

9-13-2019

Women's Political Participation and Grassroots Democratic Sustainability in Osun State, Nigeria (2010-2015)

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Recommended Citation

Abidemi Abiola, Isola (2019) "Women's Political Participation and Grassroots Democratic Sustainability in Osun State, Nigeria (2010-2015)," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Feminist Thought*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 3. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/jift/vol11/iss1/3>

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ABSTRACT

Studies on Osun State and women's representation in both the federal and state levels and in the legislative and executive arms of government indicated it has the second highest women's representation in South West, Nigeria. This gives an impression that democracy is being sustained at the grassroots. However, the fact on the ground is to the contrary, especially when compared with their male counterparts and their representation in government. Therefore, this study explores women's political participation and grassroots democratic sustainability in Osun State, Nigeria from 1999 to 2015. This study adopted survey research design. Data were collected through questionnaires and unstructured interviews.

The findings revealed that the number of women involved in political participation in Osun state is low compared to their male counterparts yet they are beginning to make great strides. It was found that women's representation at the two levels of involvement in the period under study was 50 women or 20.5% of the group while male representation was 244 or 79.5 %. Further, it was revealed that the under representation of women in political participation in Osun State was due to certain socio-cultural factors like violence, discrimination against women, people's perception of politics as a dirty game and cultural beliefs. The study conclusions suggest that representation of women in Osun State is low compared to their male counterparts. This indicates that sustainability of democracy at the grassroots level is yet to be sustained. It is recommended that there needs to be local policies to end all discrimination against women as well as a platform of action entrenched in the constitution. In addition, the support of organized women's associations not only in training women, but also through financial support and with the assistance of the government should be encouraged.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research is to shed more light into the area of political participation of women in Osun State and its effects on the sustainability of grassroots democracy between the years 2010 and 2015. The research covered Osun State which was carved out of the old Oyo State on the 27th August, 1991. It is in South Western Nigeria. Osun State covers an area of approximately 14,875 square kilometers, lies between longitude 0400E and 0505" and latitude 05 558" and 08 o7", and is bounded by Ogun, Kwara, Oyo and Ondo States in the South, North, West and East, respectively (SEEDS 2004 – 2007). The population of Osun State, according to the estimated population for year 2006 National Population, was three million, four hundred and twenty three thousand, five hundred and thirty five (3,423,535); (Male=1,740,619, Female=1,682,916). There are more than 200 towns, villages and other settlements in the state. Some of the major towns are Osogbo, Ile-Ife, Ilesa, Ikirun, Iwo, Ede, Ila-Orangun, Ijebu –jesa, Ipetu- jesa, Ifon and Osun. The indigenes of the state belong to the Yoruba ethnic group and are composed of the Ifes, Ijesas, Osuns and the Igbominas. However, non-indigenes from all parts of Nigeria and foreigners reside in the state, living in harmony with the indigenes. Yoruba and English are the languages used by the people for official and business transactions. Traditionally, the people engage in agriculture and produce sufficient food and cash crops for domestic consumption and has inputs for agro allied industries, as well as for exportation purpose (Official Web Of Osun State, 2012) Also, traders and artisans are part of the segment of the populace. Other major occupations include weaving, mat making, dying, soap making and wood carving. The people of Osun State have a rich cultural heritage such as Oranmiyan staff, Yeyemolu and Oduduwa shrine, Ife museum, Osun Osogbo shrine, Olumirin waterfalls at Erin-Ijesa, among others (SEEDS 2004- 2007).

The State is divided into three Senatorial districts namely; Osun Central, Osun East, and Osun West. Each of these districts is further divided into two zones. Osun Central is made up of Ede and Iwo zones, Osun East consists of Osogbo and Ikirun zones while Osun West comprises of Ife and Ijesa zones. In all, the state is divided into six geographical zones. The State is made up of thirty local government areas and Ife East area council (Olagunsoye, 2008).

In Nigeria generally and Osun State precisely, the Fourth Republic (i.e. the country is being governed by the Fourth Republic Constitution and the birth of Democracy in Nigeria) manifests traces of discrimination. The negligible presence of women in institutionalized politics is equally apparent in their low participation as party executives, elected officers and political appointees. While the democratic transition in Nigeria in 1999 has created opportunities that politicize gender identity, there remains both a dearth of political opportunities for women and severe self-reinforcing constraints on gender participation. Though the numbers are increasing, women remain grossly under-represented in governance in Osun State (*Daily champion*, 2011).

