

Full Length Research Paper

The myth and reality of women in politics: A discourse of the core issues

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This paper examines the myth and reality of Women in politics and the attendant core issues. In the process, the historical dimension and/or, backdrop of Women's political actions and inactions were critically examined while the concept of politics was analyzed. Within this analytical context, the seeming increasing political fortunes of women in Nigerian politics in the context of the role they are expected to perform and, which they have come to perform in recent times were highlighted and empirically analyzed. In addition, various issues and factors which culminated into major obstacles and challenges inhibiting women's role in politics are clearly highlighted as well as what the women have to and, should do through the empowerment process to continuously challenge such obstacles and, as well sustain the tempo of their increasing political relevance regardless of the potency of whatever bumps that may created and put on their way.

Key words: Myth, women in politics, core issues, Nigeria politics.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is on the issues, myth and reality of women in politics. It is a discourse concerning the place of women in politics which has generated a lot of debates and contestations depending on the side of the issue any given analyst finds him/herself. However, the *raison d'être* of this focus cannot be actualized in isolation from the conceptual analysis of the term politics. This is particularly so because, the rationality or otherwise of the exclusion or inhibition of the Women's Political activity in Nigeria can actually and, only be meaningfully understood within the parameters of this conceptual analysis.

The concept of politics: A brief analysis

The concept of politics can be multidimensionally

analyzed. It can be looked at as an art and, at the same time looked at as a discipline. But, whichever way one looks at it, politics is a concept which has not been free from disputations ranging from academic, ideological to philosophical. Thus, one can argue that one of the multifaceted problems often encountered is the lack of consensus regarding the actual conception of politics.

This tendency has generated different typifications of politics (as an art and one of the central concerns of political science). These typifications range from "politics is a dirty game", "government by deceit" to its conception as the "process at work everywhere". In short, the concept of politics and, its study (political science) have never been free from both ignorant and intellectual disputations. Generally, the historical development of politics as an art and as a discipline can be retrospectively traced to the ancient Greek period of city-states during which Plato, Aristotle and some of their Greek Contemporaries deemed the affairs of the polis – (due to the then intricacies of human political relationship) - worthy of a master science – (Political Science). During this classical period, Aristotle claimed that human self

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realization is dependent on political relationship. On the same token, he claimed that “man is a political animal” and that politics form the bases of human Social existence because the interaction of two or more people is synonymous to Political relationship. Various scholars of international repute have equally addressed the issue of politics vis-à-vis human existence in the Society.

In spite of these disputations, it is an empirical fact that politics (as an art) structures our lives, explains man’s existence as a member of organized human society”, determines our socio-political, psycho-socio-economic, geo-political and ethno-cultural positions and dictates the options due to its embracing characteristics. This being the case, it is the belief here that politics is very embracing and that it involves competition for public goods, authoritative decisions, compliance and distribution and use of power over human activities in the societies. Hence, as afore elucidated, many Scholars have defined politics (as an art and as a discipline) in the attempt to provide understanding to our practical involvement in the art of governance and our regard for the institutional paraphernalia of democracy. For an example, Williams Crane and Bernard Moses (1983) have analytically and practically defined politics. To them, analytically, politics deals with the “State as an organism for the concentration and distribution of political powers of the Nation” and, practically, it deals with the “form and substance of actions”.

On his own, Alfred de Grazia (1965), defined politics (as an art) as the events that happen around the decision-making centre of government while the study of these connotes his (De Grazia) own definition of Politics as a discipline. In addition to the foregoing, David Easton (1957), defined politics (as an art) as the authoritative allocations of scarce societal values for the society while Harold Lasswell (1958), defined it as the determination of who gets what? When? Where? How? and Why? The materialists on the other hand viewed politics as the struggle between social classes for the control of the state or institutions of the state. The structure within which the struggle takes place is regarded as the political. This conception of politics tends to emphasize the role of economic interest and class conflict in the practice of politics and in the actions of political actors.

Politics is empirical and it deals with the shaping and sharing of power hence, it is studied and analyzed by political scientists. Not minding the divergent views, politics is omnipresent and, it is actually the relationship between the “rulers and the ruled” that ranges from conflict to compliance. It does not exist in a vacuum but within a political system. It is on this basis that political life is taken to mean a system of activities ranging from support and demands or feedback from the environment to policy outputs or governmental decisions. The concept of power is very crucial to the ordering of priorities involved in politics. This explains why David Apter

(1977) claimed that “politics requires the learning of power because human lives take shape and meaning within authoritative boundaries. This shows that politics includes “the procedures through which governments, groups and individuals decide how to spend the money of the state and how behaviour will be limited (Danziger, 1994). Generally, common definitions of politics are:

1. Politics is the exercise of power
2. Politics is the public allocation of things that are valued
3. Politics is the resolution of conflict
4. Politics is the competition among individuals and groups pursuing their interests
5. Politics is the organizations and people who make and implement public policies
6. Politics is the determination of who gets what, when, how, (where, and why) (Danziger, 1994).

Looking at politics as conceptualized and analyzed in the foregoing part of this paper, it will not be only a mistake but a tragedy for anybody to think that politics does not require gender equity or balance. Thus, it is our contention here that politics as generally or traditionally conceptualized in relations to democratic and political rights of all human beings, within the polity can only and, be really meaningful if it encompasses women’s political and general rights, as integral part of human rights within the democratic framework.

In Nigeria and, indeed, in most polities of the continent of Africa and, other developing countries, in contrast to the needed integration of the womenfolk into the political process, there appears to be an all-pervading dominance of the political terrains by men all over the globe. This dominance, to any critical mind should not exist looking at the almost equal proportions of men and women in the global population.

The pervading dominance of men in the political process continues to hold sway in Africa and, indeed, in Nigeria due to various reasons, issues and other factors which continue to act as inhibitors and, or, barriers against women’s political aspirations and emancipation.

The issues: Inhibitors of women’s political participation in Nigeria, their challenges and problems

Generally, there has been an increasing paucity of women’s participation in Nigerian politics. This seems to be so, because as Akinyode-Afolabi and Arogundade (2003) once noted:

“In Nigeria, there seems to be no critical understanding of the difference between a visible agenda for women and an impacting agenda for women. While severally, emphasis is laid on women’s numerical strength,

translating such into the attainment of power has been difficult as women are perceived as 'supporters club, team of cheerers and clappers in contrast to their male counterparts."

This paucity underlies the issues which, in themselves, have become inhibitors or barriers to women's political participation. One of the greatest issues concerning the place of women in politics, which has manifested itself into a serious inhibition, is the nurturant role which the traditional African Society assigned to women. The essence of this assertion can be deduced from the analysis below.

Traditional African society and women's nurturant role

There is no doubt that the traditional African Society assigned Women a nurturant role. Due to its paternalistic orientation, social, religious, political and cultural activities revolve around the male adults to the detriment of the African Women.

The woman in Africa, in the real sense of it was seen as part of the man's property. This maintains similarity in orientation with the Judeo-Christian tradition which makes Woman an appendage to the man's total picture of authority and influence.

