Senior Secondary and 45 Female lecturers (15 per state) from tertiary institutions in the selected states. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study because of its peculiarity. Three State (Kano, Katsina and Jigawa) involved in the study. Six (6) Local Government Areas with two (2) each from the three senatorial Zone of each of the State were selected for the study. The respondents were drawn from both primary and secondary schools from the selected Local Government Areas while Female Lecturers were selected from tertiary institutions in the sampled states.

Table 1; Population Sample for the Study

S/No	State/LGA	Female Teacher at Basic Level	Female Teacher at Senior Level	at Sec. Tertiary	Female Lecturer	Total Sample
01	Kano/Bichi	10	10	15	128	
02	/Tsanyawa	10	9			
03	Kano/Gazawa	10	9			
04	/Danbatta	10	8			
05	Kano/Fagge	10	9			
06	Dogowa	10	8			
Sub-Total		60	53			

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S/No	State/LGA	Female Teacher at Basic Level	FemaleTeacher at Senior Sec. Level	Female Lecturer Tertiary	Total Sample
01	Katsina/Ingawa	10	10	15	128
02	Bakori	10	9		
03	Katsina/Batagarawa	10	9		
04	Daura	10	8		
05	Katsina/Matazu	10	9		
06	Jibia	10	8		
Sub-Total		60	53		
S/No	State/LGA	Female Teacher at Basic Level	FemaleTeacher at Senior Sec. Level	Female Lecturer Tertiary	Total Sample
01	Jigawa/Kazaure	10	10	15	128
02	Dutse	10	9		
03	Jigawa/Gumel	10	9		
04	Hadejia	10	8		
05	Jigawa/Jahun	10	9		
06	Ringim	10	8		
Sub-Total		60	53		
Grand Total		180	159	45	384

Instrumentation

Structured questionnaires and focus groups with moderated questions designed to elicit information from respondents were the instruments utilized for data gathering. Based on the literature review and political practices, a set of structured questionnaires were created, with a particular emphasis on the barriers women face to education and how these barriers affect their participation in political activities in Northwest Nigeria. Also, a guided instruction for eliciting information on constraints to women education and their participation in political activities and strategies for overcoming these challenges will also be used for focus group discussion. The

questionnaire was divided into two parts, part A contained items sought information on personal data of each respondent, part B contained questionnaire items relevant to the focus of the research. Part B of the questionnaire contained a response scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with corresponding nominal values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Two experts face validated the questionnaire. One teaches political science at Bayero University in Kano, and the other teaches test and measurement at the Federal College of Education (Technical) in Bichi, Kano State. The study's final questionnaire will be created with the help of their suggestions. The internal consistency of the questionnaire questions will be assessed using the Instrument Cronbach Alpha formula. The questionnaire will be administered on a sample size of 40 respondents comprising of 15 Female Teachers at Basic Education Level, 15 Female Teachers at Senior Secondary Education Level and 10 Female Lecturer from tertiary institutions in Zamfara state.

Data Analysis

The data collected for the study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation and frequency distribution table and simple percentage to answer the research questions

RESULTS

Table 1: Constraints to women Education

S/No.	Item	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1.	Women living in poverty face many barriers to education	36.65%	23.86%	4.26%	35.22%	100%
2.	Traditional practices and customs provide more obstacles to Women attendance to school	33.24%	28.41%	15.91%	22.44%	100%
3.	Parents withdraw girl child from school for early marriage	25.57%	19.89%	45.46%	9.09%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The computation in table 1, item 1 indicates that 36.25 percent agreed, 23.86 percent strongly agreed while 4.26 percent disagreed and 35.22 percent were strongly disagreed. Analysis of the table show that Women living in poverty face many barriers to education. That makes Poverty as one of the Constraints to women education

Item 2 shows that 33.24 percent agreed, 28.41 percent strongly agreed while 15.91 percent disagreed and 22.44 percent were strongly disagreed. The above analysis shows that Traditional practices and customs provide more obstacles to Girls attendance to school which is bad philosophy and it hinders women to participate fully in politics.

