The Nexus of Gender and Political Participation: An Appraisal of Factors Militating Against Women in Politics in Benin Metropolis, Nigeria

Boris Happy ODALONU

Department of Political Science, Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria

Abstract: - **Patriarchalism culture and gender discrimination in Nigeria political structure has given concession to under-representation and indolent participation of women in politics. This paper examined the factors militating against women in politics in Benin metropolis. Using cultural lag theory, survey design was adopted and data were collected through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods. Specifically, an 18-item Likert scale questionnaire was used to elicit responses from 450 respondents while 10 in-depth interviews were conducted. Data collected through questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages and mean) while qualitative data were content analyzed. The findings revealed that majority of women were not active in politics. Financial resources, socio-cultural inhibitions, family responsibilities, child bearing, lack of family support and lack of enabling opportunities were the major factors reported by women militating against their participation in politics. Few women who hold political key positions affirmed that their participation in politics brought positive impact in their communities. This paper submits that the prospects of Nigerian women in politics are optimistic if some of these factors highlighted above can be addressed. Women should be empowered in their political participation pursuits to enhance their contribution to viable political development in Nigeria, especially at the grassroots' communities.**

Key words: **Discrimination, gender inequality, political participation, women, Nigeria**

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country and they are known to play vital roles at the individual, family and community levels. These roles include being a mother, producer, time manager, empowerment builder, community organizer, social and political activist. But despite their major roles they partake and their significant contribution of their population, women have not been given recognition, especially in political participation activities. Hence, they are being discriminated against owing to patriarchal structure of the African and Nigerian societies inclusive. Other factors responsible for discrimination against women include cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, traditional practices, high level of illiteracy, low participation in labour force, early marriage and lack of empowerment.

Over the years, Nigerian women have therefore become target of conflict, violence and stigmatization of diverse forms, based on their positions in promoting transformative politics. Nigerian society is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and values of societies irrespective of the ethnic groups or geo-political zone stratification of the country. Thus, men are seen as the 'locus of cultural values' and male-controlled society where the characteristics of patriarchal societal culture points to male gender as the most powerful members of the society. Some areas of activities such as agricultural export of cash crops and political arena are always seen as exclusively or predominantly male; therefore overwhelmingly and morally important (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974).

As a consequence of that, women faced various forms of gender discrimination, inequality, stigmatization and exclusion, especially in the area of politics. These various forms of discrimination against women are a multiple consequence of system of beliefs, cultural values and norms. These societal beliefs, as well as ethnic, religious doctrines and cultural norms have relegated women to remain idle at the subsistence and family level. Sex role and socialization had assisted in assigning distinct and often unequal work and political positions to biological sexes; turning women into socially distinct gender which is central to the Nigerian political system where sexes are assigned to different complementary tasks in the political scene.

Besides, debates over the participation or desire of women in Nigerian politics have raised arguments that women are being seen as weaker sexes. These are socially constructed owing to social value, norms and beliefs, which have neglected their meaningful contributions and have placed them in a subordinated position to men in the nation's political system. Political participation is good for democracy, but all democracies are plagued by systematic inequalities in participation (Lijphart, 1997; Galston, 2001). One of the most persistent has been according to gender, such that women are found to participate less than men, and suggesting that half the population's interests are less well represented (Andersen, 1975; Schlozman et al. 1994).

Statement of the Problem

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. Achieving the goal of equal participation of

women in decision-making will provide a balance and it will promote the proper functioning of democracy. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account.

Democracy entails conferring responsibilities on a few on behalf of the general community or at least the majority to represent their interests (Afolabi, 2009). In order to ensure this in the true sense of it, there should be proportionality of the two genders in the representative body. However, as it stands in the case of Nigeria, one gender (men) dominate, thus relegating the other (women) to the background, thereby defeats the main idea of a representative democracy (Afolabi, 2009). In spite of the international declarations affirming the rights and equality between men and women of which Nigeria is a signatory, available literature shows that women still constitute a disproportionately small percentage of those participating in political decision-making and leadership (Bello, 2013).