The nurturant role assigned to Women because of its accompanying demands (for example, upbringing of children, creation of conducive home environment, etc.), inflicts a lot of strains and pains on them. These strains and pains have since then succeeded in stunting their political aspirations or large-scale economic pursuit compared to their male counterparts who are not bogged down by domestic considerations. This unfettered freedom accorded the men gives them ample opportunity for the pursuit of matters of religion, social, economic and politics with vigour to the detriment of their female counterparts.

This aside, there are other major obstacles and challenges to Women's meaningful participation in politics in Nigeria. These challenges and obstacles include;

I. Issue of Leadership: The Woman is usually caught in between two opposing interests depending on the issue at hand or the convenience of the agitators. A Woman is usually and often accepted as coming from or as an indigene of her husband's state of origin depending on the issue at state. In most cases, a woman is declared a non-indigene in her husband's state whenever political office holding is at stake.

II. High Registration Fees for Political Office: This usually disadvantaged the women in this country.

III. Money Politics: This, like the high registration fees militates against women in Nigeria.

IV. Security: Unless women are sure of their security they will not participate in politics.

V. Election Rigging: Women will usually flee from the electoral process because of the violence which usually accompanies election rigging in Nigeria.

VI. Low level of political consciousness of both women politicians and women in general. This retards women's political aspirations and political preferences.

VII. Inter and Intra-Party Conflict: This constitutes a constant feature of Nigerian political landscape. Women are always scared of this and its constant heating of the political system and its processes.

VIII. Financial/Budgetary Constraints/Stringency: Hardly do people have Women with the necessary funds to engage in politics on equal footing with the men.

IX. Undemocratic Political Parties: Women, due to their high sense of morality and honesty are not usually comfortable with this feature of the Nigerian political landscape which puts them at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.

X. Male Dominated Party Executive: This puts the Women in a subordinate positions compared to men

There is no doubt that the foregoing constitute serious obstacles to women's political relevance in Nigeria, but then, the women can hardly be excused from being part of the causes of their own problems due to obvious political miscalculations. According to WARDC (2003), the Nigerian women, "rather than building themselves politically by engaging the party structure constructively, they engage in distracting and destructive behaviours and actions". Such actions according to them include:

I. Struggling to get positions without knowing the requirements of such positions/offices.

II. Vying for positions that exceed their basic educational qualifications.

III. Vying for positions that they know they will not win but first for the purpose of using them to get appointed positions.

IV. Contesting to block the chance for the right woman and for the purpose of helping a male to win.

V. Contesting but expecting other people to foot the bills

VI. Contesting because other women who they feel superior to have entered the race. Disregarding the advice of older women who have been long in the game.

These major obstacles and challenges are no doubt injurious to women's political relevance in Nigeria. Thus, they seemed to have created the tendency for people to see or come to accept women's real political participation or involvement in politics as a myth rather than a reality.

The myth of women in politics

The tendency to see or accept women's participation in

politics as a myth is not only wrong but ill-conceived. This is particularly so, looking at the conceptual meaning of the term “myth” and, its non-applicability to the true-life situation of women’s political participation in Nigeria and, the world over.

A myth means anything that is opposed to reality. It connotes fictitiousness that has unscientific account. It is an unscientific theory or belief and, an imaginary thinking spoken of as though existing.

Going by the foregoing, it is not only out of place but totally untenable to conceptualize or refer to women’s participation in politics as a myth. In fact, the only thing that is mythical about women’s role in politics is the non-realization or non-acceptance by men and, even women, that women are their equal partners in politics and, that they (that is, the women) are as relevant (if not more relevant) as men to political participation or practical politics, despite the man-made or created inhibitors, obstacles and challenges already examined above.

Without doubt, it is our unequivocal contention in this paper that women’s role or participation in politics is a reality today and not a myth. In fact, it has long been so across the world. In the United States, as Barber Kellerman (1986), noted, “American Women won, after generations of efforts, the right to Vote”. By this, they reversed the practice which for a long time made the right to vote the preserve of the men.

There are instances of women’s bold political moves and actions that have actually demythologized the myth about women’s role in politics and, their relevance in the political process. Two instances of this from the American colonial beginnings and revolutions are provided below:

Forty-one Englishmen signed the Mayflower Compact on November 11, 1620, binding themselves “together into a civil body politics”. That first winter killed more than half of them; the surviving “freemen” constituted the governing body of the colony. Women had no share of political authority, though they shared the desperate dangers of frontier life in those colonial days. When Anne Hutchinson arrived in Boston from England in 1634, the Massachusetts “body politics” was in a precautions condition. The authorities, fearing anarchy, struggled to establish a stable social order in the wilderness. Mrs. Hutchinson, daughter of a minister who had been silenced for fifteen years for insisting on “able clergy”, gathered worried women in her home. There she ministered to their illnesses and taught them that they too were children of God, not bearers of Eve’s sinful seduction. Her liberal doctrines challenged the dominant powers, seemed to them to propose a liberty of conscience sure to undermine the unity essential to survival and salvation. Governor John Winthrop brought her to trial. She stood alone before her accusers, a grandmother in her mid-forties who had borne a dozen children. At that critical moment, she stood for the essence of what freedom would come to mean in the

New World (Williams Crane and Bernard Moses, 1983).

War erodes the walls between the sexes: sometimes men nurse the wounded and sometimes women produce weapons. In the American Revolution, women struggled to find a service they could contribute. The culture of the day had women locked into domesticity. But even that could be turned to wartime advantage. Women bought the household goods, so when the time came to boycott British products; women stepped forth to organize the ban. Women made flags and sewed and cooked – and wrote endlessly and informatively of the events they witnessed. The “Republican Mother” was a celebrated figure – worth educating so she could train her sons in soldierly virtue. Still, it took a giant leap of energy and imagination for the eighteenth-century middle-class American woman to engage in anything as raucous and masculine as politics. There were those who did it anyway (Afonja, 1986)

Instances of these abound in Nigeria as well. The Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo crusades, Queen Amina, Madam Tinubu activism, Nwaobiala movement of 1925, Aba women riot of 1929 are examples of Women’s bold political moves in the face of stiff male opposition and systemic oppression. Other women movements and personalities that have struggled for women’s relevance in Nigeria during pre-colonial and post colonial periods include Lagos market women movement between 1927 and 1947, Mrs. Oyinkan Abayomi, Mrs. Ekpo Young, Mrs. Wuraola Esan, Mrs. Janet Mokelu, Mrs. Henrietta Lawson, Mrs. Keziah Fashina and Mrs. Mary Ededem among others.

Currently, in the continent of Africa, a woman president, the first of its kind, in the continent, has emerged in Liberia in person of President Helen Sirleaf-Johnson. In Philippines, a woman, Mrs. Margaret Arroyo is the current President. Not only this, women had been Presidents and Prime-ministers in Indonesia, Britain, India to mention only a few. Putting the foregoing into perspective, the reality of women’s role in politics and political activities in Nigeria cannot be doubted.

The reality of women’s role in politics in Nigeria

The identified obstacles, challenges and barriers to women’s political relevance and participation in Nigeria notwithstanding, the reality of their continued relevance is not in doubt. In fact, this relevance or reality has a deep-seated historical pedigree and, cultural as well as traditional dimensions.

