



CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AS SHOWN BY FEMALE POLITICIANS IN KOGI CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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Abstract

The focus of this study is on the constraints affecting effective women participation in politics as shown by women politicians in Kogi State Central Senatorial District. The population consists of all women politicians in Kogi Central Senatorial District. The Stratified and Random sampling techniques were used to sample a total of 240 women politicians in this area for the study.. It is a survey design. The instrument employed was a self developed question titled "Constraints Affecting Women Effective Participation in Politics Questionnaire (CAWEPPQ). Using product moment correlation, a coefficient of .79 was found on a test retest which attests to its reliability. One research question was employed and the result revealed that education, violence, culture and financial factors were the major constraints to effective women participation in politics among women politicians in Kogi Central Senatorial District. The counselling implications were discussed and recommendations were made which includes the introduction of political counseling and giving incentives for girl-child education.

Introduction

The political terrain in Nigeria for a long time, has been overwhelmingly dominated by the men folk relegating the women to the background as can be seen from the women participation in politics in Kogi State from 1999 till date. From the statistics of women participation in politics with particular reference to Kogi Central Senatorial District,

beginning from 1999 till date, women have been completely underrepresented as seen below:

1. Between 1999 and 2003, no woman representative in any of the elective positions.
2. From 2003 to 2007, there was only one woman representative in the house of assembly from Adavi local government. She died in a mysterious accident after a year.
3. In the democratization process from 2007 to 2011, there were no women representations.
4. From 2011 till date, no woman in any of the elective positions.

Source: INEC Lokoja (2017)

It is a known fact that these women constitute a very significant figure of the eligible electorates during election.

This is of course diametrically is opposed to the provision of the Nigerian constitution (as amended) in section 40 viz:

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

This is equally corroborated by the same Nigeria's constitution when it averred in section 42 (1) as follows:

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

All these constitutional provisions corroborate the non-discriminatory nature of any Nigerian towards participation in politics. A level playing ground is evidently provided for in the Nigerian constitution for whoever wants to participate in politics.

From Agbajalobi (2010) submissions, the statistics of men in comparison to women in political offices is alarmingly lopsided with men on the advantage. The Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reform (2005) remarked that it is unjust and an anathema to a

democratization process to marginalize women in politics despite their significant population with their views to the entire development of a nation which are germane and in line with the constitution.

The National Policy on Women (2000) remarked that women should participate equally with men, vote and be voted for and that it is only when they are there that they can speak for themselves and welfare.

In spite of the population strength of women, there is still a wavering gap between men and women in political participation. What are the constraints to women participation in politics with particular reference to Kogi Central Senatorial District?

Statement of problem

That women are marginalized and underrepresented in Nigeria's political structures are evident. In the present All Progressive Congress led government of President Muhammadu Buhari regime, only six women are on the ministerial cabinet of the government which constitutes only 16.6% of the total number of ministers. In Kogi State, the situation is not different with two women, one as a Special Adviser on Labour and Pension Matters and recently another one as Head of Service. Evidences abound of the potency of women contributions when in position of authority. For instance, late Dora Akwujili of the National Agency for Food Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) dared and surmounted the problems of this agency. She was proactive and charismatic. Her achievements evidently surpassed her predecessors who were of the men folk. There was a considerable reduction in the distribution and importation of fake drugs. Shedding more light on this issue, Agbalajobi (2010) argued further that:

This form of discrimination is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one. Thus, both developed and under-developed states are guilty of the same discriminatory sexist politics. The only difference is that it has lasted so long in this part of the world as other nations of the world are moving towards gender equality. (P.7)

According to the 2006 census, women are about half of the population of the entire country and they constitute 60% of the Nigerian electorate, unfortunately they have been significantly underrepresented in political positions.

This statement of problem is therefore transmitted to the following research question:

1. What are the factors affecting participation of women in politics as shown by women politicians in Kogi Central Senatorial district and whether they are significant at 2.5 on criterion mean?

Purpose of the study

The study aims at finding out the constraints impeding the effective participation of women in politics among women politicians in Kogi Central Senatorial District which has made them to be underrepresented in political positions.

Significance of the study

The significance of the study is summarized as follows:

1. To really ascertain the factors that hinder effective participation of women in politics in spite of their robust electoral relevance in Kogi Central Senatorial District. This will serve as an eye opener to various stakeholders in the political circle.
2. The counseling implications discussed will serve as palliatives to husbands and the society as a whole to change their negative attitude towards the participation of women in politics.
3. It will also serve as a heuristic value for other researchers who may be interested in this area of study.

Methodology of the study

This study is a survey design carried out in Kogi central senatorial district. The population consists of all female/women politicians in Kogi Central Senatorial Districts. The stratified and random sampling techniques were used to select two hundred and forty (240)

participants for the study. The instrument employed was a self developed questionnaire titled “Constraints Affecting Effective Participation of Women in Politics (CAEPWP). It is a fourteen (14) items questionnaire that is based on a four-point modified Likert type scale. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, a value of .79 was found when pilot-tested.

The instrument is made up of two sections, A and B. Section A encompasses personal data of the respondents like religion, marital status and educational qualifications while section B contains items on the constraints that includes cultural, financial, violence and educational factors.