Despite the fact that women constitute about 49% of the country's population, their participation and representation in the governing process of the country remain in the shadows. However, of recent, especially the administration of late president Yar 'Adua (2007-2010) and President Goodluck Jonathan (2010 -2015), there has been a slight remarkable increase in women participation in politics. This was measured with certain standards like the number of women who vote in elections, the number of appointive or elective positions held by women, number of women related policies implemented by government, and so on (Ugwuegede, 2014). Yet, there is observed extensive discrimination against women and under- representation of them in politics and governance in Nigeria when compared with their male counterparts in actual practice. Thus, the representation of women in politics and decision making in Nigeria is still far below the global benchmark of 35% affirmative action (Bello, 2013; Fayomi, 2014; Ugwuegede, 2014; Okafor and Akokuwebe, 2015). It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the factors militating against women participation in politics in Edo State metropolis of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this research were to:

1. Examine the factors militating against women participation in politics in Benin City metropolis of Edo state.
2. Identify the level of women involvement in politics in Benin metropolis.
3. Evaluate the impact of women participation in politics in Benin metropolis.

II. BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nexus of Gender and Political Participation in Nigeria

Gender is a concept that has affected interest globally across different endeavors especially women participation in politics. This is because politics is a major pillar that upholds any society as an act of governance. However, there are several issues that border on gender disparity in Nigeria's political process.

Gender inequity is a global debate from time immemorial and the issue of gender inequality cuts across all facets of life. Political parties are among the most important institutions affecting women's political participation. In most middle and low-income countries, parties determine which candidates are nominated, voted for, elected and which issues achieve national prominence. The role of women in political parties is therefore a key determinant of their prospects for political empowerment, particularly at the national level. Because political parties are so influential in shaping women's political prospects, governments and international organizations seeking to advance the participation of women in elections justifiably tend to focus on the role of political parties.

Gender equality in political participation is a fundamental aspect of modern democratic governance. Under international standards, both men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to everything worldwide most especially to participate fully in all aspects and at all levels of political processes. In practice, however, it is often more challenging for women to access and exercise these rights. Existing studies on Nigeria's national development are relatively silent on the contributions of women. However, the International Women's year (1975 till date) is a period that evolves ideas about the status of women in every spheres of life (Ogunseye, 1988). In Nigeria, awareness about the role of women in development gained momentum in the latter half of the 1980s (Omu and Makinwa, 1987). This was further enhanced in 1995, as a result of the effective participation of Nigerian women in the International Conference on Women in Beijing, China. In spite of these efforts, it is appropriated to state that the role of Nigerian women right from pre-colonial till date in development has not been sufficiently emphasized.

It is important to note that Nigerian women have tremendously contributed in large dimension to the growth and development in all spheres. Nigerian women have encountered a number of problems while venturing into politics. This is as a result of large-scale marginalization both in voting exercises and in allocation of political offices. Political conflict, violence and the social stigma that politics is a 'dirty game' is one of the big obstacles for women to enter into politics and these are the major causes for low representation of women in Nigeria politics (Behrendt-Kigozi, 2012). However, political participation extends beyond parties. Women can also become involved in certain aspects of the electoral process through independent action- particularly at the local level- and by joining civil society organizations. Some women in post-conflict countries have gained political experience by participating in non-elected

transitional assemblies. Women's networks, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and the media also have provided avenues for women's political participation (Kiev, 2011).

Historical Demography of Women's Participation in Nigerian Politics

During the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women contributed to the sustenance of the kin groups. Apart from being mothers and wives and taking charge of the domestic sector, women contributed substantially to the production and distribution of goods and services. In southeast of Nigeria, women also took part in the production of palm oil and palm-kernel. They also participated in local and long-distance trade in different parts of Nigeria. Women were fully involved in the procurement and sales of various food items and related commodities. Women in pre-colonial Nigeria were fully involved in food processing, for instance, fish drying and garri processing especially in the coastal areas of Calabar, Oron and the Niger Delta region. In southeast of Nigeria, the women of Okposo, Uburu and Yala were very active in salt production (Effah, 2002).

