

Women and Political Participation in Nigeria: A Study of Enugu State Women, 1999-2019

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Abstract

Over the years, marginalization has characterized women participation in politics due to alleged inhibiting social, cultural and religious factors. These factors purportedly affect women's active involvement in politics. However, various moves to correct this disadvantaged position of women in politics have proved abortive as the spate of women involvement is still low. Based on this challenge, this study appraised women political participation in Nigeria with special interest in Enugu State under the present Fourth Republic. The Ambivalent Sexism theory as espoused by Glick and Fiske (1997; 2001) was adopted as the framework of analysis for the study. This theory posits that there is a kind of relationship between men and women which results in deep ambivalence. It further maintains that hostile and benevolent sexism complement each other in reinforcing traditional gender roles and preserving patriarchal social structures of women as subordinate to men. The data for the study were collected using questionnaire as primary source, while textbooks, journals, internet materials were for secondary source. These data collected were analyzed using Linear Regression. The study revealed that perception of women and their traditional roles in the society largely militates against their active political participation in Nigeria especially in Enugu State ($\beta = .258$; $t = 4.589$; $p < 0.01$). However, the study recommended that all traditional, cultural and institutional inhibitions preventing Nigerian women from active participation in politics should be abolished at all cost.

Keywords: Political participation, women, marginalization, Ambivalent Sexism Theory, Enugu State

Introduction

Women involvement in governance and decision making has generated a lot of anxiety in international community. This is as a result of global anxiety on inactive political participation of

women especially in Africa despite concerted efforts being made by governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups on the need for proper integration of women in political process of various countries.

Women do not only comprise the majority in terms of population in Nigeria, they also play a crucial role in society as procreators of posterity as well as producers of goods and services. Although, women have made great strides forward in obtaining a vote and right to be elected to political offices in the advanced countries of Europe, America and developing countries like India, they still constitute less than 15 per cent of the Members of Parliament, and less than 5 per cent of heads of states worldwide. They hold only a fraction of other leadership positions nationally and internationally (Kasomo, 2012:1). Men have continued to dominate women in political, economic, social, and religious realms in global records. This situation has necessitated the clarion call that women should be empowered by giving them due status, rights, and responsibilities to enable them participate actively in decision making at the political level (Kasomo, 2012:1). Consequently, issues concerning women have received serious attention from the United Nations and its specialized agencies. For instance, the principle of equality of men and women was recognized in the United Nations Charter (1945), and subsequently in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). There were also the Beijing conference and the affirmative principle, all geared at increasing women's quota in political offices.

In spite of these efforts, women's decreased level of political participation is still glaring. This low representation has been allegedly attributed to a lot of factors that borders on cultural, socio economic and religious issues that seems to gird around the womenfolk by the society. For instance, in Africa, women are assigned specific roles as home managers which involve cooking, taking care of the children, and other menial roles and chores that could be assigned to them by their husbands. For this reason, some duties which hitherto concern development, achievements, decision making, etc., are left for men to handle, while prescribed responsibilities like cooking, taking care of the family, typing and teaching are supposedly given to women. Women constitute more than half of the entire Nigerian population, but their participation in decision making and general political processes is relatively low when compared to their male counterpart (Abubakar & Ahmad, 2014).

In Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions, respectively. To further empower the participation of women in politics, the regime of Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party(PDP), scrapped all fees required by women political contestants to enable them participate in future elections. Nigerian government under the Fourth Republic have been encouraging women to come out from their shell and join other women the world over in the full participation in politics and administration. This necessitated the sending of about 30 women to India to see and learn how to establish a small scale industry in order to contribute immensely to the economic development of the country. Hence, the

regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo made frantic efforts to reach the women by appointing them to key positions in the Federal level as ministers, director generals, and some other elective positions in the Legislative Assembly, as Senators, House of Representatives members, local government chairmen, councillors, speakers, etc. (Idika, 2010). Even with the affirmative action of 35% representation of women in political and non-elective positions in Nigeria as espoused by the government of President Jonathan, the number of women in the elective and appointive positions in Nigeria especially in Enugu State is still not encouraging. Against this backdrop, this study is intended to evaluate and investigate the obstacles tilting towards increased women participation in politics in Nigeria with analysis of Enugu State women between 1999 and 2019.