Culturally and/or, traditionally, women have occupied various traditional positions of power in most parts of Africa and, particularly in Yoruba kingdom right from the pre-colonial period. In fact, Afonja (1986) gave analytical relevance to issues of gender identity, equality and struggle for same in her analysis of the position of women

in relations to power and authority in traditional Yoruba society. Even though, Afonja's analysis clearly showed the deep-seated nature of disregard for women's initial relevance in the monarchical structure of the Yoruba race, when she claimed that "the foundation of patrilineal rule of succession to the highest political office, that of the monarch, was laid when Oduduwa bypassed his two eldest daughters to confer authority over new territories on his seven princes (Afonja, 1986), her generative analysis of Yoruba history from AD 100 shows that "the monarch was (and still) a source of legitimate authority for women either as direct monarchs or as Regents" thus, constituting a gender identity and or its formation and perpetuation. The monarchy as a culture based activity is not only reserved for men but also for the women if not for the "logic of domination" and philosophy of "men as victimizers and women as victims". This is decipherable from Afonja's (1986) position that:

"Women became rulers in one or more of the following ways: they were picked by the Ifa oracle on the prediction that their reign would be more prosperous than that of direct heirs to the throne: they acted as regents for young heirs to the throne for extended periods of time, or in cases where the Ifa oracle was unable to find a suitable heir and having shown immense ability as regents they were allowed to rule."

This situation spanned the length and breadth of most if not all Yoruba kingdoms including the source – Ile-Ife. In fact, there were instances where women ruled throughout as the substantive monarchs. This happened in Akure, Ondo State where three female rulers occupied the throne between 1393 and 1414 and Ado-Ekiti, in Ekiti-State where one female ruler. Yeyenirewu, ruled between 1511 and 1552. It equally happened in Ile-Ife where Luwe was a female Ooni (ruler of Ife) as well as in Egba land where Tenilade, Erelu and Latoni respectively reigned as the traditional rulers (Afonja, 1986). Not only this, it has been argued that:

"Oral tradition has it that women played prominent roles in the political history and decision-making processes of (some) traditional societies. The legendary roles played by Princess Inikpi of Igala land and Moremi of Ife as saviours of their societies during warfare, to the extent of sacrificing their lives to ensure victory, were remarkable. Other notable women of valor who helped in directing the course of history of their traditional societies in the pre-colonial era included Queen Amina of Zaria (a formidable female ruler who led military expeditions and expanded her territory as far as River Niger, the Kwararafa empire and Kano in the north), Queen Kambasa of Ijaw and Queen Owari of Ilesa (JHU, 1997, cited in Akinyode-Afolabi and Arogundade, 2003)."

According to Akinyode-Afolabi and Arogundade (2003),

citing JHU, (1997), the political relevance of women in the pre-colonial communities was well pronounced. They articulated this position thus:

In the pre-colonial communities with dual political systems, women generally mobilized for theirs and their families' welfare. The leaders of the women usually got their position of authority and influence on merit. They could articulate the views of women and had the financial wherewithal to maintain their status. Among these were the Iyalode, Lobun, Arise of the Yoruba, the Omu of Onitsha and Western Igbo. Women also had strong and powerful associations through which they organized and acted politically. The associations enabled them to put up a united front to express approval or disapproval to political situations. Among the Igbo, there was also the institution of the Umu Ada, the eldest daughters of the village whose main role was peace-making in the community. The Umu-Ada were usually feared because they often used their enormous powers to intimidate family members, particularly the wives.

Equally positions of authority as traditional chiefs existed for women as well. Even though, these were at the lower levels of the traditional hierarchy, they (that is the positions) were indicative of the cultural values, norms and beliefs which, combined, gave a pride of place to gender identity and social cohesion needed for the peaceful and crisis-free existence of the people while reducing social exclusion or ostracism.

The foregoing apart, overtime, and particularly during the anti-colonial struggle. Nigerian women as already earlier emphasized in this paper greatly demonstrated their leadership and responsibility qualities. The likes of Chief (Mrs) Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Margaret Ekpo were in the thick of anti-colonial struggle in Nigeria and, they gallantly fought imperialism side by side with men.

The analysis of Women's level of political participation as contestants for political offices and, notable Women Political office holders (elective and appointive) as well as their representation in the Public/Federal Service provided in Tables 1 to 16 empirically attest to the relevance of women in Nigeria's political process in spite of the obvious obstacles and their attendant negativism against them in terms of gender representation. The contents of these Appendices show the reality of Nigerian women in politics and its accompanying processes. As a matter of fact, some notable women political office holders (elective and appointive) during the fourth Republic include:

1. Mrs. Osomo, Minister of Housing and Urban Development until 2005
2. Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala: Minister of Finance and later Minister of External Affairs
3. Mrs. Nenadi Usman, Minister of State for Finance
4. Mrs. Obi Ezekwezi (Madam Due Process), Minister of Solid Minerals and later Minister of Education

Table 1. Distribution of contestants and winners on state, party and gender bases in the state assembly election (1999)

S/N	State	Number of contestants						Total	Winners						Total	Total	
		AD		APP		PDP		Contestant	AD		APP		PDP		Contestant	Contestant	
		M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F	M	F			
1	Abia	6		17	1	24	0	48	1	0	0	5	1	18	0	24	1
2	Adamawa	5	0	24	1	25	0	55	1	1	0	4	1	19	0	25	1
3	Akwa Ibom	8	0	25	0	22	0	56	1	0	0	9	0	17	0	26	0
4	Anambra	5	0	27	0	29	1	62	1	0	0	4	0	25	1	30	1
5	Bauchi	17	0	29	0	29	0	75	0	1	0	8	0	21	0	30	0
6	Bayelsa	9	0	20	1	23	1	54	0	3	0	6	0	13	0	22	0
7	Benue	3	0	28	1	25	4	61	5	0	0	11	0	17	1	29	1
8	Borno	3	0	27	0	24	1	55	1	0	0	17	0	11	0	28	0
9	Cross River	7	0	25	0	25	0	57	0	0	0	14	0	11	0	25	0
10	Delta	27	0	28	0	27	1	83	1	0	0	5	0	23	1	29	1
11	Ebonyi	11	0	24	0	24	0	59	0	1	0	8	0	15	0	24	0
12	Edo	7	0	23	1	24	0	55	1	0	0	3	0	21	0	24	0
13	Ekiti	25	0	24	2	22	3	77	6	22	1	1	0	2	0	26	1
14	Enugu	2	1	23	1	24	0	50	1	0	0	2	0	22	0	24	0
15	Gombe	9	0	23	1	24	0	57	1	1	0	13	0	10	0	24	0
16	Imo	2	0	27	1	27	2	59	3	0	0	11	0	16	0	27	0
17	Jigawa	3	0	30	0	30	0	63	0	0	0	18	0	12	0	30	0
18	Kaduna	13	0	32	0	34	0	79	0	2	0	7	0	25	0	34	0
19	Kano	2	0	40	0	40	0	82	0	0	0	5	0	35	0	40	0
20	Katsina	5	0	34	0	34	0	73	0	1	0	4	0	29	0	34	0
21	Kebbi	1	0	24	0	24	0	49	0	0	0	14	0	10	0	24	0
22	Kogi	5	0	25	0	24	0	54	0	0	0	13	0	12	0	25	0
23	Kwara	12	0	24	0	20	0	56	0	5	0	17	0	2	0	24	0
24	Lagos	14	0	39	0	37	3	119	3	37	0	3	0	0	0	40	0
25	Nasarawa	0	0	22	0	22	0	44	0	0	0	3	0	19	0	22	0
26	Niger	0	0	27	0	25	2	54	2	0	0	0	0	25	0	27	2
27	Ogun	25	1	18	1	25	1	71	3	21	1	2	0	3	2	26	0
28	Ondo	23	1	22	0	23	1	70	2	19	1	1	0	3	0	24	1
29	Osun	25	1	26	0	25	1	78	2	22	1	2	0	1	0	26	1
30	Oyo	30	1	4	0	31	0	66	1	28	0	0	0	3	0	32	1
31	Plateau	17	0	22	0	23	1	62	1	0	0	4	0	19	1	24	1
32	Rivers	4	0	32	0	32	0	68	0	1	0	11	0	20	0	32	0
33	Sokoto	0	0	30	0	30	0	60	0	0	0	20	0	10	0	30	0
34	Taraba	5	0	24	0	24	0	53	0	0	0	8	0	16	0	24	0
35	Yobe	0	0	24	0	24	0	48	0	0	0	13	0	11	0	24	0
36	Zamfara	0	0	24	0	24	0	48	0	0	0	19	0	5	0	24	0
	Total	356	6	917	11	949	22	2255	37	165	4	285	2	521	6	983	12