Women engaged in pottery making especially in Afikpo in present day Abia State, and in weaving. In Northern part of Nigeria, even the women in purdah were involved in food processing and also traded with the aid of their children. Most often, these women supplied the means of sustenance for entire households (Effah, 2002). In addition, pre-colonial Nigerian women provided healthcare and spiritual services, extensively. Most traditional religions feature immortal females as goddesses and most goddesses in Nigeria were portrayed as river goddesses, fertility goddesses and earth goddesses. In the Niger Delta area, women provided music, songs and dances required during religious activities. Women also officiated as priestesses, diviners, healers, traditional birth attendants, and often times as custodians of sanctuaries for gods and goddesses.

The legal status of Nigerian women in pre-colonial times needs highlighting. Under the pre-colonial customary laws in most Nigerian societies, women were considered. At the same time, certain limitations were imposed which subordinated them to male authority. Women had independent access to income. Since land was usually owned communally, whoever worked or tilled the land, whether male or female, derived the benefits. Nevertheless, women in many societies could not inherit land. More so, education in pre-colonial times was functional. It enabled women to obtain a skill in order to earn a living. As cited by Kolawole, Abubakar and Owonibi (2012), Ogunseye (1988) and Aliyu (1992) observed that "a woman who was without a craft or trade", or who was totally dependent on her husband, was not only rare, but was regarded with contempt. As regards politics, women in pre-colonial Nigeria were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. Most often, they carried out separate functions from the men and these functions were fully complementary.

In pre-colonial Bornu, for instance, women played active parts in the administration of the state. They held very important offices in the royal family, including the offices of the Megira (the Queen mother) and the Gumsu (the first wife of the Mai or King) (Ola, 1978). Also, women played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century, by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi. The people of Kano and Kastina paid tributes to her. She turned Zaria into a very prominent commercial centre. The story was not different in ancient Yoruba land. The Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as female traditional chiefs. They consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwel of Ossomari in the pre-colonial history of Nigeria cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed tremendous bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State (Omu and Makinwa, 1976).

Historical Account of Exclusion of Women from Nigeria Politics

The colonial economy was an export-oriented one and it seriously undermined the prestige of the traditional occupations of Nigerian women. While it placed women at a great disadvantage, it enhanced the economic status of the British, Lebanese, Syrian and a few male Nigerian merchants.

Hitherto, many of the smaller markets dominated by women were gradually disintegrated as a result of the emergence of expatriate firms such as John Holt, United African Company (UAC) and Lever Brothers. Women were denied access to medium and large-scaleloans, which were vital in operating at the bulk purchase level of the colonial economy. As cited by Kolawole, Abubakar and Owonibi (2012), Curtin (1964) indicated that, in agriculture cash crop incentives, exports, technology and innovations were restricted to men. Colonial policies and statutes were clearly gender biased especially against women. That is, the colonial masters strongly believe exploitation exercise in Africa was not women affair; it was purely men's work. This explains why women were not part of the imperialists that exploit Africa. They believe that women are inferior to the men in a variety of attributes that will expedite action of exploitation.

During the colonial period, education was functional. The curricula emphasized religious instruction and clerical skills for boys and domestic science for girls. Technological and scientific based education was not encouraged. The

curricula for girls enabled them to become good housewives, rather than income earners. As regards politics, colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise and very few of them were offered any political or administrative appointments. It was only during the 1950s that three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs.) Ransome-Kuti (Western Nigeria House of Chiefs), Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo (Eastern Nigeria House of Chief) and Chief (Mrs.) Janet Mokelu (Eastern Nigeria House of Chief). Notedly, women in southern Nigeria were given the franchise in the 1950s. The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance (Adeyemi and Adeyemi, 2003). In the fourth republic, which started on May 29, 1999, the Nigerian political terrain has witnessed slight increase in the number of women political appointees, even though women were not given the opportunities to perform well at the elections.