Theoretical Framework

The Ambivalent Sexism theory as propounded by Glick and Fiske (1997; 2001) was adopted as the framework of analysis for the study. This theory posits that there is a kind of relationship between men and women which results in deep ambivalence. This is in contrast to many other forms of prejudice (e.g., ethnic, racial, national), relationships between men and women that probably marked by simple antipathy and negative stereotypes. According to the theory, the coexistence of power differences between genders on one hand, and strong interdependence on the other, gives rise to both hostile and benevolent attitudes toward men and women. Glick and Fiske (1997; 2001) assert that hostile and benevolent sexism complement each other in reinforcing traditional gender roles and preserving patriarchal social structures of women as subordinate to men. Both forms of sexism share the assumption that women are inferior and restricted to a lower social status. Hostile sexism reflects misogyny (i.e., the hatred of women by men) and is expressed through blatant negative evaluations of women. Examples of hostile sexism include beliefs about women as incompetent, unintelligent, overly emotional, and sexually manipulative. Benevolent sexism reflects evaluations of women that are seemingly positive. Examples of benevolently sexist attitudes include the reverence of women in wife, mother, and child caretaker roles, the romanticizing of women as objects of heterosexual affection, and the belief that men have a duty to protect women. While benevolent sexism may not appear to be harmful to women on the surface, these beliefs are extremely caustic to gender equity and restrict women's personal, professional, political, and social opportunities. This is because these seemingly positive evaluations imply that (a) women are weak and need to be protected, (b) women should not deviate from traditional gender roles as mothers and caretakers, and (c) women should be idolized by men for their sexual purity and availability (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Applying this theory to the behaviour of men towards women or vice versa, there is a basic assumption that ambivalent gender attitudes of both men and women determine the perception of one over another. Put differently, the theory of ambivalent sexism perceives both sexes differently based on their observation.

The theory identified two basic assumptions that reflect the perception of each group of gender over the other. These basic assumptions are: 'Hostile ambivalent attitude' and 'Benevolent ambivalent

attitude'. The theory maintains that hostile attitudes are directed by men towards women who are perceived to be challenging male dominance in the society. These women are also perceived as using their sexual allure to gain control over men. Such women are mostly career women, politicians, business entrepreneurs and other women that are recognized by the society on the basis of their achievements other than the traditional roles of a woman as a care giver and so on. Benevolent attitudes on the other hand are directed toward women who comply with traditional gender norms. It is a subjectively positive but patronizing attitude, which views women as pure but weak beings who ought to be adored and protected by men (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1997).

Ambivalent sexism theory further posits that attitudes toward men are characterized by a similar ambivalence as in women (Glick & Fiske, 1999, 2001). Hostility toward men reflects antagonism to men's higher status and dominance. Although expressing resentment of male power, hostile attitudes assume that male dominance is natural and inevitable (Glick et al., 2004). In contrast, benevolence towards men acknowledges and admires men's roles of protectors and providers by women. Both types of attitudes reinforce gender hierarchy by characterizing men as inherently powerful and aggressive while admiring their traditional roles. They are positively correlated with each other and have negative associations with indicators of gender equality (Glick et al., 2004).

The Ambivalent Sexism theory as a paradigm of this study tends to x-ray the extent of disparity and inhibitions women are exposed to in their quest to make meaningful impact in the society other than their primary or traditional roles allegedly imposed on them.

From the analysis of the theory, women are not together in their quest for involvement in decision making structure of the society. While those that tend to rise above the normal traditional roles as care givers are making effort to achieve it, a greater percentage of the womenfolk perceive themselves as helpers to men. This scenario is a serious impediment to women involvement in governance but few that participate are perceived to be challenging a status quo by their fellow women.