This study seeks to explain such imbalances as perceived by those men and women in power, with regard to women's involvement in politics. To achieve this, the following objectives were turned into research questions in order to have answers to the quagmire of imbalances in politics and challenges of democratic sustainability in Osun State. They are:

1. To explore the extent of women in political participation
2. To examine those factors that militate against women's political participation
3. To evaluate the challenges of democratic sustainability
4. To explore the link between women's participation and grassroots' democratic sustainability.

METHODOLOGY: Quantitative and Qualitative designs were used in the analysis of the data gathered by the researcher. The findings from quantitative method of data collection which included data obtained through questionnaire administration sought to determine the level at which women in Osun State are involved in political participation and those factors that hinder their involvement. In addition, the questionnaires were used to answer research questions one, two and four, which have to do with the level of involvement of women in political participation, socio-cultural factors affecting women political participation and the link between women political participation and democratic sustainability in Osun State (2010-2015). Furthermore, research questions three and four, also, were based on findings on the qualitative perspective of the work, which involved data obtained from interviewees in Osun State and included women and men politicians, market women and organized associations. It also included analysis of published and unpublished works related to the research topic under study and personal observation of the researcher during the field survey at the Local Government Areas of the State.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GRASSROOTS' DEMOCRATIC SUSTAINABILITY

Women Political Participation

Since the 4th Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995, the expansion of women's political participation has been a worldwide trend. From the local to the global level, women's

leadership and political participation have been compromised. Women are underrepresented as voters, as well as in leading positions whether in elected offices, civil services, the private sector or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance (UN Women, 2011).

Women account for over half the population of most societies and remain under represented. Mahmood (2008:20) posits that, "Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives in all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved".

According to Akinyode-Afolabi (2003), in spite of the great desire for women's empowerment in all sectors by many international organizations which has been championed by the United Nations and its agencies, the representation of women in government and other public decision-making positions is still very low all over the world. Although, the experiences of women in all regions of the world differs, a situational analysis still points out a huge gender gap between women and men's representation in political leadership as well as in other aspects of public life. Examples of countries where there are voting restrictions placed on women include the Middle East, especially Brunei, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirate (Inter Parliamentary Union, 2018).

Women face two kinds of obstacles to participating in political life. Structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions, which limit women's options to vote or run for office. Capacity gaps which mean women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders. As the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation states "women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes as well as low levels of poverty among women". However, individual women have overcome these obstacles with great acclaim and often to the benefit of society at large. Nevertheless, for women as a whole, the playing field needs to be leveled, creating more opportunities for all (UN Women, 2011).

Olatunde (2010) argued further that, women are needed in office, and it is necessary to strengthen their capacity for leadership. It is also necessary that voters support women who are qualified to be in positions of power. Believing in them to bring about wider social change and an end to inequality in particular, it is necessary to train women who are running for office in order to ensure that women are willing and able to promote gender equality while governing. In order to achieve gender equality, efforts should be established to create clearer awareness of the political significance of women that will overturn the male power structure. Although, there are some biological, socio-economic, political and behavioral differences between the genders, these differences are products of the society and the society has to remove these socially created differences. The feminist movements that have been formed in Nigeria have the objective of ensuring that the principle and provision of equality of rights, obligation and opportunities before the law and non-discrimination of women citizens as contained in Nigeria's constitution are effectively enforced. This is where the true practice of democracy come to play.

Grassroots' Democratic Sustainability

Grassroot Democracy is the political process being driven by ordinary citizens rather than wealthy individuals or big organizations such as unions or major political parties. Sustainable democracy relies upon the equality and complementary participation of men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society through political processes (Anifowose, 2004:205;

Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003). The imperative of women participation in democratic governance cannot be over emphasized (Bruce, 2004:113). However, despite widespread democratization in most countries, women record poor participation in politics and decision making process both at the local, national and international levels.

Democracy has political participation, as one of its tenets (Arowolo and Aluko, 2010:58) and it is found to be liberal and unrestrictive. Similarly, Aluko (2011) sees political participation as “freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision process and the right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise”. Relating this with democratic sustainability in Osun State, women should be given the right to influence decision making processes, an equal opportunity platform for political participation and fairness in such competition.