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles in various aspects of the nation's development, and assumed a more critical role in traditional agriculture. Particularly, as a result of the large-scale exodus of able bodied men to wage labour, Nigerian women took over an increasing portion of the burden of food production, contributing between 50% and 70% of Nigeria's food requirements (Effah, 2002). From the foregoing, it is evident that only very few Nigerian women have participated and emerged in Nigeria's political landscape, in spite of the pioneering efforts of women like Funmilayo Ransome-kuti and Margaret Ekpo since the 1950s. Today, the number of women in managerial positions in any organization is still nearly insignificant; in Africa at large, this is the case although, using Nigeria as a reference point. It is worthy of note that women and party politics in Africa is not different from what we have seen in Nigeria. Therefore, Nigeria is a practical example of developing nations where women's active role in the political sector is not acknowledged.

Factors Militating against Nigerian Women in Politics

In Nigeria, marginalization mostly during party nominations is one of the major factors militating against women in politics (Ako-Nai, 2005; Muhammed, 2006; Okoosi-Simbine, 2006). A study by Olasupo (2006) revealed that Nigerian women are marginalized at all tiers of government and a broad understanding of power relations by women, men and youths. The general notion of political stakeholders is that women should settle for subsidiary roles whereas women believe that they should be given equal chances as men. One of the major reasons for women low participation in politics and voting is dissatisfaction with men in power and not representing women's interests or the strategic needs of women (Olasupo, 2006).

As cited by Kolawole, Abubakar and Owonibi (2012), Afolabi (2006) revealed that traditional beliefs in pre-colonial society was characterized by a clear gender division of responsibilities as well as a strong sense of hierarchy, in which social superiors (men) enjoyed respect and obedience from subordinates (women) and this allows men to be in control of allocation of resources. In Nigeria, family system is patriarchal in nature where men are major decision makers in their household. Women in some Nigerian ethnic group societies have no access to property or inheritance rights while in some instances, women are subjected to cruelty as a result of asking for their portion of inheritance rights or property. Social ranking of women depend on age, lineage and achievement and women outside the social ranks are seen to be subordinates. They are generally not expected to participate in community discussions, as they are not seen as potential source of leadership.

Traditionally, women depend on men for decision-making, which result to women not having confidence in them and are not allowed to partake in decision making at home. Ancient and modern historical evidences support the idea of male domination over their female folks in many spheres of human endeavor in many societies of Africa including Nigeria. The subjugation of women to men's domination covers a wide range of issues, including the family, globalization, human rights, culture, race, reproduction, human trafficking and sexuality. Throughout ages, virtually in all cultures, women were rarely considered equal to their male counterparts. African societies, including Nigeria are equally replete with several cultural practices, which tend to promote male superiority over the female gender. Studies (Aina, 2012; Soetan, 2014; Agbalajobi, 2010) have unveiled the travail of the female gender humiliation, manipulation and marginalization through a number of culturally biased norms and practices. This has culminated into systematic institutionalization of male superiority over the female in all spheres of life – socio-culturally, economically and politically.

Political violence is another factor that reduces women participation in politics in this society. This is as a result of men participation in politics often leads to their involvement of thugs before, during and after elections, conflicts, violence that leads to destruction of lives and properties, midnight meetings and large cash flow for corrupt electoral practices. All these makes women feel uncomfortable in participating in political activities. Another barrier for women low participation in politics is money. In Nigeria, politics is pigeonholed with money with exorbitant nomination fee. This is often done to create gender bias owing to the fact that a lot of women will not be able to afford the nomination fee for the position of their interest. Another factor is the seclusion of women from the sight of men as a result of religious practice of Islam where women are kept in purdah. This has worked to the detriment of women's physical and psycho-social development. Other issues militating against women in politics include Nigeria's democratic culture, which is often characterized by assassinations, lawlessness, illegalities, rigging, oppression, manipulation, marginalization and violence. Others include male dominated

party executives, labeling, money politics and innumerable social, cultural and religious factors. These above mentioned factors constitute barriers to women aspiring and contesting for elective positions in Nigeria.

Ogburn's Theory of Cultural Lag

The concept of cultural lag was first developed by Williams F. Ogburn (1922). Ogburn noticed that material culture tends to develop and advance at a faster rate than non-material culture. Material culture is the physical and tangible aspects of culture including technology, buildings, and tools. Non-material culture is the aspect of culture that is not physical, nor is it tangible; rather, it includes cultural values, morals, and religion. Culture is a major factor that hinders women's participation in politics. Cultural impediments to women's economic emancipation have also denied them political positions, which make them lag behind in gender representation in political participation. This has created more and wider direct impact on the population of women than those of men in contemporary societies.