Moreover, the theory also perceives men as originally superior to women and as such, doing everything to maintain that status. Most men are hostile towards women that tend to question their status quo. Therefore, few men support women active participation in decision making. The theory however reveals that most women perceive their participation in politics or decision making as an aberration. These pose a challenge to women's active political participation in Nigeria.

Methodology

This research made use of survey and documentary research designs. A survey research design itself can be seen as the proposed or adopted systematic and scientific plan, blueprint, road map of an investigation, detailing the structure and strategy that will guide the activities of the investigation, concerned and executed in such a way as to obtain relevant and appropriate data for answering pertinent research questions and testing hypothesis. The choice of this method is the fact that survey in a descriptive study is more appropriate in dealing with public feelings, opinions, and views in relation to analyzing the facts thereto. Documentary method on the other hand involves review of relevant documents such as textbooks, journals, periodicals and magazines to identify scholarly postulations on the subject of study.

Population, Sample size and Technique

The population of the people of Enugu State was taken as the population of the study and it is estimated at 4,411,100 (NBS 2016). The sample size of 400 was determined by using statistical method. And in determining the sample, the researchers employed a statistical formula devised by Yaro Yamene (1973). Stratified random sampling technique which appreciates a homogeneous class or group within a heterogeneous sample population was adopted for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

For testing of hypotheses, linear regression was adopted. The data for the computation of X^2 is dependent on the numerical values got from the responses using the Likert 5 point-scale.

Table 1.1 Questionnaire Distributions and Return

Questionnaire	Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Returned	370	92.5
Not returned	30	8.1
Total	400	100

Demographic Factors

Table 1.2: Sex Distribution of Respondents

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	145	39.2
Female	225	60.8
Total	370	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The Table 1.2 shows the responses of staff sex distribution. In the table, 145 respondents representing 39.2% of the respondents stated that they are male while the remaining 225 respondents representing 60.8% stated that they are female. Therefore this table reveals that majority of the respondents are female.

Table 1.3: Age Distribution of Respondents

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
20 – 24	30	8.1
24 – 29	32	8.6
30 – 34	30	8.1
35 – 39	48	12.10
40 – 44	60	16.2
45 – 49	60	16.2
50 – 54	50	13.5
55 – 59	33	8.91
60 and above	27	7.29
Total	370	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

The Table 1.3 shows the age distribution of respondents. In the table, 30 respondents representing 8.1% out of the entire respondents are within 20-24 years, 32 respondents representing 8.6% are within the age bracket of 24-29 years, 30 respondents representing 8.1% are within the age bracket of 30-34 years, 48 respondents representing 12.10% are within the age bracket of 35-39 years, 60 respondents representing 16.2% are within the age bracket 40-44 years, 60 respondents representing 16.2% are within the age bracket of 45-49 years, 50 respondents representing 13.5% are within the age bracket 50-54 years, 33 respondents representing 8.91% are within the age bracket 55-59 years and 27 respondents representing 7.29% are within the age bracket 60 years and above. Hence, the majority of the respondents fall within 45-49 years.

Table 1.4: Distribution on Educational Qualification

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
FSLC	76	20.5
SSCE	119	32.2
BSC/HND	116	31.35
HIGHER DEGREE	53	14.3
Ph.D	6	1.62
TOTAL	370	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The Table 1.4 shows the responses of the research respondents on educational qualification. In the table, 76 respondents representing 20.5% of the entire respondents indicated they have qualification of FSLC, 119 respondents representing 32.2% of the respondents stated that they have SSCE, 116 respondents representing 31.35% of the entire respondents indicated they have qualification of B.Sc/HND., 53 respondents representing 14.3% of the respondents stated that they have Higher degree qualification while the remaining 6 respondent representing 1.62% indicated that they have

Ph.D and above qualification. Therefore this table reveals that majority of the respondents are in possession of SSCE qualification.

Table 1.5: Distribution of respondents' marital status

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Married	300	81.1
Not Married	70	18.9
Total	370	100

Source: field survey, 2019

The Table 1.5 shows the responses of respondents on marital status. Out of 300 respondents representing 81.1% of the entire respondents are married while 70 respondents representing 18.9% indicated Not Married. Hence, it is clear that the majority of the respondents are married.