Source: INEC, Abuja

5. Mrs. Abiodun Olujimi, Deputy Governor Ekiti State (Since late 2005, vacated her seat in the House of Representative following her appointment as the Deputy Governor by the Ekiti State Governor).

6. Mrs. Mariam Chiroma, Minister of Women Affairs

7. Mrs Chinwe Obaji, Minister of Education

8. Mrs. Pauleen Talem, Minister of State for Science and Technology.

9. Erelu Olusola Obada, Deputy Governor, Osun State

10. Mrs. Titi Oseni, Speaker, Ogun State House of Assembly

11. Dr. Mrs. Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, Commissioner for

Table 2. January 9, 1999 gubernatorial and state houses assembly election distribution of contestants and winners with their running mates on state, party and gender bases in the gubernatorial election.

S/N	State	Number of contestants and running mates						Total	Winners and running mates						Total
		AD		APP		PDP			AD		APP		PDP		
		M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F	M	F	
1	Abia	2	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
2	Adamawa	0	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
3	Akwa Ibom	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
4	Anambra	2	0	0	1	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
5	Bauchi	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
6	Bayelsa	1	1	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
7	Benue	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
8	Borno	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
9	Cross River	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
10	Delta	1	0	2	0	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
11	Ebonyi	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
12	Edo	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
13	Ekiti	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
14	Enugu	1	0	2	0	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
15	Gombe	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
16	Imo	2	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
17	Jigawa	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
18	Kaduna	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
19	Kano	2	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
20	Katsina	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
21	Kebbi	1	0	1	0	2	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
22	Kogi	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
23	Kwara	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
24	Lagos	1	1	1	1	2	0	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
25	Nasarawa	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
26	Niger	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
27	Ogun	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
28	Ondo	1	0	2	0	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
29	Osun	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
30	Oyo	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
31	Plateau	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
32	Rivers	1	1	1	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
33	Sokoto	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
34	Taraba	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
35	Yobe	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
36	Zamfara	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
	Total	58	3	61	3	66	0	191	9	1	17	0	38	0	65

Source: INEC, Abuja.

Health, Ogun State. (She later became a Senator through the 2007 election).

12. Alhaja Salmot Badru, Deputy Governor, Ogun State.

13. Honourable Foluke Etteh, Speaker, House of Representatives (First Woman to hold the Office in Nigeria)

14. Mrs. Bunmi Famoriyo, Commissioner for Education, Osun State

15. Mrs. Oluremi Oyo, Special Assistant to the President, on Media Matters.

16. Mrs. Farida Waziri, Executive Chairman, Economic

and Financial Crime Commission [EFCC] since 2008.

17. Mrs. Virginia Etiaba-(First elected as a Deputy Governor of Anambra State with Dr. Peter Obi as the Governor in 2003 but only took Office in 2005/2006 following the Court's nullification of Dr. Chris Ngige's election. She later became the first female Governor in Nigeria within the same period following the impeachment of Governor Peter Obi by the Anambra State House of Assembly).

18. Princess Sarah Sosan, Deputy Governor, Lagos State (Since 2007).

Table 3. February 20, 1999 national assembly election distribution of contestants and winners on state, party and gender bases in the federal House of Representatives elections.

S/No	State	Number of Contestants						Total	Total female Contestants	Number of contestants						Total	Female winners	
		AD		AP		PDP				AD		AP		PDP				Winners
		M	F	M	F	M	F			M	F	M	F	M	F			
1	Abia	2	0	6	0	8	0	18	0	0	0	1	0	7	0	8	0	
2	Adamawa	0	0	8	0	8	0	16	0	0	0	1	0	7	0	8	0	
3	Akwa Ibom	0	0	7	0	9	1	17	1	0	0	0	0	8	1	9	1	
4	Anambra	3	0	8	1	11	0	23	1	0	0	1	0	10	0	11	0	
5	Bauchi	1	0	12	0	12	0	25	0	0	0	3	0	9	0	12	1	
6	Bayelsa	4	0	5	0	5	0	14	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	5	0	
7	Benue	2	0	11	0	11	0	24	0	0	0	1	0	10	0	11	0	
8	Borno	1	0	10	0	9	1	21	1	0	0	6	0	4	0	10	0	
9	Cross River	2	0	7	0	7	0	16	0	0	0	5	0	3	0	3		
10	Delta	0	0	5	0	4	1	10	1	0	0	3	1	3	0	7	1	
11	Ebonyi	4	0	6	0	5	1	16	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	6	1	
12	Edo	2	0	8	1	9	0	20	1	0	0	1	0	8	0	9	0	
13	Ekiti	6	0	2	2	6	0	16	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	
14	Enugu	4	0	7	0	7	1	19	1	0	0	3	0	3	0	8	0	
15	Gombe	1	0	6	0	6	0	13	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	6	0	
16	Imo	1	0	10	0	10	0	21	0	0	0	4	0	6	0	10	0	
17	Jigawa	2	0	11	0	11	0	24	0	0	0	8	0	3	0	11	0	
18	Kaduna	8	0	15	1	15	1	40	0	0	0	1	1	13	0	16	2	
19	Kano	2	0	24	0	24	0	50	2	0	0	1	0	23	1	24	0	
20	Katsina	0	0	15	0	15	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	15	0	
21	Kebbi	0	0	8	0	8	0	16	0	0	0	3	0	5	0	8	0	
22	Kogi	2	1	9	0	9	0	21	1	0	0	5	0	4	0	9	0	
23	Kwara	6	0	5	1	5	1	18	2	0	0	4	1	1	0	6	1	
24	Lagos	22	2	11	2	15	7	59	11	21	2	1	0	0	0	24	2	
25	Nasarawa	2	0	5	0	5	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	
26	Niger	2	0	10	0	10	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10	0	
27	Ogun	9	0	0	0	9	0	18	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	
28	Ondo	7	1	7	0	8	0	23	1	6	1	0	0	1	0	8	1	
29	Osun	8	1	7	1	9	0	26	2	7	1	0	0	1	0	9	1	
30	Oyo	14	0	6	0	10	1	31	1	12	0	0	0	2	0	14	0	
31	Plateau	3	0	8	0	8	0	19	0	0	0	1	0	7	0	8	0	
32	Rivers	1	0	11	0	13	0	25	0	0	0	2	0	10	0	12	0	
33	Sokoto	1	0	11	0	11	0	23	0	0	0	7	0	4	0	11	0	
34	Taraba	4	0	6	0	6	0	16	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	6	0	
35	Yobe	0	0	6	0	6	0	12	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	6	0	
36	Zamfara	0	0	7	0	7	0	14	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	7	0	
37	FCT	2	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	
	Total	128	5	302	9	333	15	792	29	64	4	74	3	205	4	354	11	