Item 3 shows that 25.57 percent agreed, 19.89 percent strongly agreed while 45.46 percent disagreed and 9.09 percent were strongly disagreed. The above analysis shows that Parents are most likely not withdrawing girl child from school for early marriage.

Table 2: Implications of the Constraints to Women Education on their Political Participation

S/No.	Item	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1.	Girl Child who miss out on education are more likely to miss out political opportunities	21.02%	5.40%	36.93%	36.65%	100%
2.	There is little or no freedom for women to vote their choice	55.40%	34.38%	7.67%	2.56%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The computation in table 2, item 1 indicates that 21.02 percent agreed, 5.60 percent strongly agreed while 36.93 percent disagreed and 36.55 percent were strongly disagreed. Analysis of the item show that Girl Child who miss out on education are not likely to miss out political opportunities. The computation in item 2, shows that 55.40 percent agreed, 34.38 percent strongly agreed, while 7.67 percent disagreed and 2.56 percent were strongly disagreed. Analysis shows that women without education have no freedom to vote their choice.

Table 3: Parents prepare boy child education above girl child education

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	91	25.85%
Strongly Agree	95	26.99%
Disagree	106	30.11%
Strongly disagree	60	17.05%
Total	352	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The computation in table 3 indicates that 25.85 percent agreed, 26.99 percent strongly agreed while 30.11 percent disagreed and 17.05 percent were strongly disagreed. Analysis shows that families prepare boy child education than that of the girls' child.

Table 4: Strategies that could be adopted towards enhancing women education

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Free education	182	51.70%
NGO	43	12.22%
Scholarship	39	11.08%
Avoid Mix Education	88	25%
Total	352	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The computation in table 8 shows that 51.70 percent agreed Free Education, 12.22 percent suggested NGO intervention, 11.08 percent for Scholarship and 25 percent suggested avoidance of mix education.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study highlighted a number of challenges which undermined the attainment of goals and objectives of the women politicians in Northwest Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to discuss some of the problems and prospects of the findings based on the study questions to enable the consumers or reader and as well the potential researchers to have knowledge of some constraints to acquiring education and leading chances for political participation for Women in Northwest Nigeria.

The first research question of this study asked about constraints to Women Education in Northwest Nigeria. Each participant described her opinion with majority believed that Women living in poverty face many barriers to education in Northwest Nigeria. The effect translate in to many children not having the opportunity to learn, especially if they are girls.

Children living in poverty face many barriers to education, but the stakes are especially high for girls.

When girls receive quality educations, they see the benefits in all aspects of their lives. Keeping girls in school supports economic growth, promotes peace, and even helps fight climate change.

The study found that Poverty is the most important factor that determines whether or not a girl can access education, according to the World Bank. Even in areas where parents don't have to pay school fees, it can be difficult to keep up with the costs of transportation, textbooks, or uniforms. Parents also often rely on girls' income to support the household, and sending a girl to school means they spend less time helping in the home.

This view collaborate with the fact that many governments of developing countries including Nigeria is that governments lack either the financial resources or the political will to meet their citizens' educational needs. In response, poor parents in some low income countries have organized and paid for their children's education themselves. It is true that school fees and other user

payments are a heavy burden for some parents to bear. But, given the alternative children receiving no education at all such payments can represent a temporary, if less than ideal, solution to the problem.

The second item of the research question is about traditional practices and customs could provide more obstacles to Girls attendance to school. Majority of the respondents believe that traditional practices and customs provide more obstacles to Girls attendance to school in Northwest Nigeria. In Northwest Nigeria girls' work primarily takes the form of domestic tasks, which are not considered in many studies of child labor. Policies that attempt to ban the labor-force work of children will have practically no effect on girls' education in Northwest Nigeria.

