

Research Article

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Factors That Militate Against Women Participation in Politics in Enugu State

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Abstract: This research studied factors militating against women's participation in politics in Enugu state using four communities (Amokwe, Ikpamodo, Ndeaboh and Eha-Amufu) drawn from three senatorial zones as case study sites. The research approach employed was Community Familiarization Visits, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-Depth Interview (IDI). The FGD comprised of women and men leaders in the selected communities who served as the respondents while in the case of IDI the selected women community leaders served as the respondents. The study revealed among other things that women from the study areas have not been actively involved in politics since the return of Democracy in 1999 mainly due to poor finance, lack of education, lack of support from fellow women and an unfavorable political environment. The study thereby recommends different measures to end women's discrimination and intimidation, and the creation of a favorable environment for the improvement of women's political participation in Enugu state.

Keywords: women; political; Enugu; communities; research; respondents.

1 Introduction

Globally, women have been a great source of support to the installment/ enthronement of political leaders in every society due to their numbers and nature. Although half the population of Nigeria is made up of women, they occupy less than 10 percent of political positions [1]. Gender inequality permeates every level of Nigerian society including the political sphere. This gender stratified society assigns rights and responsibilities on the basis of physiological differences between men and women [2]. One must note that the full and equitable participation of women in public life is essential to building and sustaining strong, vibrant democracies. Also, women's participation in politics helps advance gender equality and affects both the range of policy issues that get considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. And one will ask, "why women in politics"? [3]. According to Yahaya and Umar Kari [4], women had been politically active and relatively less exclusive in the decision-making process in many pre-colonial societies but the colonial administration with its gender-bias policies have helped to enthrone and sustain patriarchy. Some such women who were even military warlords in their respective communities are Iyalode of Ibadan, Efunsetan Aniwura, Moremi of Ile-Ife and Queen Amina of Zaria. They further noted that women's involvement in politics varies throughout the world and their participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance. Also, women's equal participation with men in power and decision making is part of their fundamental right to participate in political life, and at the core of gender equality and women's empowerment [5].

One must note that a lot of energy has been invested to support women in Governance. As documented on the UN Women website (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/global-norms-and-standards>)[6], the 2003 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142)

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Table 1: Available information on women representatives at all levels of governance from 1999-March 2019 [9].

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015		2019	
	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	9(8.3)	109	7(6.4)	109	8(7.3)	109	8(7.3)
House of Representatives	360	7(1.9)	360	21(5.8)	360	27(6.9)	360	19(5.3)	360	19(5.3)	360	11(3.1)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
Deputy Governor	36	1(2.8)	36	2(5.5)	36	6(16.7)	36	3(8.3)	36	4(11.5)	36	4(11.5)
State House of Assembly	990	24(2.4)	990	40(3.9)	990	57(5.8)	990	69(7)	990	50(5.1)	990	40
Local Government Area Chair	710	13(1.8)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	0	774	0	774	N/A
Councillors	6368	69(1.1)	6368	267(4.2)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	0	6368	0	6368	N/A
Ministers	47	7(14.9)	47	7(14.9)	27	7(25.9)	42	12(28.9)	30	6(20)	43	7(16.3)

stipulates that Member States, of which Nigeria is inclusive, should take steps including to: monitor progress in the representation of women; ensure that measures to reconcile family and professional life apply equally to women and men; develop mechanisms and training programs that encourage women to participate in the electoral process and improve women's capacity to cast informed votes in free and fair elections; promote the participation of young people, especially women, in civil society organizations; and develop programs to educate and train women and girls in using the media and information and communication technologies. The UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 calls on governments, political parties, trade unions, and professional and other representative groups to adopt a 30 percent minimum proportion of women in leadership positions, with a view to achieving equal representation. The Beijing Platform for Action reiterates resolution 1990/15 and calls for an increase in women's representation in Strategic Objective G2. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women includes commitments under Article 7 on political and public life, and Article 8 on representation.

Again, it is clearly stated in the Nigerian 1999 constitution that any citizen, male or female, may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his or her interests. In section 42 of the same constitution, the rights of women not to be discriminated against in terms of participation in any legitimate endeavor are further upheld.