Cultural and social values has impacts on political development and when women are not embedded in those values, such a nations lag behind in economic and political development. These factors are prone to be obstacles towomen's participation in political life. However, in practice, womenlag behind in almost all public spheres of life. They lagged behind in political participation and decision-making, and also in economic empowerment. A consequence of the motherhood role is that the responsibility for childcare is seen to be the major roles for women. Thus, cultural norms are hostile to women's participation in politics.Cultural lag occurs when changes in material culture occur before or at a faster rate than the changes in non-material culture. In other words, cultural lag is when technological change, or something similar like tools, develops faster than society can process those changes (Ogburn, 2009).

However, gender is a social tool liable for distribution of roles based on femininity and masculinity. Distribution of gender roles is reinforced through socialization, which in quintessence gives an individual his/her identity in the social structures. Sex and gender are not the same since sex is the biological difference between male and female and gender entails roles constructed through different socialization of males and females (Kivoi, 2014). Gender roles keep changing and evolving with time, as a result gender roles have tendency to favor men. This is as a result of patriarchal and stereotypical nature of many African societies. Political participation and representation in Nigeria has always taken a sexist perspective where women only participate as voters (Awe, 1995). This feature of social structure is an indicator to a gender hierarchy of marginalization. Hence, patriarchy explains that the male gender is in total control of all means of production and decision making in the family and community level.

Stereotype traditional beliefs on women leadership can be traced to cultural factors, which are culturally and socially constructed. While male gender roles tend to be more empowering and domineering, female gender roles seem to be less empowering and submissive in nature. This submissiveness in gender roles and societal expectations of female folks hinder women's participation in politics. Thus, cultural practices and perceptions in Nigeria represent major obstacles to women's participation in political governance and decision making (Anigwe, 2014; Ekpe, Eja and Egbe, 2014). Practices such as early marriages impede women's empowerment and affirmative action in particular. Such practices, limit women's chances to advance their education and career, which may open doors for wider political participation of women. Communal stereotypes and long held traditional obsolete beliefs have for long regarded women as suitable for only domestic chores whereas, politics is a domain for men only.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for the study was collected through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Independent variables were built around factors that militate against women's participation in politics. Respondents were identified with pseudonyms in line with ethical requirements for ethnographic studies. Fieldwork began with the qualitative aspect of the research, which provided important insights for the investigation of the study area. For most studies employing triangulation, qualitative data are immensely significant and must precede the survey method in order to facilitate the design of the questionnaire. By setting out to investigate the factors, which militate against women's participation in politics in Edo metropolis, the present study relied primarily on exploratory data as a starting point for quantitative research (Isuigo-Abanihe and Obono, 2000). Specifically, qualitative data for the present analysis was elicited through in-depth interviews.

For the quantitative data, a cross-section of Edo metropolis women, ages 20-51 and above, were selected as respondents using a multi-stage sampling technique. In all, 480 questionnaires were administered, out of which 463 were finally returned for analysis. Only 450 questionnaires were useful, however, representing a return rate of 94.5 percent. Sampling, the process of selecting a number of individuals to represent a larger group, began with obtaining a complete list of enumeration areas (EAs) in Edo metropolis (demarcated for the 2006 census). An EA is a compact area carved out of a locality with well-defined and identifiable boundaries. The study population was selected from three local government areas – Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba Okha within Benin metropolis involving the use of systematic approach, in the selection of households from the EAs across the samples local government areas for this present study.

Quantitative data was edited and cleaned to eliminate inconsistencies, which could undermine the validity of the

data. The data generated from pre-coded, open-coded and fixed choice questions were entered, using Microsoft Access software in order to minimize data entry error and to ensure better data management. Data was finally exported and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. A descriptive analysis of data was undertaken using univariate frequency distributions, simple percentage and mean. In addition, qualitative data was analysed using a manual content analysis. The procedure began with the transcription and translation of the tape recordings of both the in-depth interviews, then the examination and later, isolation of various responses that were relevant to study objectives. Using this method, data from the in-depth interviews was imported into the analysis on the merit of their applicability.