The researcher employed the descriptive statistics in analyzing the data which includes frequency counts, percentage and mean scores. The frequency counts and mean scores of each item on the questionnaire were worked out and a criterion mean of 2.5 was used. A mean of 2.50 and above was taken to mean that the respondents agreed with the item while analyzing, a mean below 2.50 was taken to mean disagreement. The extent of respondents’ agreement or disagreement with each item was put in four Likert scale levels of Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) 1.

Results (Statistical Analysis)

Table I: Age range of the respondents

Age range	Frequency	%
20 – 30	0	0
31 – 40	28	11.67
41 – 50	172	71.86
51 and above	40	16.66

Table I above shows the age range of the respondents. Most of the respondents fall within the age range 41 – 50, 172 (71.86%), this is quickly followed by the the age range of 51 and above, 40 (16.66%). The age range between the ages of 31 and 40 are 28 (11.67%) while those of 20 to 30 recorded no respondents.

Table II: Educational qualifications of the respondents (Demographic data)

Educational qualification of the respondents	Frequency	%
Illiterates	150	62.5
Secondary School Certificate	42	17.5
First School Leaving Certificate	30	12.5
A level and above	18	7.5

The educational qualifications of the respondents are revealed above. 150, representing 62.5% of them are illiterates, this is followed by Secondarians, 42 representing 17.5% of the respondents. Those with First School Leaving Certificates are 30, representing 12.5% of the respondents while those with A’level and above are the least. They are 18 which represents 7.5% of the whole women.

Table III: Religion

Religion	Frequency	%
Christianity	75	31.5
Islam	142	59.16
Others	23	9.58

Most of the respondents are Muslims, 142 representing, 59.2% of the respondents. The data shows that Christians constitute 31.5% (75) of the respondents while other religions 23, representing 9.6% of the respondents.

Table IV: Marital Status of the respondents

Religion	Frequency	%
Married	176	73.33
Single	64	26.6

The table above shows that in Kogi Central Senatorial districts, 176 representing 73.3% of the total respondents are married while 64 representing 26.6% of the respondents are single.

Research Question One: What are the constraints to effective women participation in politics in Kogi Central Senatorial District and whether they are significant at 2.5 on criterion mean?

Table V: Constraints of effective women participation in politics in Kogi Central Senatorial Districts.

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	SD	Sig./Not Sig.
Cultural Constraints								
1	They loose their marriage responsibilities	120	100	15	15	3.39	1.91	S
2	They are not meant to compete with men in line with thier cultural beliefs	120	95	15	10	3.35	1.83	S
3	Only women of easy virtues go into politics in line with some cultural beliefs	125	85	20	10	3	1.73	S
4	The dirty nature of the game is immoral for a woman	200	30	10	0	3.79	1.83	S
						Average		
						$\bar{x} = 3.38$		
Financial Challenges								
5	It entails a lot of money and women may not have it.	180	50	8	2	3.71	3.71	S
6	Women may not see who to sponsor them	175	45	15	5	3.6	1.89	S
7	They depend on men for survival and men may not offer such largesse	190	40	9	1	3.74	1.94	S
8	Politics need very fat bank account	200	15	20	5	3.70	1.22	S
						Average		
						$\bar{x} = 3.69$		
Violence								
9	Women cannot withstand the violent nature of the game	200	18	17	5	3.7	1.92	1.5
10	Needs a lot of stress that women may not withstand	210	20	8	2	3.8	1.94	S
11	Involves a lot of physical stamina and an average woman is a weakling	200	20	15	5	3.7	1.92	S
						Average		
						$\bar{x} = 3.7$		
Educational factor								
12	The Nigerian woman has no adequate	226	12	2	0	3.76	1.93	S

	opportunity for adult literacy programme							
13	There is no special incentive for woman to pursue western education	220	13	7	0	3.8	1.94	S
14	To participate fully in politics, you need some form of education	200	30	8	2	3.7	1.92	S
15	Women low level of literacy is a factor	232	8	0	0	3.9	1.97	S
						Average		
						$\bar{x} = 3.7$		

From table V, all the factors are beyond the criterion level of 2.5 indicating that they are significant and are constraints to effective participation of women in politics in Kogi central senatorial districts.

Discussion of findings

Table one shows the age range of the respondents. From the table, the most prominent age range are those between the ages of 41-50. This is not a surprise since according to Erickson's stage of Ego development, this age range falls within seventh (7th) stage which deals with generativity that concern itself with the ability of an individual to be productive in various ways that encompasses the production of children and the guidance of the younger generation. Politics legitimizes men and even women to lead, guide and to be a pathfinder to bring positive changes in the life of a society. Their main responsibility is to guide and establish the next generation. Politics is a veritable ground for this. The maturity is there, experiences have been gathered in the vicissitudes of their life.

Table two indicates that the respondents are predominantly illiterates accounting for 62.5% (150) of the total respondents. As illiterates, how will they interpret policies in governmental positions? How would they contribute meaningfully in legislature matters?

How would they interpret the constitution?