In spite of the difficulty of defining democracy, there are some values that are common in the concept and understanding of democracy. Democracy is not all about rights and responsibilities alone, but also about equal justice and fairness. Similarly, sustainability can be defined as the ability to live within the limits or equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. This can be referred to under the tenets of democracy as equal justices and fairness.

According to Stiftung (2009), sustainability however “ for some, is a moral duty, while for others it is merely a means to an end. Yet others regard it as a threat to freedom. And democracy. Ultimately, however, sustainability comes down to being one thing: profoundly political.” Furthermore, instead of playing sustainability and democracy against one another, or reducing them to ends and means, their relationship does not do justice to either notion. It is much better to recognize that the idea of sustainability is where the contestation we call democracy, a contestation which is necessarily based on power and only ever comes to rest temporarily, is already taking place. Therefore, in a social contract, democracy does not see some as citizens and others as slaves, everyone is equal before the law and entitled to equal opportunity, be it male or female, rich or poor, members of elite’s class or the masses, minority or majority (Danjibo, 2006). Women in politics go beyond having equal rights with men but achieving a sustainable democracy (Omoniyi, 2012).

Shifting (2009), stated that sustainable democracy is not just a question of view point, but also a question of influence, that is between men and women. He says there is no recipe; sustainability is a process on which a society (which involves both men and women) must agree.

Sanni (2011:14), in defining what true democracy is, said that there are some fundamental values in democracy that we often forget because of self centered political ambition involvement by politicians in Nigerian men and women. Sanni in democratic countries, the majority, which includes both male and female, decides who will rule the nation by voting process, hoping that elected ruler will represent the majority’s needs and therefore, sustainability of democracy will be assured.

Ethridge and Handelman (2012) stated some factors that distinguish democratic government from other forms of government. They are stated below:

1. Political Equality: a large segment of the population must not be denied political rights based on their race, family heritage economic status, or religious affiliation. The implication of this should it happen is the fact that political influence is longer in the

hands of the people, and the government. This failed to meet a basic principle of democracy especially when women are being discriminated against.

2. Again, with the assurance of political equality, a government is not democratic unless there is a process or mechanism through which the people can express their opinion. Thus, popular consultation is essential and can best be described as a component of democracy because, it gives opportunity for both men and women to view their mind on any national issue that may affect their lives.
3. Majority rule: The principle is simple but can be very controversial. That is, an emergence of a candidate is on the premises that majority voted for such an individual. However, it can be controversial when the majority decides to vote to deny electoral rights to a religious or racial minority. Minority, in this context, most of time, are women. Such an action would violate the principle of political equality and would be undemocratic despite the fact that it was adopted through popular consultation and majority rule.

Consequently, for democracy to be sustained in Osun State in particular and Nigeria as a whole, interest of the minority group that is women though their population is almost the same or above a little that of men. But in the issue of politics, they can be referred to as minority who are not put into consideration when decisions are made as regards political issues. They are discriminated against based on sex, culture, economic, education and religion factors.

Sustainability of democracy has to do with gender balance, equity and equality, rule of law, popular participation and lots of principles. Therefore, grassroot democracy can be said to be sustained in Osun state, Nigeria when women are eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; participation in formulation of government policy and implementation of the same and to hold public office and perform all public function at all levels of government. Furthermore, since democracy has to do with the involvement of the majority including the acknowledgement of minority rights; which women can be grouped in when it comes to the issue of politics, protection of human freedom and human rights (women inclusive), women should, therefore, see participation in public life as part of their responsibility which will ensure the sustainability of grassroot democracy in Osun State and increase the number of women in public life.

Theoretical framework:

The Civic Voluntarism Model

Political participation and involvement in community organizations are the hall mark features of civic engagement in a democratic society. It is an important role that the public plays when they participate in politics because it ensures that political institutions and leaders take the voices of residents into account when making decisions affecting their communities (Ramakrishnan, 2008). Furthermore, Putnam (2000) in Ramakrishnan (2008) suggest that it is important to pay attention to inequalities in participation across different racial and ethnic groups. Putnam (2000) argues further that "it is especially true for political outcomes, where absolute levels of participation are less important than the relative differences in participation, with the latter playing a significant role in determining which groups have more say than others in the formulation and implementation of policy decisions.

The most well-known and widely applied model of political participation in political science was originally referred to as the Resources Model with its origins in the work of Sidney Verba and Norman Nie (1972) in their influential research on participation in the United States. The core value of the civic voluntarism model of participation is captured in the following quote.