Source: INEC, Abuja

19. Mrs. Okereke, Head of Service [Federal Civil Service, 2007-2008]. (The first Woman to occupy the post in Nigeria).

20. Mrs. Amman-Pepple, Head of Service (Federal Civil Service, 2008 to 2009). (The second Woman to occupy the post in Nigeria).

Table 4. February 20, 1999 national assembly election distribution of contestants and winners on state, party and gender bases in the senate election.

S/N	State	Number of contestants						Total				Winners				Total
		AD		AP		PDP		AD		AP		PDP				
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	F	F	M	F	M	F	
1	Abia	1	0	2	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
2	Adamawa	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
3	Akwa Ibom	0	0	2	0	3	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
4	Anambra	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
5	Bauchi	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
6	Bayelsa	2	0	2	0	3	0	7	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
7	Benue	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
8	Borno	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
9	Cross River	1	0	1	2	2	1	7	0	0	0	0	1	20	0	2
10	Delta	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1
11	Ebonyi	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
12	Edo	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
13	Ekiti	3	0	0	0	3	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
14	Enugu	3	0	3	0	3	0	9	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
15	Gombe	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	3
16	Imo	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
17	Jigawa	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	3
18	Kaduna	3	0	3	0	3	0	9	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	3
19	Kano	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
20	Katsina	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
21	Kebbi	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	3
22	Kogi	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
23	Kwara	2	0	3	0	3	0	8	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
24	Lagos	3	0	1	0	2	1	7	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
25	Nasarawa	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
26	Niger	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
27	Ogun	3	0	0	0	3	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
28	Ondo	3	0	3	0	3	0	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
29	Osun	3	0	2	0	3	0	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
30	Oyo	3	0	0	0	3	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
31	Plateau	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
32	Rivers	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
33	Sokoto	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	3
34	Taraba	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
35	Yobe	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
36	Zamfara	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
37	FCT	1	0	1	0	3	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	61	1	3
	Total	39	0	90	2	106	3	240	20	0	0	23	1	2		107

Source: INEC, Abuja

The political fortunes of the Nigerian women have actually gained better and increased momentum by ways of increased political relevance through appointments and the electoral process towards the end of the first eight years of the democratic experiments of the fourth Republic and, particularly since the commencement of

the Yar'Adua Presidency in the year 2007 the political fortunes of the Nigerian Women are far more than accounted for in Tables 1 to 16. This is attested to by the fact that within these periods, the position of the number one Civil Servant of the nation – (Head of Service) was, respectively occupied in succession by Women. Not only

Table 5. Female political representation in Nigeria (1999 to 2003)

Period	Senate	House of representatives	Federal cabinet
First Republic	1	Nil	Nil
Second Republic	1	3	3
The Botched Third Republic	1	Nil	
Fourth Republic	3	13 (one nullified)	7

Source: A Sat Obiyan and Akinde, S.T. (2002): "The Federal Character Principle and Gender Representation in Nigeria": Indian Journal of Social Sciences, Volume 6, Number 4, (October), p. 243.

Table 6. Women senators during the First, Second, Third Republics and First Phase of the Fourth Republic

S/n	Name of elected member	Republic	Numbers per republic
1.	Mrs. Wuraola Esan	First	1
2.	Mrs. Franca Afegbua	Second	1
3.	Mrs. Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor	Third	1
4.	Mrs. Florence Ita-Giwa	Fourth	
5.	Mrs. Stella Omu	Fourth	3
6.	Hajiya Khairat Abdul Razaq-Gwadabe	Fourth	

Source: Obiyan and Akindele (2002)

Table 7. Female Representation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: (August, 1998 - February 1999 Elections)

Type	Seats	Number of female contestants	Number of female winners	Percentage
L.G.A. Chairmanship	774	46	9	1.16
Councillorship	8810	510	143	1.62
State Assembly	990	39	12	1.21
Governor	72	6	1(Deputy Governor)	1.39
Senate	109	5	3	2.75
House of Representatives	360	29	13(One Nullified)	3.61

Source: Obiyan and Akindele, 2002; p. 244 as adapted from Agina-Ude, Ada (1999), New Challenges and Directions: Nigerian Women in Democracy, AGADA Report for Inter-Agency Forum of Donors Interface, GADA, Lagos, p. 13.

Table 8. Women elected into State Houses of Assembly in 2003

S/n	States	Number of constituencies	Number of women elected	Percentage (%) of elected
1.	Abia	24	2	8.33
2.	Akwa-Ibom	26	2	7.69
3.	Anambra	30	4	13.33
4.	Bauchi	31	1	3.23
5.	Bayelsa	24	1	4.17
6.	Benue	29	5	17.24
7.	Borno	28	1	3.57
8.	Delta	29	2	6.90
9.	Edo	24	2	8.33

Table 8. Cont.

10.	Ekiti	26	1	3.85
11.	Enugu	24	1	4.17
12.	Gombe	24	1	4.17
13.	Imo	27	1	3.70
14.	Kaduna	34	1	2.94
15.	Kogi	25	2	8.00
16.	Kwara	24	1	4.17
17.	Lagos	40	2	5.00
18.	Niger	27	1	3.70
19.	Ogun	26	1	3.85
20.	Ondo	26	1	3.85
21.	Osun	26	1	3.85
22.	Plateau	24	2	8.33
23.	Rivers	32	1	3.13
24.	Taraba	24	1	4.17
25.	Adamawa	25	0	0
26.	Cross River	25	0	0
27.	Ebonyi	24	0	0
28.	Jigawa	30	0	0
29.	Kano	40	0	0
30.	Katsina	34	0	0
31.	Kebbi	24	0	0
32.	Nasarawa	24	0	0
33.	Oyo	32	0	0
34.	Sokoto	30	0	0
35.	Yobe	24	0	0
36.	Zamfara	24	0	0

Source: WARDC, 2003

Table 9. Women elected into National Assembly in 2003

S/n	Houses	Total number elected	Number of women elected	Percentage (%) of women elected
1.	Senate	109	3	2.75
2.	House of Representatives	360	21	5.83

Source: WARDC, 2003

Table 10.Female-Senators (2003 Elections)

S/no.	Name of elected member	State	Party
1.	Senator Daisy U. Ehanire-Danjuman	Edo South	P.D.P.
2.	Senator Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora	Kwara Central	P.D.P.
3.	Senator Veronica I.A. Anisulowo	Ogun West	P.D.P.