The third item of the research question was that to prove if Parents withdraw girl child from school for early marriage in Northwest Nigeria. Majority of the respondents were of the view that it is longer common practice in Northwest Nigeria that parents withdraw girl child from school for early marriage. Early girl-child marriage is a common practice in most developing countries. Every minute a girl-child is married off against her will, education attainment terminated and dreams aborted by this reoccurring act. The research finding shows that early girl-child marriage has no significant effect on Girl Child Education in Northwest Nigeria.

The second question is about implications of women education to their political participation. Majority of the respondents believed that women who miss out on education are not likely to miss out political opportunities.

The second aspect of the research question proved that women without education have no freedom to vote their choice. That their parents or husbands dictate their choice in term of election.

The third research question about if families prepare male child education above their female counterpart in Northwest Nigeria. Majority of the respondents believed that many girl child were drop out of school before completing their primary education due to financial problem.

The fourth research question is to explore strategies that could be adopted towards enhancing women education in Northwest Nigeria. Many of the respondents varied in their suggestions. Majority believed that free education for girl child is essential for enhancing women education in the region. While others believed that creating circumstance of avoiding mix education would be of great importance. The role of Non-Governmental Organizations and award of scholarship for girl child education would be significance.

CONCLUSION

Some factors, such as traditional practices and customs, limit women's access to education as well as political offices. Similarly, cultural and religious factors create significant variety in

women's representation across the country. There is a wide gap between women's representation across the religiously conservative north and the south, especially for legislative offices. Nigeria's north has produced popular women executive candidates at the state level, including one who ran for governor on the platform of a dominant party in Adamawa State. Importantly, individual states within the northern and southern regions also display notable deviations, making cogent the necessity of subnational outcomes.

The outcomes of the 2022 primary elections show that women suffer disadvantages at the individual, institutional, and systemic levels. Some of these barriers can be addressed through legislative reform; several reforms have been proposed in the National Assembly but have not yet been translated to substantive policies or laws. Other solutions lie in recognizing and elevating women as viable and competitive candidates who are capable of harnessing the support of millions of voters. Such endeavors would require significant resources, training and marketing, and media support for women candidates.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) describe gender equality as “not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world” (United Nations, 2022). Highlighted as SDG 5, it is also a cross-cutting principle underlying most of the other goals in pursuit of development whose benefits are enjoyed equally by women and men.

Finally, at the individual level, the high attrition rate for women aspirants and candidates is attributable to the high number of novice candidates seeking office and, relatedly, the low level of persistence of women politicians who lose elections. Across the board, the women who thrive in Nigerian politics have significant staying power, whether due to their own political clout, their networks, or their participation in their local political parties. But there is hope more especially by the Federal Executive Council approval of a revised National Gender Policy in March designed to promote gender equality, good governance, and accountability across the country's three tiers of government (Guardian, 2022), though it awaits implementation.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study the following recommendations are given

- i. The performance of women at general elections calls for sober reflection and an urgent need to re-strategize for the next general elections. There is urgent need for internal democracy in the political parties to whittle down male dominated party executives.
- ii. There should be also examination/assessment of parties' primaries with a view to formulating and implementing reforms that will support a more level playing field.
- iii. The establishment of women political institute where parties and all female aspirants and candidates would be equipped with the skills that underpin the positions should be desirable. The outcome would inform necessary remedial steps aspirants should take to address gaps to reposition them for exigency of electoral campaigns and elective office.

iv. Formal education, bills of right, various development programmes of different governments have helped in the uplifting Nigerian women. Nigerian women contribute enough to national development as their contributions to development still leaves much to be desired when compared to that of men. The situation could be improved by raising female literacy in Nigeria.

v. Women in Nigeria should also develop positive attitude to politics. It is by making up leadership positions that to institute reform in favour of women. Nigeria women should learn to assert themselves right from home by fighting discriminatory practices even in the wider society they should not nurture patriarchy but fight it.

vi. In order to bring improvement in political participation of women, there is a need for women empowerment. Empowerment means providing resources for people in disadvantaged situations, so that they can strengthen their own capacities in order to fully participate in the community and articulate their interests. This requires the full participation of all affected people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions that determine the well-being of societies.

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