”we focus on three factors to account for political activity. One helpful way to understand the three factors is to invert the usual question and ask instead why people do not become political activists. Three answers come to mind: because they can’t, because they don’t want to; or because nobody asked. In other words, people may be inactive because they lack resources, because they lack psychological engagement with politics or because they are outside of the recruitment networks that brings people into politics (Verba Scholzman and Brandy, 1995: 269).

Verba and Nie (1972:13) argue that this model has to do with the social status of an individual, his job, education and income which are the major socio-economic factors that militate against participation. These three factors determine largely the extent to which women participate in politics. It does this through the intervening effects of a variety of elements: 1. the person’s civic attitude which is conducive to participation. 2. attitudes such as a sense of efficacy, of psychological involvement in politics and a feeling of obligation leading to participation.

This theoretical model has been widely cited and replicated, and is probably the most important model of political participation in the literature today. However, it has been criticized based on the use of socio-economic status as a predictor of participation and civic values. The model fails to explain, however, why large numbers of high-status individuals do not participate in politics. That is, while participation is associated with social status, the latter is nonetheless a relatively weak predictor of participation, because many high-status individuals do not get involved in politics. (Verba 1995).

Relating this concept with the study, women in Osun State fall into three categories based on the three questions and answers that come to mind, which have been analyzed above. Some women in Osun State argued that they could not participate because they lack financial support or they are not financially buoyant enough to participate. They also report having a lack of time to participate. Some groups of women fall into the group of those who see politics as a dirty game which involves violence and thuggery while the last group of women fall into the group of no mobilization, that is there was no one to encourage them to participate. Even if they desired to participate, there was no personal or community connection able to bring them into politics. These are the major reasons why women’s representation in Osun State has been low when compared to that of their male counterparts, despite the fact that the state ranked the second highest in participation in the South-West region and the third in Nigeria for women’s participation. However, when applying this theory, one concludes that psychological attitudes always play an important role in explaining political participation.

Therefore, institutions like organized associations as referred to in this work can facilitate participation by supporting their members who desire to contest an election but do not have enough personal or financial resources to participate. Also, mobilization is very important to help women participate in political issues. The participation of women and men together tend to bring about the sustenance of democratic norms at the grassroots level in Osun State.

PROACTIVE FEMINIST APPROACH

This approach was put forward by Isola, Abidemi Abiola (2014). Literally, proactive means action and result-oriented behavior. However, relating this with the involvement of women’s political participation and the challenges or discrimination they face based on gender, culture,

economics, and religion factors, the proactive feminist approach may be useful. This approach suggests that women should act in advance to deal with difficulties. Embarking on acting ahead of anticipated events, proactive behavior creates result-oriented behavior, instead of waiting for things to happen in their favor. Most women are aware of the discrimination that exists against them because of their sex. That shouldn't stop them from acting proactively. If women adopt a proactive feminist approach, then they will not discriminate against themselves by not participating, but rather prove they can make things happen when it comes to the issue of contesting for a post at the federal, state, or local government level.

People who are proactive do not sit around waiting for an answer from someone to appear to solve their problems. They constantly move forward and are actively engaged, not passive in their actions. For example, there may be a situation where women do not go out to vote because of their mistaken belief that they cannot make anything happen and should, therefore, just remain silent and be unheard publicly. When giving in to such a belief, women will not be proactive, but when not bothered with such a belief, women will go a long way to make an impact. Government and the men who are involved are also expected to make the environment conducive for their adult female citizens to participate during elections either as political candidates or as voting citizens. Men should give their wives moral support.

Relating to these attitudes, Kiev, 2011, averred that there is a need for a step by step policy approach aimed at creating a favorable environment for women to participate in public life. It is also important that political parties and government institutions take a proactive approach in creating internal policies accounting for women's needs. This will make women catalysts or multipliers of good practices as citizens. Therefore, Osun State women should not just participate, they should take ownership of their program and be accountable to themselves. This study, thus, adopts the civic voluntarism model and the proactive feminist approach as its conceptual framework.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section summarizes the findings and conclusions on the issue of the involvement of women in political participation, and how it ensures democratic sustainability.

Research Question One: What is the Extent of Women Political Participation in Osun State?

Table 1: Do you belong to any political party?