Source: WARDC, 2003.

these, many more Women were elected into the National Assembly in 2007. These seeming achievements notwithstanding, the reality of the Nigerian women's

political activities and relevance depicted in Appendices I to XVI and, other facts provided here in, there are still problems. These problems range from political neglect;

Table 11. Comparison of women representation in 1999 and 2003 general elections.

S/n	Position	Number of available seats	Number of women elected and percentage of total in 1999		Number of women elected and percentage total in 2003	
1.	Presidency	1	-	0%	-	0%
2.	Senate	109	3	2.75%	3	2.75%
3.	House of Representatives	360	12	3.33%	21	5.83%
4.	Governorship	36	-	0%	-	0%
5.	State Houses of Assembly	990	12	1.21%	38	3.84%

Source: WARDC, 2003

Table 12. Female members Federal House of Representatives (2003 Elections)

S/no	Name of elected member	State	Constitutency	Committee	Party
1.	Hon. Fakeye Eniola	Osun	Atakunmosa/East and West Ilesa		P.D.P.
2.	Hon. Mercy Almona-Isei	Delta	Ndokwa/Ukwuani	Chairman	P.D.P.
3.	Hon. Minimoh Iquo	Akwa Ibom	Ikono/Ini	Deputy Chairperson Police Affairs	P.D.P.
4.	Hon. Maimunat U. Adaji	Kwara	Baruten Kaiama		A.N.P.P
5.	Hon. Dabiri Abike Kafayat	Lagos	Ikorodu	Chairman	A.D.
6.	Hon. Fatima, S. Talba	Yobe	Nangere/Potiskun		A.N.P.P.
7.	Hon. Saudatu Sani	Kaduna	Lere	Chairman	P.D.P.
8.	Hon. Ogodo U. Patience	Kaduna Ebonyi	Lere Ohaukwu/Ebonyi	Chairman Deputy Chairman	P.D.P.
9.	Hon. Patricia O.O. Eteh	Osun	Ayedaade/Irewole/Isokan	Leader	P.D.P.
10.	Hon. Azumi Namadi Bebeji	Kano	Kiru/Bebeji		A.N.P.P.
11.	Hon. Abiola Edewor Omolara	Lagos	Apapa	Deputy Chairman	A.D.
12.	Hon. Aondona Dabo Anzuana, C.	Benue	Vandeikya/Kaonhisha		U.N.P.P.
13.	Hon. Jumoke Thomas	Lagos	Lagos Island I		A.D.
14.	Hon. Temi Harriman	Delta	Warri		P.D.P.
15.	Hon. Patricia Akwashiki	Nasarawa	Nasarawa North		P.D.P.
16.	Hon. Binta Koji	Kaduna	Kaduna South		A.N.P.P.
17.	Hon. Fanta Baba Shehu	Kaduna Borno	Kagi/Gubio/Magumori	Chairman	P.D.P.
18.	Hon. Nkechi Nwaogu	Abia	Obinwa Ugumnagbo/Osisioma		A.N.P.P.
19.	Hon. Jesse U. Belonwu	Anambra	Onitsha North South	Deputy Chairman	P.D.P.
20.	Hon. Ruth Jumai Ango	Kaduna	Zangon/Kataf/Jaba		A.N.P.P
21.	Hon. Mrs. Abiodun Olujimi*	Ekiti	Ekiti South I		P.D.P.

Source: WARDC, 2003/Collated Facts by the author from Different Sources.

*This woman was later in the year 2005 appointed as the Deputy Governor of Ekiti State.

gradual erosion of the relevance so acquired in the course of their struggle to total disempowerment. In fact, the trend in Nigeria is contrary to global history which has shown that both males and females are capable of immense contributions to human development and democratic happiness and, that such contributions can be made by women at any level or position of authority.

In other words, in spite of these developments which capture the historical place of women in traditional,

cultural, communal, economic and political scheme(s) of things, the relevance of women has gradually been eroded. Women have been consistently seen and treated as appendages to their male counterparts. Women, even, at this period of the twenty first century are still to some extent, considered as tools of assistance and emotional physical support for men. Even, in spite of evidence to the contrary there is still the erroneous belief that the place of women is in the kitchen (and the bed

Table 13. Women in the State Houses of Assembly, 2003 (Elections).

S/n	States	State constituency	Names of elected member	Party
1.	Abia	Aba North	Hon. Blessing Azuru	
		Ukwa West	Hon. Gold Nwaogugu	P.D.P.
2.	Akwa-Ibom	Etinam Orkanam	Mabel Etim Udongwo	P.D.P.
			Eshiet I. Eneobong	
3.	Anambra	Aguata I	Eucharika Anazodo	P.D.P.
		Onitshal South II	Hon. Tabaisi Anthonia	P.D.P.
			Okoye	
		Njikoka	Bridget Chkwuka	P.D.P.
		Ogbaru I	Bar. Njideka-Ezeigwe	P.D.P.
4.	Bauchi	Barazo	Hon. Habiba Sabo	P.D.P.
5.	Bayelsa			
6.	Benue	Gwer East	Maria Aikola Amedu	P.D.P.
		Gwer West	Hon. V.N. Gajir	P.D.P.
		Ohimini	Hon. Christy Adokwo	P.D.P.
		Okpokwu	Dewa Cecilia N.T.	P.D.P.
			Misho Elizabeth Fina	P.D.P.
7.	Borno	Gwoza	Hon. Asabe Villita Bashir	P.D.P.
8.	Delta	Oshimili South	Hon. C.M. Olanrewaju	P.D.P.
		Oshimili North	Hon. Felia Nwaeze	P.D.P.
9.	Edo	Oredo West	Hon. Esohe Jacobs	P.D.P.
		Egor-Edo	Hon. Elizabeth Ighodaro	
10.	Ekiti	Efon-Ekiti	Hon. Oluwafemi Christiana (Mrs.)	P.D.P.
11.	Enugu	Udi South	Hon. Ene Chika	P.D.P.
12.	Gombe	Kaltungo East	Hon. Zainab Abubakar	P.D.P.
			Alman	
13.	Imo	Owerri Municipa	Mrs. Anthonia Ngoka	P.D.P.
14.	Kaduna	Chkuna	Hon. Maria Dogo	P.D.P.
15.	Kogi	Omala Koogi	Hon. Rosemary Moman	P.D.P.
			Hon. Nana Ojebu	P.D.P.
		Adavi Kogi		
16.	Kwara	Sao/Essa	Hon. Banke Gbadamosi	P.D.P.
17.	Lagos	Mushin I	Funmi Tejuosho Smith	A.D.
		Amuwo Odofin	Bola Badmus	A.D.
18.	Niger	Munya	Fati Tasala Ibrahim	P.D.P.
19.	Ogun	Abeokuta South	Titi Sodunke Oseni	P.D.P.
20.	Ondo	Ondo West II	Hon. Princess Titi Akinmade	P.D.P.
21.	Osun	Ifedayo	Hon. Dr. Mrs. Funmilayo	P.D.P.
			Olaseinde Mustpaha	
22.	Plateau	Langtang Central Mangu	Hon. Tina Lar	P.D.P.
		North East	Hon. Rohilar Baleri	P.D.P.
23.	Rivers	Akuku-Toru I	Mrs. Anthonia Membere	P.D.P.
24.	Taraba	Karim Lamido II	Hon. Virginia Baba	P.D.P.
25.	Adamawa		No Female Legislator	
26.	Cross River		No Female Legislator	
27.	Ebonyi		No Female Legislator	
28.	Jigawa		No Female Legislator	
29.	Kano		No Female Legislator	
30.	Katsina		No Female Legislator	
31.	Kebbi		No Female Legislator	
32.	Nasarawa		No Female Legislator	
33.	Oyo		No Female Legislator	
34.	Sokoto		No Female Legislator	
35.	Yobe		No Female Legislator	
36.	Zamfara		No Female Legislator	