IV. FINDINGS

Table 1 contains four items on demographic characteristics of the respondents. The age bracket shows that 91 (20%) of the respondents are below 20 years, 135 (30%) are within 21-30 years, 112 (25%) are within 31-40 years, 66 (15%) are within 41-50 years while 46 (10%) are 51 years and above. This indicated that the highest age bracket of the respondents is within 21-30 years.

Table 1.Percentage distribution of respondents by selected socio-demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	%
Age	> 20	91	20
	21 – 30	135	30
	31 – 40	112	25
	41 – 50	66	15
	51 and above	46	10
Total		450	100
	Single	133	30
	Married	271	60

Marital Status	Separated/Divorced	31	7
	Widow/ Widower	15	3
Total		450	100
Educational Level	Primary Education	66	15
	Secondary Education	125	28
	Tertiary Education	259	57
Total		450	100
Occupational Status	Traders	50	11
	Farmers	41	9
	Private Sector Workers	86	19
	Civil/Public Servant	153	34
	Unemployed	32	7
	Students	88	20
Total		450	100

Source: Field Work 2016

The marital status of the respondents show that 133 (30%) of the respondents are single, 271 (60%) are married, 31 (7%) are either separated or divorced, while 15 (3%) are either widow or widower. This implies that majority of the respondents are married. Educational level of the respondents shows that 66 (15%) had only primary education, 125 (28%) had secondary education while 259 (57%) had tertiary education. This shows that the most of the respondents had tertiary education. Occupational status of the respondents shows that 50 (11%) are traders, 41 (9%) are farmers, 86 (19%) are private sector workers, 153 (34%) are either civil or public servants, 32 (7%) are unemployed while 88 (20%) are students in tertiary institution. This finding indicates that the majority of the respondents are either civil or public servants.

Table 2: Factors Militating against Women's Participation in Politics

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
1	Women abstain from politics because they do not have enough resources to enable them participate effectively in politics in Nigeria	210 (840) 47%	160 (480) 35%	58 (116) 13%	22 (22) 5%	3.24	Agree
2	Lack of finance is major constrain militating against women participation in politics in Nigeria	270 (1080) 60%	131 (393) 29%	30 (60) 7%	19 (19) 4%	3.44	Agree
3	Cultural and religion beliefs deprive women from active participation in politics in Nigeria	195 (780) 43%	186 (558) 41%	40 (80) 10%	29 (29) 6%	3.21	Agree
4	Family responsibilities and child bearing hinder women from participating effectively in political activities.	180 (720) 40%	139 (417) 31%	99 (198) 22%	32 (32) 7%	3.03	Agree
5	Women are not given equal opportunity like the men to participate actively in politics in Nigeria	162 (648) 36%	118 (354) 26%	121 (242) 27%	49 (49) 11%	2.87	Agree
6	Lack of family support is a critical challenge to women active participation in politics in Nigeria.	114 (456) 26%	181 (543) 40%	55 (110) 12%	100 (100) 22%	2.68	Agree

Source: Fieldwork, 2016.

Table 2 reveals that all the items have mean rating above 2.50. This shows that the major factors militating against women in active participation in politics in Nigeria include: lack of finance, cultural and religion hurdles, family responsibilities and child bearing, lack of enabling opportunity and lack of family support. These results conformed to the findings from the interviewee. According to one of the interviewee:

> "There are various reasons for low participation of women in politics. First, to play politics, money is needed. This is the major obstacle for most women, who would have loved to play politics. This is because women lack the financial resources to pay for registration and nomination fees, contribute money for campaign funds other sundry activities that require money to scale through. In fact, women are generally poor in Nigeria and thus do not have the financial strength to pursue their political ambitions. For me, I will rather spend my hard earned money on the betterment of my children than to waste it in politics" (IDI, Woman, 21-30 years, Oredor LGA)