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Yes | 218 | 17.5 |
| | No | 1030 | 82.5 |
| | Total | 1248 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey (2012)

Table 1 shows the analysis of women that belong to political parties. From the data only 218 respondents representing (17.5%) belong to one political party or the other, while the remaining respondents, numbering 1030, representing (82.5%), do not belong to any political party. This

is due to the violence that is involved in political participation, gender discrimination, and socio cultural factors. These factors affect the numbers of women involve in political participation thereby have poor representation of women in political arena in Osun State.

Table 2: Do you think women are participating in politics as they ought to?

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Yes | 556 | 44.6 |
| | No | 692 | 55.4 |
| Total | | 1248 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey (2012)

Table 2 shows the analysis of women that participate in politics in Osun State. It showed that 692 respondents representing (55.4%) agreed that women are not participating in politics as they ought to have been. The remaining respondents of 556 (44.6%) agreed that women participate as they ought to. Some of the major factors that account for the low level of participation in politics by women include low level of educational attainment, inadequate finance by some women, religious belief as well as cultural factors.

The implication of the above analysis is that the extent of women in political participation in Osun State, based on the respondents’ responses, shows that it is low compared to their male counterparts because of the dirty nature of politics, violence, gender discrimination, etc.

The data revealed that the number of women involved in political participation in Osun State is low compared to their male counterparts because of the dirty nature of politics, violence, gender discrimination and, socio-cultural factors. This is not only limited to Osun State in Nigeria. Countries like Liberia experience the same problem because there is no legal instrument to set a quota for the number of seats that must be allocated to women in parliament. (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2006; 2019). Likewise in Tanzania, President Jakaya Kikwete did not recognize women as an integral part of governance as they ought to. A very good example occurred in the presidential election in 1995 and 2000. Two women, Rose Lugendo and Lucia Magnez, respectively ran for the presidency but unfortunately, they were not successful. Prior to that election, there were negative comments that “time was not ripe for the country to have a woman president” (Sharo,2005:8). In addition, women’s political participation in India, the world’s largest democratic country, and countries that have been led by women in the past are among the least impressive regarding women’s political participation. The reason for the low participation of women is because they are continually confined to household roles (Chhibber, 2011; Kumar,2017; inter parliamentary union, 2017, inter-parliamentary union, 2018).

However, some countries like South Africa, Rwanda, Cuba and Finland have used laws and political innovation to make tremendous gains in empowering women politically (National Democratic Institute 2013). In South Africa, since the end of the apartheid system and the first democratic elections in 1994, women have continued to make gains in South African politics and governance. Globally, Rwanda ranks first on female representation in parliament with an astounding rank: Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) 2018, 61.3% in the lower house and 38.5% in the upper house. In Cuba's 2018 election, women earned more than 53.2% of representation. Also, in Finland the 2015 election produced 42.0% in the Lower House of Parliament.

For democracy to take root in Osun State, women's political participation needs to be addressed pragmatically. Madeline Albright, former Secretary of State to the United States once said, "If democracy is going to put down strong and healthy roots, it must profit from all the full and equitable participation of women in national and local leadership positions and in a full range of advocacy roles" (National Democratic Institute, 2014). According to the United Nations Deputy Secretary General, Asha Rose Migiro, "When women are empowered, all of society benefits" (National Democratic Institute, 2014); United Nation, (Sept.7, 2017)

As long as the number of women politically participating in Osun State is low, Democracy cannot be sustained in the State because women who are supposed to be partners in progress in the political arena are underrepresented as a result of social inequality and discrimination against women. Women are an important part of the society and should be considered in governance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS TWO: WHAT ARE THOSE FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN OSUN STATE?

Underrepresentation of women in Osun State in the political arena is because of some factors militating against them. The findings of the study reveal that some socio-economic, socio-cultural and ideological factors constrain women in Osun State and in some parts of the world from participating in public life. (Fayomi, 2015) Based on the findings through interviews, some factors that continue to impede women's empowerment in Osun State were discussed. They are culture, religion and education. Taking these factors one after the other, the responses gathered from the interviews, which took place on March 23- 30, 2012, shed more light on how these factors impede women's participation in political issues in Osun State. From the interviews, out of 62 respondents 60 (98.4%) respondents agreed that culture impedes women's involvement in political issues while 2 (3.2%) respondents disagreed.