Source: WARDC 2003/collated facts by the author from various sources.

room). This has to change. And, the only way out or, mechanism for such a change is the constant struggle for

Table 14. Summary of women in elective and appointive positions in the Fourth Republic (First Phase).

S/no.	The elective and appointive positions
1.	6 Woman Ministers
2.	9 Women Presidential Assistants
3.	2 Women Presidential Advisers
4.	3 Women in a 109 Member Senate
5.	21 Women in 360 Member House of Representatives
6.	38 Women in State Houses of Assembly
7.	2 Women Deputy Governors

Source: Collated Facts by the author from Various Sources, 2003

Table 15. Gender representation in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service (2003)

Grade level	Number of female	Percentage	Number of male	Percentage	Total	Percentage
12 - 14	3,134	33.1	6,333	69.9	9,467	100.0
15 - 17	492	24.1	1,549	75.9	2,041	100.0
Commissioners/ Ministers	8	17.0	39	83.0	47	100.0

Source: Office of Head of Service, Abuja as excerpted/cited from Omoleke, I. I and Bisiriyu, L. A. (2008): "Discrimination" against Women: An overview of the problem of gender inequality in the Public Service in Nigeria". Journal of Social and Policy Issues. Volume 5, Number 2. Page 79.

Table 16. Female senators (2007 elections) including those re-elected.

S/n	Name of elected member	State	Party	Year elected
1.	Senator Nworgu	Abia	P.D.P	2007
2.	Senator Grace Bent	Adamawa	P.D.P	2007
3.	Senator (Mrs.) Eme Ekaete	Akwa-Ibom	P.D.P	2007
4.	Senator Joy Imordi	Anambra	P.D.P	2007
5.	Senator Chris Anyanwu	Imo	P.D.P	2007
6.	Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello	Ogun	P.D.P	2007
7.	Senator Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora*	Kwara Central	P.D.P.	Re-elected in 2007
8.	Senator Daisy U. Ehanire-Danjuman*	Edo South	P.D.P.	Re-elected in 2007

*First Elected in 2003.

Source: Collated Facts by the author from Various Sources 2007 - 2009.

political empowerment and relevance in the political process.

Women's empowerment: The way out

Empowerment means to give power or authority to a person or a group of people. It means giving ability to such people and, to enable them do or gain what they previously lack. Simply put, women's empowerment connotes political, economic and educational

empowerment. Thus, it could be argued that, to some extent, women's empowerment has three dimensions though, this is not to pretend that our women are not culturally disempowered looking at the plethora of many obsolete cultural practices that had long discriminated against them.

Political empowerment as one of the three dimensions of empowerment refers to increased political participation by women in decision making and policy formulation at all levels of society and government. On its own, economic empowerment could be taken to mean improved access

to productive resources and gainful employment for the womenfolk within the political system while educational empowerment involves the dismantling of attitudinal and institutional barriers which had long and are still disarticulating and limiting the supply of and demand for female labour.

As could be deduced from the foregoing, empowerment means the process of gaining control and authority of participating; of decision making and, policy formulation. In other words, it is "a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control and, to transformative action".

Women's empowerment is a continuum because it has several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components. It includes:

- (i) Creating awareness about women's situation, discrimination, rights and opportunities towards gender equality. Awareness building at the group level entails creating a sense of belonging to group and recognizing the power of working together as a group.
- (ii) Capacity building for skills development and gaining the ability to plan and execute plans and programmes as well as developing interactions with people and institutions around them.
- (iii) Greater participation and control in decision making in the home, community and society.
- (iv) Action to ensure greater equality between men and women.

Women's empowerment consists of a sequence which entails:

1. Having control or gaining further control;
2. Having a say and being listened to;
3. Being able to define and create from a women's perspective;
4. Being able to influence social decision even outside traditional female boundaries and;
5. Being recognized and respected as human beings with a contribution to make.

It is innocuous to deduce from the foregoing that women's empowerment has to do with the capacity to mobilize resources to produce beneficial social change. It has to do with the process of making women aware of their conditions and potentials and, building capacity to ensure equal participation in decision making at all levels of society and government for lasting and, beneficial social change.

The need for women's emancipation in most politics and, particularly in Nigeria, has to do with the gradual erosion of women's political and cultural relevance.

The media too, has a role to play in creating awareness of women's contributions to the society. The media can

help in this way and in other ways by removing discriminatory gender stereotypes. This can be done through positive projection of women as role models, creation of women's needs problems and priorities. Gender sensitive reports, and programmes, education through plays and programmes, campaign for gender equity, education of women about family planning and contraceptives to reduce (avoidable) maternal morbidity and mortality and, encourage safe motherhood.

The totality of the immediate foregoing requires appropriate mobilization strategies for political actions. Such strategies may include embarkment on political marketing, forming lobbying or pressure groups to influence policy makers, policy protests, public lectures and other forms of collective actions. This, in itself, would lead to something better than the present process of merely trying to raise the political consciousness of our women folk without concrete and concerted self efforts by the women.

The pursuit of this path which Beltran (1992), called "collectivization of consciousness", by the Nigerian women as it has been, and now the case in Argentina, would further enhance the attainment of an "irreversible identification of common interest" with other women organizations vis-à-vis specific women issues" (Beltran, 1992). In fact, it was the adoption of strategies of this nature that led to the positive change in the status of women in Argentina since 1983 (Beltran, 1992).

This calls for an efficacious mobilization ideology on the part of the Nigerian women. In short, they should borrow a leaf from Argentina where between 1983 and 1987, women played a decisive role in their political fortunes by mobilizing themselves in pre-election period for political actions/participation consequent on which "quota system" regulation of representation was achieved. On this premise, it is a considered opinion here, that, the Nigerian women should and, must, in the prosecution of their political needs for recognition, as was done in Argentina, embark on the following:

1. Feminization of women in politics
2. Contact with cooperative experiences
3. Formation of association of women in politics coming from different parties
4. Massive mobilization of the women's movement
5. Fostering adequate understanding of the problem, political vision of the future or information campaigns of men in politics.