In spite of the United Nations and other international Organization's advocacy and declaration of the rights and equality between men and women of which Nigeria is a signatory, results show that women still constitute a small percentage of those participating in political decision-making and leadership as shown in Table 1. Even now, women's participation is drastically dropping due to violence and thuggery. Women no longer come out now in the same numbers as compared to previous years. The problem statement which this research study seeks to address is:

- A woman's voice represents the voices of the most socially excluded in the society.
- Women have always been sidelined in political happenings in Enugu state since inception of democratic leadership in 1999 as shown in Table 2.

This therefore calls for urgent action to find out factors militating against women's participation in politics and gain support from all concerned groups to support the Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) project for the restoration of the voice of women in Enugu state politics in areas of active political participation.

Table 2: Enugu State Political Gender Distribution.

Year	Position	Male Positions (Every 4 Years)	Female Positions (Every 4 Years)	% Male	% Female
1999 till date	Governorship	6	0	100	0
1999 till date	Senate	18	0	100	0
2015 till date	House of Representative	15	1	93.75	6.25
2019 till date	State House of Assembly	21	3	87.5	12.25

WVL basically gives women's rights a voice so as to make up for the no/low traction women concerns/affairs get on headlines. Noteworth, is the fact that this project opportunity is the first that Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is having with a non-Canadian organization.

2 Methods

The main aim of this research is to find out factors that militate against women's participation in politics in Enugu State. Others include:

- To use the research findings as a tool to advocate for increased women's political participation in Enugu State
- To facilitate implementation of reservation of 30 per cent political space to women
- To work with other Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and women's political activists to raise the voice of women in Enugu to political forefront
- To equip women political leaders with the necessary leadership skills

Eight communities were mapped out for this activity from the three senatorial zones of the Enugu state. Two research methods were adopted which include: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Community Consultative Forum (that is In-Depth Interview).

Twelve participants (10 women and 2 men) with previous leadership background (political party leaders, community women leaders, traditional leaders and church leaders) were selected for the FGD in each community while thirty (30) women leaders per community were selected as participants for the community consultative forum.

The key questions used for the Focus Group Discussions are:

- What discourages women from participation in politics?
- What role can the Government, political leaders, traditional or religious leaders play to support women to be a part of politics?
- What laws should be put in place to increases women participation in politics?
- In your opinion, what do you think should be done to encourage women's participation in politics?
- How does society see women vying for political positions?

3 Results

After the community familiarization visits, four communities - Ikpamodo, Eha-Amufu, Amokwe and Ndeaboh were selected across the three senatorial zones based on acceptable parameters.

The Key Findings are summarized below:

- The respondents are traders, farmers, civil servants with political interest, attend political; gathering with good understanding of politics
- Lack of the girl-child education as the major factor that has denied women basic qualifications for active participation in politics.

- Men and women's wrong perception about women in politics. They see them as prostitutes, stubborn and disrespectful
- Male political dominance using some suppressive tools like financial inducement , God-Fatherism, political violence, formation of men's clique within the political cycle
- Jealousy, hatred and envy by some women against women participating in active politics has been a source of discouragement to other women with political interests
- Two respondents pinpointed a lack of financial ability among women as the major setback to women's participation in politics
- Style of politics (violence, insincerity, and women marginalization/suppression of women political interest by the male counterpart) as one the major factors that discourages women's participation in politics

Results for the consultative forum carried out in the four communities in which in-depth interviews were done are shown in Figures 1 and 2 below.

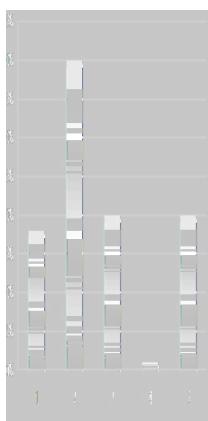


Figure 1: Reasons for Women Non-Participation in Active Politics in Enugu State (from the community consultative forum). 1 = Lack of Financial Resources to Pursue Political Ambition; 2 = Insufficient Education and Political Enlightenment; 3 = Lack of Clear Policy for Women by Parties; 4 = Cultural Factors; 5 = Lack of Adequate Recognition for Women by the Authorities.