According to one of the respondents at Ilobu, Wilson (chairperson for Rural Development Board Osun State and a two-time commissioner in the state.) affirms:

There is this cultural belief that men are the head and women are to be subordinate to them which means slavery to many men and this makes them treat their wives as such, hindering them from having the boldness to participate in politics.

Also, Erelu Olusola Obada, a lawyer turned politician, the first female deputy governor and a two-time Deputy Governor of Osun State, believe that because of cultural beliefs, men tend to feel quite uncomfortable having their wives appear on the political scene. She said, 'threatened' is the best word to use to describe such a reaction. However, not all men are threatened, some are interested. Using herself as an example, she said her husband is proud of her and greatly supportive in the sense that he helps to keep the family together in harmony and plays the role of a father and a wife at the same time. This, however, is not the case of most men in Osun State.

Adegoke, the President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Osun State Chapter, also stated that: "Cultural beliefs have continually militated against the rise and recognition of women in state politics." Respondent A, (whose name is withheld) asserted that women have continued to be discriminated against, right from birth. They are perceived as domestic beings, largely dependent on their husbands. They are restricted to the kitchen to perform domestic chores.

Religion and other cultural factors have continued to be used to further suppress and oppress women. In very strong terms, a former teacher and a politician ({B} name withheld), blames religion and culture as the basis for gender inequality. According to her, this situation has given rise to gender stratification, male entitlement and female self-abasement. The women's leader of Osun State Ede South is of the opinion that, there is the cultural belief that some religions have been suppressing women to the extent that women regard themselves as not capable to lead men.

Furthermore, cultural beliefs continue to impede women's involvement in political issues in Osun State and other countries of the world. Findings, based on the interviews attested to the fact that the cultural factor is one of the major factors that subject women to enslavement. This is in accordance with several scholars such as Epelle and Oriakhi (2003) Osinulu (2006); Abokede, (2008); Olatunde (2009) Falola, 2018; Agbalajobi(2010), Losindilo (2010); and Uhunmwuango (2011) who has written extensively on such factors.

Respondent C and D stated that like most other patriarchal societies of the world, a Nigerian woman is socialized into a culture of female subordination. She is not only subordinate to her husband and men in her own family but also to the entire members of her husband's family. The kingship structures, residence pattern and marital practices and attitudes put men in a position of advantage from the historical past to the present. Although women and men's sphere of activities in most of the Nigerian traditional societies were rather complimentary, valued and prestigious, women remain subordinate to their male counterpart. The general view is that, a woman, more often than not, derives her social status from her two major roles: that of a wife and that of a mother. As a mother, the woman is the primary custodian of the cherished values of her society. This she does by devoting her energies to life-preserving activities of procreation which means having as many children as possible, while she enjoys higher social status and sense of fulfillment by the birth of male children. Respondent E stated that, these cultural, patriarchal value systems pre-determined the social roles assigned to women are generally, low paid and apolitical, and thus militate against the advancement and participation of women in any political process.

From the interviews, out of 62 respondents, 10 (16.1%) respondents agreed that religion supports women's political participation while 30 (48.4%) disagreed; the remaining 22 (35.4%) were neutral; they believe that it could either be an impediment or not depending on the interpretation of the various religious instructors.

Religion and culture go hand in hand when it comes to women's right (Duke, 2010). Reacting to this statement, Respondent F shares the same view with Omoleye (Director of women affairs in Osun State) that religion places limitations on women's rights and political participation. They shed more light by saying that in a situation where religion dictates that women should be in seclusion, that is, they are not to be seen in the society, nor to speak publicly, they said such religion beliefs negatively impact women's participation with political issues. Some agreed saying that, religion could make women shy away from taking elective positions in the public because of the way their immediate families look at them, that is, they fear being castigated by their religious groups, families and the public in general.

The interviews reveal that 55 out of 62 respondents (88.7%) agreed that a woman's educational background determines her chances of contesting elections while 7 (11.3%) disagreed. This implies that lacking an education is an important factor that can militate against women's rights.

According to Mr. Bepo and Lawyer Abass (Iwo) "Education is also an important aspect when it comes to women's rights. Education, which is seen as a panacea for social mobility is often denied to women and this had made married women ignorant of their rights as well as their position". Responding to this issue, Laoye-Tomori, the current (2010) Deputy Governor and Commissioner for Education in Osun State reaffirms education of a girl-child as an important target every government and parent should embark on and ensure its achievement. This is because it brings development to the state and nation as a whole. Further, she emphasized that when a girl child becomes educated, she knows her rights, and grows up to become a responsible woman whom others can depend on in life. She said that one of the main goals of Aregbesola's administration was to ensure that every child in Osun State, whether a girl or a boy, is educated. In support of this, Oyebanji and Adebayo (caretaker, Ife East local government) believe that if this goal is achieved, women will gradually participate in this area and that there have been improvements since women became involved in occupying top positions in the public services.