This is necessary because, as it happened in Argentina, where "the women participated during the fight against dictatorship and return to democracy" (Beltran, 1992), it had been done in Nigeria in the past by some notable women activists (Mba, 1982). It is high time the steam of the past struggle is productively reactivated (Mba, 1982, 1989). In fact, this is in line with the concluding

discussion at the workshop organized by the international department of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) Bonn, in October 1992 that:

1. Problems facing women are a worldwide phenomenon
2. These common problems can be better solved through co-operation and solidarity between women throughout the world.
3. Women must continue to press for increased participation in all forms of decision-making and gain a greater say in every aspect of life, be it political, economic or social.

It is particularly imperative for the Nigerian women to vigorously pursue by ways of resistance, this path in view of the fact that, as once articulated by Mama (1995):

“Women constitute a historically oppressed and marginalized group, and, at least half of most national populations; their level of political representation is crucial.”

Through committed mobilization of the women by the women, the philosophy of feminism which according to Mama (1995) is “the popular struggle of African women for their liberation from the various forms of oppression” would be attained, thus challenging the current femocracy of feminine autocracy existing within various African polities, Nigeria inclusive. This femocracy, which, in itself, should be resisted by genuine women activists, was once defined by Mama (1995) as:

An anti-democratic female power structure which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but, unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men rather than from any actions or ideas of their own.

Through this resistance, the Nigerian women would be able to, as was done in Latin America (Jacquette et al., 1994), “project gender issues into national political debates”. In the process, they would be capable of:

1. Insisting on their (political) autonomy
2. Focusing on issues of “daily life”
3. Demonstrating commitment to better goals rather than instrumental goals
4. Focusing on moral issues
5. Pursing the maintenance of “flat” rather than “vertical” leadership (Jacquette et al., 1994).

The need for this empowerment and struggle by the Women is further compelled by the existing startling statistical revelations about women in the world. Even though, these statistics were provided some years back they are reproduced here to educate us about the denigration women have suffered and continued to suffer in the societies across the world. In making these startling statistical revelations, Odugbemi (1992), noted that:

Although, women’s status has improved over the last 20 years, the majority still lags far behind in terms of wealth, power, position and authority and three out of every five persons living below poverty line are women. In fact 660 million women daily battle with chronic hunger and malnutrition. The number of illiterate women rose from 543 million in 1970 to 605 million in 1991 while the number of illiterate men rose from 348 million to 367 million 21 years later. Less than 40% of rural women are literate and parents are likely to abort a pregnancy, if they knew the fetus is female. Of the 8,000 abortions carried out in Bombay, India in 1990 after parents knew the fetus sex through amniocentesis, only one would have been a boy. Women work as much or more and longer hours than men in order to overcome institutional and social hurdles confronting them. In Asia and Africa, women put in an average of 18 working hours more each week. They have less leisure hours than men, with men spending twice as much time relaxing and resting as women. Women were reputed to produce 60 to 80% of all food grown in developing countries with at least 60% economically active women involved in agriculture. At least 30% of women who work on farms do so freely since they till ground for their husbands, fathers or brothers they are not paid. In 70% of cases, women’s unpaid domestic work takes much more time, energy and dedication than their paid work. If the unpaid work were to be calculated in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) it would raise the GDP one quarter or one third higher in most countries of the developing world.

Even though, on the surface, these statistics appear dated, they are not and, are therefore still relevant today in the context of the neglect, oppression and discrimination constantly faced by women across the world. This position is supported by Yusuf’s (2001), comprehensive analysis of the lot of women in the third world which, according to Elegbeleye (2005), shows that:

“In South Africa, women are faced with discrimination and disadvantage despite being responsible for food production. Ironically many receive little in the way of training and extension services. The problems faced by South African Women farmers are as a result of ideologies, structures and customs in the area of kinship and marriage, politics and law and, education and religion. Considered on a general scale, African women producers, with respect to both subsistence food crops and cash crops, are not provided for despite their role towards the wellbeing of their families, communities and nations. Too often, farmers are officially assumed to be men and provision made for women is trivial or subsumed under the ‘family’ concept. In the areas of land allocation and tenurial systems settlement schemes and development policies, women’s customary rights are abrogated, they lose their autonomy, while their labour is appropriated and consequently the profits there from.”

These sad situations among others prompted the concrete decision of the African Parliamentary Union (APU), at its conference in Sudan, in October, 2002 on the role of women in decision making (WARDC, 2003). This decision which came in form of resolution 107/25/02 on the role of women in Decision making prescribed the following:

1. URGES: Parliaments to adopt legislative means aimed at creating a propitious environment for the extension of decision-making power of women.
2. INVITES: governments to effectively apply instruments and conventions relating to the rights of women, which they have freely ratified and approved.
3. ACKNOWLEDGES: that a positive discrimination is practiced in the educational program in order to make it possible for women to acquire the capacity and competence needed for their integration at all levels of decision-making
4. REQUESTS: that national strategies and program of action are put in place in all countries which aim at real participation of women in the rural communities in decision-making.
5. URGES: governments to set up mechanisms for financing remunerating activities of women.
6. RECOMMENDS: that the electoral codes, the basic instrument of political parties and the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns be re-adapted and encourage gender parity in the executive and legislative institutions.
7. INVITES: the General Secretariat of APU to study the ways and means for the institution of a Parliamentary Women Committee within the Union (WARDC, 2003). It is a different matter whether or not; the substance of this resolution has been practically and locally adopted in all polities within the African continent. The fact that it was made shows that issue of women's political relevance has attracted the attention of relevant international organs within the continent. This, in itself appears to be the right step in the right direction which must be purposively followed.

Conclusion

The issue of women in politics in the context of its myth and reality has been examined in this paper. In the process, the concept of politics was analyzed. Various issues, factors which culminated into major obstacles and challenges inhibiting women's role in politics were highlighted as well as what the women have to do through the empowerment process to continuously challenge such obstacles.

The study argued and premised the fact that, the role or place of women in today's Nigerian politics is a reality and not a myth. This was statistically supported with empirical facts (Tables 1 to 16). In addition, political

exploits of women in Nigeria, Africa and across the world were highlighted.

Even though, the place of women in Nigerian politics from pre-colonial, and immediate post-colonial periods to date appears to be that of non-real relevance, in spite of the various political movements they embarked upon, the study contended that the Nigerian women have made giant strides and progress in their quest for political relevance and reality. Along this line, we argued that the Nigerian women have achieved more political relevance during this fourth Republic and Administration than the previous ones. Though, this does not suggest that our women have crossed the Rubicon of political ostracism and/or, reached the promised land of political relevance and dominance, it however, suggests that our women have gained increased relevance in terms of the reality of their political involvement, actions, participation and, eventual emancipation within the Nigerian body politic thus, deactivating the mythology of their political role in the political landscape.

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