Table 1.6: Distribution of Respondents based on Occupation

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Public Servants	93	25.1
Farmers	76	20.5
Artisans	69	18.6
Business	98	26.5
Not employed	34	9.2
Total	370	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The table 1.6 shows the responses of the respondents on occupation. In the table, 93 respondents representing 25.1% are public servants, 76 respondents representing 20.5% of the respondents are farmers, 69 respondents representing 18.6% of the respondents are artisans, 98 respondents representing 26.5% of the respondents are into business while the remaining 34 respondents representing 9.2% are not employed. Therefore this table reveals that majority of the respondents are into business.

Table 1.7: Distribution of respondents' Political Participation status

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Not participating	190	51.35
Participating	180	48.64
Total	370	100

Source: field survey, 2019

The table 1.7 shows the responses of respondents on their position on participation status. Out of 190 respondents representing 51.35% of the entire respondents are not participating while 180 respondents representing 48.64% indicated participating. Hence, it shows that the majority of the respondents are not participating.

Table 1.8: Data on Women Participation in Enugu State (1999 to 2019)

S/n	Position	No. of Women in 1999	No. of Women in 2003	No. of Women in 2007	No. of Women in 2011	No. of Women in 2015	No. of Women in 2019
1	STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	-	4(16.7%)	4(16.7%)	4(16.7%)	3 (12.5%)	3 (12.5%)
	TOTAL NO OF SEATS	24	24	24	24	24	24
2	EXECUTIVE COUNCIL	2(11.8%)	2(11.8%)	3(12%)	3(12%)	4(16%)	4(16%)
	TOTAL NO OF SEATS	17	17	25	25	25	25
3	LOCAL GOVT CHAIRPERSON	-	-	-	-	-	2(11.76%)
	TOTAL NO OF SEATS	17	17	17	17	17	17
4	COUNCILLORS	-	2(0.77%)	8 (3.08%)	9 (3.46%)	16 (6.15%)	33(12.69%)
	TOTAL NO OF SEATS	260	260	260	260	260	260
5	SENATORS	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL NO OF SEATS	3	3	3	3	3	3
6	HOUSE OF REPS	-		1 (12.1%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	-
	NO OF SEATS	8	8	8	8	8	8

Source: Odigbo et al. (2015) and fieldwork (2019)

Presentation of Data Based on Research Question

Table 1.9: Mean rating of responses of respondents on women inhibitions from active political participation

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	U	A	SA	N	FX	\bar{X}	Decision
1	Women's traditional roles in the society encourage their political participation	58	134	3	75	90	370	1075	2.9	Accepted
2	Most men discourage their	29	12	-	4	28	37	562	1.5	Rejected

	women from active involvement in politics and governance				0	9	0			
3	Culture and tradition motivates women to participate in politics in Enugu State	123	82	76	70	19	370	1331	3.6	Accepted
4	Greater number of people including women see politics as business for only men and as such women should not participate	54	23	12	83	198	370	762	2.1	Rejected
5	Most women are not interested in politics because they perceive it to be a dirty game virtuous women should abstain from	72	85	9	96	108	370	1027	2.7	Accepted
6	Religious inhibitions of submissiveness of women to their husbands has placed a serious impediment on active women political participation	57	83	6	96	128	370	955	2.6	Accepted
7	Huge financial involvement in active political participation in Enugu State deters women	155	66	7	62	80	370	1264	3.4	Accepted
8	Enugu State women do not want to participate in politics	196	87	5	61	21	370	1486	4.1	Accepted
Total	Mean								2.8	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1.9 above shows the mean mark calculated from the response of the respondents on women inhibitions from active political participation. Based on the decision rule, that if \bar{x} is below 2.5 it is considered rejected and if \bar{x} is 2.5 and above it is considered accepted. However, all the items in the table were accepted except item 2 and item 4 which do not score above the mean score of 2.5 and meanwhile the overall mean is 2.8 it therefore proves that there is women inhibitions from active political participation.