This also conform to the studies carried out by Jegede (1994); Agbalajobi (2010); Nelson (2012) which attributed financial constraints as the major hurdles to women's political participation in Nigeria. About 90% of women in Nigeria, according to Ngara and Ayabam (2013) currently live below poverty line. Compared to men, women have less access to crucial resources such as information, education, skill, training, health (especially reproductive health and family planning), cash income, and credit, all of which are necessary for survival within the prevalent stifling economic depression in Nigeria (Jegede, 1994).Another extract from one of the interviewees' state as follow:

> "I would say that women are not active in politics because of the cultural stereotyped role of women in the society. Women are involved in childbearing and taking care of the children and the home. Hence, women would not have the full time to venture into politics. Secondly, due to the nature of politics in Nigeria, my husband would not allow me to go into that. In addition, some men would not allow their wives to go into politics because they had the notion that it would expose them to all sorts of immoral behaviours. So if you are married to such husband that is not supportive in terms of active involvement in politics, what would you do in that situation?"(IDI, Woman, 31-40 years, Egor LGA)

Table 3 reveals that items 1 and 2 indicate mean ratings below 2.50. This implies that majority of women in Edo state are not actively involved in political activities. The table also revealed that items 3 and 4 have mean ratings above 2.50.

Table 3: The Level of Women Involvement in Politics

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
1	Majority of women in Edo State are involved in political activities.	75 (300) 17%	99 (297) 22%	192 (384) 43%	84 (84) 18%	2.36	Disagree
2	I participate in politics by attending party meetings, campaigning in election and vying for elective positions, etc.	61 (244) 14%	72 (216) 16%	227 (454) 50%	90 (90) 20%	2.23	Disagree
3	I participate in politics by only voting in elections.	118 (472) 26%	166 (498) 38%	101 (202) 22%	65 (65) 14%	2.74	Agree
4	I don't participate in politics because my vote does not count in elections	128 (512) 28%	157 (471) 35%	75 (150) 17%	92 (92) 20%	2.72	Agree

Source: Fieldwork, 2016.

This indicates that most of the women who participate in politics only vote in elections while others believed that their votes does not count, thus they neither vote in elections nor participate in other political activities. This finding also corroborate with the interview question: what is the extent of women involvement in politics in Edo State? In response to the question, an extract from interviewee state:

> "I don't really know the extent of women involvement in politics in Edo State. However if I should quantify the level of women in elective and appointive positions in comparison to men in Edo State, I would

say 3%. For instance in Edo State House of Assembly, out of 24 members, only one is a woman. The chairmen and vice chairmen of 18 Local Government Areas of Edo State are all men. In terms of appointive positions, there are 18 Commissioners in which only two are women. For me I only vote in elections. I am not a member of any political party because most of political parties in Nigeria prefer men to women in contesting for party and political offices"(IDI, woman, 41-50 years Ikpoba)

Table 4 reveals that item two mean ratings is below 2.50. This implies that the increase in the education of women has not advanced the level of women's participation in politics in Nigeria. The table also revealed that items 1, 3 and 4 have mean ratings above 2.50.

Table 4: The Impact of Women Involvement in Politics

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
1	Women in politics have brought development to their various communities	150(600) 33%	124(372) 28%	100(200) 22%	76(76) 17%	2.77	Agree
2	Increased women education has led to their participation in politics	112(448) 25%	95(285) 21%	44(88) 10%	199(199) 44%	2.26	Disagree
3	Women in elective or appointment political positions have contributedimmensely to democratic consolidation	132(528) 29%	178(534) 40%	90(180) 20%	50(50) 11%	2.87	Agree
4	Empowerment of women would create room for their active participation in politics	235(940) 52%	121(363) 27%	64(128) 14%	30(30) 7%	3.24	Agree

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

This shows that women who were actively involved in politics have contributed meaningfully to the growth and development of democracy in Nigeria and that they need to be continuously empowered for them to remain active and relevant in Nigerian political scene. This is also in line with interview question: How would you assess the performance of women in elective and appointive positions in Nigerian political arena? In response to the question, an extract from interviewee state:

> "For me, they have performed well. Although they were few women who abused their offices like former Speaker of House of Representative, former Minister of Health, former Minister of Aviation and so on. Those who have performed credibly well include former Minister of Finance, Dr.Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, former Minister of Education, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, former Director General of NAFDAC, Late Prof. Dora Akunyili, former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Aloma Mariam Mukhtar, and so on"(IDI, Woman 51 years and Above, Okha LGA)

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study showed that the major factors militating against women in active participation in politics in Nigeria are lack of finance, cultural and religion hurdles, family responsibilities and child bearing, lack of enabling opportunity and lack of family support. This was revealed in table 2 on the factors militating against women in politics. The findings of this study are also in consonance with the works of Aluko and Ajani, (2008); Akiyode-Afolabi, (2008); Okeke (2015) that outlined the following factors as the major constraints to women participation in politics in Nigeria:

> "The volumes of money involved…most women are not proportionally empowered, to muster the kind of resources required to prosecute elections in Nigeria. Others are cultural barriers, the turbulent nature of the Nigerian political arena, lack of cohesion among women and women's perception of themselves in relation to men, labeling women as anti-party people and cultural deviants, deliberate political party techniques to eliminate female aspirants, high registration fees, security, financial constraints, male dominated executive, undemocratic party policies, electoral violence, ideology, portrayal of women in the mass media, antireligious doctrines, among other constraints" (Aluko and Ajani, 2008; Akiyode-Afolabi, 2008; Okeke, 2015)

As a result of the above constraints, the level of women involvement in politics particularly in the study area is low and most of them only participate in politics by voting in elections. While some of them have political apathy, that is they neither involve in politics to seek elective or appointive positions nor vote in elections because they had the impression that their votes does not count. This was revealed in table 3, items 1 and 2 with mean ratings below 2.50 and items 3 and 4 with mean ratings above 2.50. It should be noted that participation in politics involves much more than just voting. Political participation derives from the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government.

This study also revealed in table 4 that the increase in the education of women has not been in consonance with the level of women's participation in politics in Nigeria. Therefore, apart from acquiring education, women need to be empowered financially and otherwise for them to remain active and relevant in Nigerian political scene. The table also revealed in items 1, 3 and 4 with mean ratings above 2.50 that women who were actively involved in politics have

contributed meaningfully to the growth and development of democracy in Nigeria and that they need to be continuously empowered.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the factors affecting women participation in politics in Nigeria with special reference to Edo State. The result of this study shows that several factors inhibit women from active participation in politics in Nigeria. These factors include; financial constraints, poverty, socio-cultural and religious practices, lack of equal opportunities, women traditional role, nature of Nigerian politics, lack of women empowerment and so on. However, since the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, there has been an increase in women's political participation in both elective and appointive capacities compared to what it used to be.

For instance, during President Goodluck administration, the hopes of women in Nigerian politics were raised by his appointment of 33% women into ministerial, ambassadorial and key decision-making positions. In spite of these increases, women are still highly marginalized considering the disparity in the proportion of men to women in politics and leadership positions. As Olufade (2013) rightly notes, equitable participation of women in politics and government is essential to building and sustaining democracy; and democracy cannot truly deliver the expected dividends if women's under-representation continues.Thus, to enhance women participation in politics in Nigeria, based on the findings of this study, the following measures are hereby recommended:

1. Women should be given equal access to credit facilities and factors of production like land, capital and labour just like men to enhance their output and income generation.
2. Since poverty is a factor to women participation in the politics, economic empowerment could be a better way of enhancing women participation in politics.
3. Government, NGOs and other stakeholders should engage in programmes and policies that would empower women politically, socially and economically.
4. There should be the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions in the constitutions and manifestoes of parties. This will serve the purpose of mainstreaming gender into their activities (Okafor and Akokuwebe, 2015).
5. There should be equal representation of Nigerian men and women in governance to ensure that enacting laws of the land and making policies particularly those affecting gender issues will always remain equitable.
6. Family members (especially husbands of married women) should give women political aspirants the

relevant consent and support to venture into politics and governance.
7. There should be enabling constitutional amendment to ensure equitable appointive and elective positions in governance for meaningful national development.
8. Nigerian women should develop positive attitude to politics no matter the hurdles.

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