How would they communicate to the people they are supposed to represent?

How will they write memos?

How do they conduct meetings?

What intellectual contributions can they make for governance?

They are already politically diseased because of illiteracy. Illiteracy therefore is a serious anathema to holding political positions among women.

In this area, that is, Kogi Central Senatorials, most of the people are Muslims and that is why the Muslims recorded the highest population that is 142 (59.16%) of the entire population of the respondents as seen in table three (III).

In table IV (four) 176 (73.3%) of the women are married. They may be playing politics as a form of support to the family upkeep. Since most of them are illiterates with no serious skill in hand as a vocation, most of them may have stopped giving birth. It is likely too that some of them may have separated from their husbands as single mothers. Again, it is the married women who could coordinate other younger ones for political meetings.

Today, in Nigeria, politics is geared towards personal investment. It requires a lot of hard work, diligence and commitment to succeed. One of the strongest factors here is finance since votes are bought with money. This is because; the populace has come to know that most of the politicians are machivellenristic in nature. They get to positions and dump the people who voted them. They get themselves alienated. Haven invested so much in God-Fathers, bribing the voters, the security and other stakeholders; there is therefore an intractable ambition and desperation so as to hijack the political machinery for money invested politicians face frivolous and dubious demands from God fathers who wield tremendous influence in the society. The politicians have to seriously satisfy these people by providing them a lot of money since their opinions about any candidate holds sway to the electorates. They equally employ marabouts, prayer warriors and magicians to assist them. All these people are in their payroll. Where will a woman get all these? Finance is therefore a constraint to women politicians.

Tor and Terkula (2011) remarked these systems that entered the Nigerian system have put women in a serious disadvantage.

In politics, success and failure are similar to Siamese twins. It involves wits and charms, thuggery, infighting, intrigues, backstabbing, horse-trading, nocturnal meetings, arguments and counter arguments in the quest for power acquisition, status enhancement and recognition. This involves serious struggles which most times result into the display of animalistic instincts in form of physical fights, killings and maimings, shooting of guns for these purposes and of course to scare people. Can women withstand these? No, this is another constraint to women participation in politics.

Culture is the way of life of a people. It encompasses languages, religion, dress patterns, even methods of civilization. The cultural orientation ranges from cooking, taking care of the house, rearing children and only a handful still believe that women too should be involved in other secular responsibilities. Politics is seen as murky water in which women are not to partake. It is the belief that only women of easy virtues partake in the ugly exercise mostly because of their responsibilities towards their children and other family members. The Ebirras of Kogi State believe that women should be completely subservient to men and therefore, should not be allowed to occupy a position of authority and lord over them to the men folks. This is another constraint to effective participation of women in politics.

Counseling Implications

The central focus of this study is on the constraints of the participation of women in politics in Kogi Central Senatorial District. This has a lot of implications for couples in marriage counseling. From the religious point of view, the first divine institution is marriage where the responsibilities of couples are clearly spelt out. The man therefore has to be encouraged to play an androgynous role to reduce tension in the home, as a result of occasional absenteeism of the woman for political activities. This has become very important because their actions and inactions present volumes of information to the children. Behavioural counseling further explains this. Again there has to be dyadic consensus on germane issues relating to political activities. This equally calls for marital adjustment. For example who speaks for women in political meetings? Who acts as their umbrella? Who

represents their interests? How do they defend their relevance? They need counseling for all these. This is because, according to Sheppard and Kottler (2011):

Counselling permits practitioners to make a difference in people's lives and to see the results in their lifetime. One of the ways in which attempts to confront our own mortality is by preserving our spirit long after physical death. The reward of a counsellor is the knowledge that a generation of clients will remember and use the help that was offered even after we are gone. Our profession allows us to productively face our own fears of death by leaving behind those who because of our efforts feel less pain. (P.7)

The pain of underrepresentation of women in political positions can be ameliorated through effective counseling that will serve generations yet unborn. Women should be counseled that they are not second class citizens through enlightenment programs and conferences. These avenues will further encourage them to go into politics.

In conclusion, politics encompasses all the struggles put in by man to gain power, recognition and an uplifted status in order to have control of leadership. This enables man to oversee the control of the pot of "honey" (money) and the resources accruable from that position. As far as the Nigerian constitution is concerned, that, equally regulates the activities of the Ebirras living in the Kogi Central Senatorial district of Kogi State. Women have not been excluded from playing active roles. Therefore, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Political counseling should be introduced into guidance and counseling curriculum to unveil the potentials of women in holding political appointments.
2. The literacy rate of women should be enhanced through adequate literacy programme and making Girl-Child education tuition free so as to reduce the present illiteracy level of women.
3. Any cultural value that does not enhance the status of its members should be discarded for something more progressive. Women too can equally excel like men. For example, Okonjo Iweala, former minister of finance, Late Prof. Dora Akunyili (NDLEA), Kemi

Adeosun, Minister of Finance, Aisha Abubakar, Minister of State, Trade, Industry and Investment

4. Money politics should be discouraged in politics. This should be by making politics less attractive. This will probably make women who have passion for politics to be opportuned. This will make for a more balanced view for political participation.

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