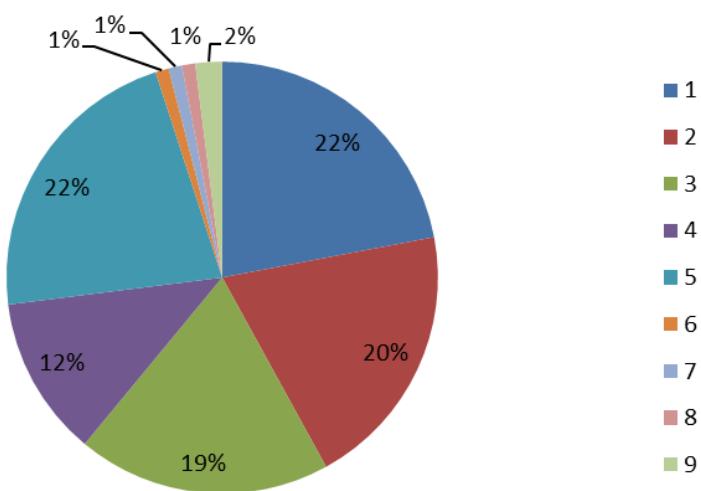


Figure 2: Suggested Solutions to the Factors that Militate against Women Participation in Politics in Enugu State.

1. Community mobilization; 2. Financial support; 3. Sensitization; 4. Men's Engagement; 5. Economic empowerment; 6. Strategic trainings
7. Political linkage; 8. Elimination of electoral fraud; 9. Creation of quota system

4 Discussions

Nigerian society is to be blamed for this disparity because men and women are endowed with leadership qualities and society needs both sexes to work together. The power of a woman in politics should never be underestimated, as she takes it very seriously; like the political field is her kitchen and makes sure nothing goes wrong. The limits set by society are only man-made, not ordained by God; just ask Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Hillary Clinton, Margaret Thatcher and Christine Lagarde among others globally [7] and let's not forget Uche Ekwunife, Stella Oduah, Oby Ezekwesili and Late Dora Akunyili.

From our research findings we can state these as some of the key factors that militate against women's participation lack of the girl-child education, lack of financial power, psychological, disempowerment, the nature of politics in Nigeria and a lack of a basic educational foundation. But there is a need for women to take the bull by the horns and utilize every opportunity available. According to Eniola [2] women are the most critical instrument in ensuring that their voices are heard in politics. A gender balance in parliament would enable women to lobby for the domestication of the various international instruments on women's rights which Nigeria has ratified, thus enhancing the promotion and protection of women's rights in this country.

Among other things, political parties should adopt and implement party-specific gender quotas, informal targets, and other positive action mechanisms at all levels of office, including for internal party positions. From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were drawn.

- Effort should be invested in sensitizing women on the need for active participation in politics, love and support one another in politics
- Two respondents suggested a quota system to be introduced in Nigeria's electoral system, both in party levels and in all arms of government -The quota system will reserve some political and appointment positions for women alone.
- Traditional, religious and government structures should involve more women in decision making
- Women coming out for different political positions should be supported financially and parties should also subsidize the nomination form charges for women
- A clear cut message of love, peace and women's solidarity for other women participating in politics should be taken to the communities
- Economic/financial empowerment programs(skill trainings/fundraising) should be introduced for the empowerment of economic excluded women with political interest
- Literacy training should be introduced to women in the communities with political interest

In conclusion, the government should understand that politics is not just for men but women inclusively, that is why we say that gender equity is very important. They should also create an enabling, safe political environment that will enable women to run politics the way it ought to be. On their own part, Civil society organizations have an important role to play in conducting information and awareness-raising campaigns to encourage women to stand for election, give women reorientation to what politics is all about and in running capacity-building programmes to support women in this process. These actors can contribute to developing the skills like the Women's Leadership Academy run by the Women Empowerment Education and Peace Building Initiative (WEPBI), experience, knowledge and the resources of women in the pipeline for elected office and once they enter [8]. This is what we at the Women Empowerment Education and Peace Building Initiative (WEPBI) in partnership with ActionAid Nigeria and support of Global Affairs Canada are doing through the WVL project.

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