Respondent G concluded that since education does often determine one's access to positions of influence, women with less education have the tendency to occupy the lowest positions in the former sector, which neither grants them access to high wages nor to power and influence in the society because of their low educational qualifications or attainment.

On the other hand, Respondent H, said that in Osun State, a female child is encouraged to go to school, that is, there is no discrimination when it comes to schooling.

Chief Bayewu and Chief Elumade are of the same view that, politically, when women in different parts of the world struggled to win the right to vote, they expected that the right to vote would inevitably lead to women's greater participation and representation. Their expectations were not fulfilled, and as a result, women embarked on another longer and more difficult struggle to actually get women involved in politics.

Respondent I, stressed that Nigeria's political experience since independence (1960) has shown that despite their numerical strength, the level of women's participation in politics has been low when compared to their male counterparts. She agreed that this issue varies from one democratic government to the other, and that recently women's participation is definitely increasing but not up to the expected level. From the field survey, 56 (90.3%) respondents agreed that the cost of preparing elections discourages women from contesting while 6 (9.7%) respondents disagreed. This signifies that the high costs of preparing for elections discouraged women from participating in politics.

Respondent J laments that politics is the only sector where women's numerical strength is not refuted. She said in Osun State, being a patriarchal society, clearly manifests social categorization of women as inferior to men and, therefore, not capable of, or suitable for political leadership.

Also, Idowu (former Honorable, Ife central), states that women play important roles in campaigning and mobilizing support for their political parties, yet they rarely occupy decision-making positions in these structures. Oyebamiji argued that where political parties possess resources for conducting election campaigns, women do not benefit from their resources. She further said that, parties do not provide sufficient financial support for women candidates. This just to emphasizes that women are only being used by political parties to achieve their goals but they themselves are not really recognized when it comes to the issue of holding political positions.

However, looking back at the democratic governments that Osun State has had so far, it can be said that there are positive changes for women. During the period of Aregbesola (Governor of Osun State), women were encouraged and they are gradually taking their places in every sector, that is, politically, academically, economically and socially. This has been gradual, however, women are yet to be fully recognized.

With the positive changes in women's political involvement, which is in support of what the immediate past Deputy Governor of Osun State had said, then it could be said that women in Osun State are becoming more enlightened. Education for a girl child is of great importance and strong cultural and religious beliefs are becoming weak and dormant to some extent. If this continues for a long time the barriers to women's rights may be lifted completely in Osun State enabling women to participate more in governance.

The under representation of women in the process of decision making and implementation undermines the fundamental concept of a democratic form of governance which assumes that

participation and representation in all areas and levels of public life should be equally available to women and men (Aluko, 2011).

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC SUSTAINABILITY IN OSUN STATE?

Based on the findings of this study, corruption, dishonesty of leadership, growing economy, social inequality, the role of anti-social elements and discrimination against women are some of the challenges of democracy that hinder the sustenance of democracy in Osun State. However, because this work is focusing on women and discrimination against women as one of the major challenges of democracy in Osun State, the researcher focused on the importance of women's participation in decision-making, which will help to overcome challenges of democracy in Osun State.

According to Chinsman (2005) "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 (and)?? service aid sustaining the family".

During a one-day sensitization workshop (2nd of November, 2012 held in Osogbo), which aimed at encouraging women to actively participate politically in the governance of the Osun State, the immediate past Deputy Governor of the State, Laoye-Tomori, in her speech, stated that empowering women is crucial to the present administration in Osun State. She stressed that it could end poverty and hunger but, denying women the opportunity of empowerment, the Osun State administration will be denying their children and society a better future. Therefore, the immediate past Osun State administration shared the belief that if women are properly empowered, especially those in the rural areas, they can meaningfully contribute to the development of the State leading to the sustenance of democracy at the grassroots' level thereby overcoming one of the major challenges of democracy in Osun State. The role of women in the future development of the nation cannot be over-emphasized. The United Nations declaration that the total development of any country requires the maximum participation of women in all fields, has proved to be a catalyst to the prominence women's development has come to acquire in recent times.