Test of Hypothesis

The results for the test of hypothesis, which was tested with simple Linear Regression, are presented below:

- H_0 : Perception of women and their traditional roles in the society largely does not militate against their active political participation in Enugu State in particular and Nigeria in general.
- H_i : Perception of women and their traditional roles in the society largely militates against their active political participation in Nigeria especially in Enugu State.

Table 1.10a: A Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.345 ^a	.339	.104	.44086

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of women and their traditional roles
- b. Dependent Variable: Active political participation

Table 1.10a above revealed that there is a relationship at $R = .345$ between perception of women and their traditional roles and the level of active political participation. An examination of the table shows that the $R^2 = .119$ which implies that perception of women and their traditional roles accounts for only 33.9% of variations having a significant effect on the level of active political participation.

Table 1.10b: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.742	3	1.581	8.132	.000 ^b
	Residual	35.179	366	.194		
	Total	39.921	369			

- a. Dependent Variable: Active political participation
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of women and their traditional roles

Table 1.10b shows that the F-value is the Mean Square Regression (1.581) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.194), yielding $F = 8.132$. The table shows that perception of women and their traditional roles is statistically significant at ($\text{Sig} = .000$). Therefore it is a significant predictor of active political participation at $F_{(3,184)} = 8.132$.

Table 1.10c: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.403	.265		12.859	.000
PWTR	.258	.056	.340	4.589	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Active political participation

Table 1.10c above revealed the degree of influence of perception of women and their traditional roles and its level of significance. The statistical result is given as (Perception of women and their traditional roles; $\beta = .258$; $t = 4.589$; $p < 0.01$). The statistical result implies that perception of women and their traditional roles is a significant predictor of the level of active political participation.

Linear Regression Model is given as $Y = a + \beta X$

Where Y = Active political participation

a = constant

βx = Coefficient of X

Therefore active political participation = $3.403 + 0.258PWTR$

Based on the results in the Anova table above, the significant levels for perception of women and their traditional roles is less than 0.01 therefore we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. That is, perception of women and their traditional roles in the society largely militates against their active political participation in Nigeria especially in Enugu State.

Summary of Findings

Having carried out this research project, the researcher made the following findings:

The study revealed that perception of women and their traditional roles in the society largely militates against their active political participation in Nigeria particularly in Enugu State. This is indicated as: $\beta = .258$; $t = 4.589$; $p < 0.01$.

Conclusion

The dismal participation of women in Nigeria's political development became a worrisome phenomenon when after four consecutive successful legitimate change of government through democratic electoral process, following the nation's return to civilian regime in 1999, Nigeria fails to achieve the critical mass of 30% women's representation in governance especially in Enugu State. This study has also discovered the attributions to lack of women's active participation such as cultural, religious and societal infringements meted on those who tend to participate actively in politics. These inhibitions pose a very big threat to women's involvement in politics.

Recommendations

The researchers made the following recommendations:

1. There should be a reformation of customary and religious institutions of the states so as to avoid discrimination against women's involvement in public life. The patriarchal structures that reinforce power imbalance between women and men should be dismantled. Any form of intimidation, harassment or act of violence against any woman venturing into politics must be severely punished, to encourage more women to come out.
2. Government should partner with women's movements and civil society to embark on aggressive awareness and enlightenment campaign towards changing societal perception that woman are inferior to men.
3. Education of women is useful to destroy inferiority complex and to give aspiring women courage and confidence to compete with men. Women education/orientation should target the adult population both in the cities and rural areas.
4. In addition, the creation of a political environment supportive of and conducive for women's participation is a responsibility of the government. Therefore, government must curb the culture of huge financial involvement, electoral violence and the use of political thugs and gangsters to suppress and witch-hunt political opponents in the country.
5. There should be a deliberate constitutional provision for allotment or zoning of particular positions to women such as deputy governor, vice president and other managerial positions to enhance the level of their involvement.

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