Key policy makers, nongovernmental organizations, international Organization have all stressed the need for women to participate adequately in the economy, government and overall growth of their countries (Chukwuemeka, 2011). Similarly, the international IDEA (2014) argued that "No struggle for democracy has ever been waged by men alone. Women are called upon in almost every struggle to swell the ranks of the movements and work and struggle for freedom, change and democracy. The African experience is rich with the history of women's involvement at all levels of struggles for freedom, change and democracy. Therefore, in accordance with what the former female Deputy Governor of Osun State, Obada, said and I quote "train up a man, you have just trained a man; but train a woman, then you can be sure you have trained a nation". So, for democracy to deliver on its promise it must be able to count on the contributions of all its citizens but this cannot be achieved if women are prevented, whether by law or custom, from full participation in the political and economic life of Osun State and as a country as a whole.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC SUSTAINABILITY IN OSUN STATE?

According to Danjibo (2006), democracy is not all about rights and responsibilities, but also about justice and fairness. Therefore, in a social contract, democracy does not see some as

citizens and others as slaves. Everyone is equal before the law and entitled to equal opportunity, be it male or female, rich or poor, members of elite class or the masses, minority or majority. This implies that there is equal participation of both male and female citizens in public life. Democracy and its sustenance, together with the participation of both men and women, are related, linked together as revealed in the findings that political participation of women in Osun State ensures the sustenance of democracy. During the workshop that was held in Osogbo on the 2nd of November 2012, the then State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Welfare, Adegboyega, in her welcome address, remarked that there was a need for women to be sensitized to be actively involved in public life. She explained that this would help women take active roles in decision-making processes by involving and taking active roles in politics at all levels. She noted that, out of about four hundred (400) legislative seats in the National Assembly, less than 50 of them are occupied by women, stressing that the figure is too low compared to the role women play during political campaigns. She believes that there is a need for women to reason together and strategize to prepare themselves to take care of their home front and at the same time actively participate in governance of the state. Similarly, Asafa, who represented The National Council of Women Society, lauded Governor Rauf Aregbesola's administration for its empowerment scheme, noting that several women, including those physically challenged, have been empowered through skill acquisition introduced by the government in order to ensure democratic sustainability in Osun State (Faturoti, 2013). This is in agreement with the 90.1% respondents on the research question 5 that there is a relationship between women participation and democratic sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Summary of Findings:

Political Participation

The issue of involvement of women in political participation should be based on the quality and not quantity. While women's numeric representation in political institutions may be critical, it does not guarantee that women have more influence over policy decisions or that women's rights and gender equality are addressed in government policies and programs. Initiatives aimed at increasing women's political participation and representation must take into account the need to go beyond numbers and ensure more positive outcomes for women and this should include enabling women's voices and perspectives to be heard in decision-making, and ensuring that services address women's needs and interests as well as those of men (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Democratic Sustainability

There are many challenges facing Osun State government as a whole, which includes lack of transparency, lack of accountability and corruption. If women are allowed to participate with the kind of feminine nature that they have which seeks to manage things well, by making use of valuable resources, then to some extent, corruption can be curbed making the sustainability of democracy achievable. This is because there is a link between women's involvement in political participation and grassroots' democratic sustainability. As such, women's political participation in Osun State forms the basis of democratic sustainability at the grassroots' level in the state.

Conclusion

Representation of women in political arena ensures the sustainability of democracy in Osun state. Failure on the part of women to participate actively by coming out to vote during an

election or vying for a post can hinder the sustainability of democracy in Osun State. The level of involvement of Women in politics in Osun State Nigeria is still under represented due to the fact that women are ignorant of their right which as to do with coming out to vote for their candidate, vying for a post during an election as a candidate, joining one political party or the other could help them increase their representation in the involvement of political activities. Women of Osun State, Nigeria, are also ignorant of the reality that without them democracy cannot be in its true form because democracy preaches majority rule and involvement of all citizens in the governance of its country.

Recommendations

Special measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate-life-long learning as well as development of occupational/vocational/technical skills of women. Furthermore, the media should be used to portray good images that is, human dignity of girls and women. They should be encouraged to develop codes of conduct, professional guidelines and other self-regulatory mechanisms to remove gender stereotype and promote balanced portrayals of women and men.

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