

## A Comparative Analysis of Women Candidatures and Outcomes in the 2011 and 2015 Nigeria General Elections

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### Abstract

*One noticeable development in the Nigeria's 2015 general elections is the differentials in the numbers and outcomes of women involvement as candidates in comparison to the 2011 elections. The percentage of women contesting for presidential position decline from 12.5% in 2011 to 7.1% in 2015. That of the gubernatorial election also witnessed a reduction from 10.2% in 2011 to 7.1% in 2015, while the percentage of women for deputy governorship positions was relatively stable with only an increase of 0.4%. However, there was a double increment in the contestations for Senatorial posts from 10.3% in 2011 to 22.2% in 2015. Also, the number of women candidacy into the House of Representative and State Houses of Assembly recorded an increase of 5.7% and 5.6% respectively. However, when it comes to actual successes at the polls, the outcomes were not encouraging. With the exemption of deputy governorship number that improved from 2.8% in 2011 to 13.8% in 2015, all others witnessed a sharp decline. While Presidential and Governorship numbers returned nil percentages, there were shortfalls of 1.8% and 2.5% of women elected into the Senate and the House of Representatives respectively. Given the presence of 35% affirmative action and incentives introduced by various parties, some questions arise: Why do the positive changes refused to come? What does this say about the Nigerian society?.....*

**Keywords:** *Women, 2015 elections, Changes, Differential outcomes and Nigeria*

### Introduction

Women's participation in politics cannot be overemphasized and is of strategic importance for women's empowerment. Aside this, it also has wider benefits and impacts particularly on the development of an economy. Recently, there has been political reawakening among women as to the need for full participation in the politics of their societies so as to be part of the decision or policy makers pertaining to issues affecting the society whose major effects (as a result of inappropriate decisions and policies) are bore by the women. In most societies of the world, women constitute virtually 50% of the population (Ekundayo and Beatrice, 2014). Moreover, Afolabi et al. (2003) indicated that "women constitute over half of the world's population, contributing in vital ways to societal 72 development". Women perform the roles of a mother, producer, home manager, community organizers and socio-cultural and political activist. Though the latter has not been fully actualized, however,

despite their obvious roles in the home and the society at large, women are marginalized and their voices are not heard. According to the recent report of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) 2013 analyzed a year record for women participation in parliaments worldwide. The percentage of parliamentary seats held by women globally rose to 21.8 percent, or an increase of 1.5 percentage points compared to the previous year (IPU, 2014). In Sub-Saharan Africa, between 1995 and 2013, there was an encouraging improvement of 13% in the percentage of women participation in parliament, rising from 9.5% to 22.5%. Despite this improvement, it is obvious that women have not been actively involved in decision making processes. (Annual Report of the Public Defender, 2013).

Globally and in Nigeria, there has been a wide gap between women and men participation as aspirants in election as women are poorly represented. Society beliefs that women are over-ambitious when they aim for any position of authority, thus women are not appreciated and do not receive full support and mentoring they need to compete with their male counter parts in politics, thus gender discrimination is rooted in culture rather than society. As a result, there is presently, a low representation of women at all levels of government in Nigeria.

Women should be represented at all levels of decision making in any political settings/country (locally, regionally and nationally) particularly places where crucial or vital decisions need to be taking as regards resources allocation that can bring about development in the society. Evidences have shown that there is superior human development outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness in countries where women are adequately represented at all levels of decision making (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2005; Clots-Figueras (2011); Miller, 2008). It has been argued that women when giving opportunity in decision making process tend to allocate resources in favour of education (particularly children education), social services and health, which is redistributive in nature whenever.

In Nigeria, as part of the key policy, the document of the national gender policy 2006 encouraged women participation in political and public life. In order to bridge the gap in political representation in both elective and appointive posts at all levels, the policy set a 35% affirmative action in favour of women in order to encourage women participation in politics and governance.

Over the years women's role in decision making processes have not been noticed due to the perceived believe that women are to be seen and not to be heard, their duties have been confined to the home as a caregiver to their children, husbands and the families at large. In the context of this study, it is observed that Nigerian women had been operating in a less liberal or democratic environment, the political climate of politics in Nigeria had not been encouraging women participation in the country's election, the fear of violent before, during (at election polls) and all sorts of slander, libel after a winner must have emerged. In Nigeria, Also, the few women in politics are seen in unpopular or unrecognized parties while others were politically unknown personalities. Women in political parties are mostly floor members, they are not present when crucial steps are to be taken at party level such that they are not selected as representative for primaries and elective position. The complacent nature of African women at any stage of life achievement and the strong will to ensure they are heard seems to limit their participation. All these factors, among others encourage a structure of inequality in the country, so the need for women participation in decision making process and public affairs informed this study. Therefore, given the 35% affirmative action in women's favour, this study intends to investigate on the involvement of women participation as aspirants in 2015 election in Nigeria, and also in comparison to other past general elections and also determine those factors responsible for the change (improvement/deterioration).

To achieve this, data was sourced through secondary sources from Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Others are from published texts, journals, newspapers, magazines, declassified information and the Internet via content analysis.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Feminism is seen as an organized movement which promotes equality for men and women in political, economic

and social spheres. This theory is one of the major contemporary sociological theories, which analyzes the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using that knowledge to better women's lives. It is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to society. Feminists believe that the dominant ideology of patriarchy due to sex type make women to be oppressed. Patriarchy is the system which oppresses women through its social, economic and political institutions. Freeing society of patriarchy will result in liberation for women. Throughout history men have had greater power in both the public and private spheres. To maintain this power, men have created boundaries and obstacles for women, thus making it harder for women to hold power or occupied the position of power. There is an unequal access to power between women and their men counterpart.

There are different types of feminism theory namely, liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, cultural and eco-feminism. Among these types, the most related is radical feminism. Radical feminists believe that society must be changed at its core in order to dissolve patriarchy, not just through acts of legislation. Radical feminists believe that the domination of women is the oldest and worst kind of oppression in the world. They believe this because it spans across the world oppressing women of different races, ethnicities, classes and cultures. Radical feminists want to free both men and women from the rigid gender roles that society has imposed upon them. It is this sex-gender system that has created oppression and radical feminist's mission is to overthrow this system by any possible means. Sometimes radical feminists believe that they must wage a war against men, patriarchy, and the gender system which confines them to rigid social roles. They completely reject these roles, all aspects of patriarchy, and in some cases, they reject men as well, (Mary daly). The radical feminist theory was applied to analyze the extent at which women in Nigeria are seen to be dominated and relegated in politics. And as to what extent patriarchy system of our society has made women to conform and to be complacent with their believed traditional roles as caregiver, food producer and sometimes provider.

## **Constitutional Provisions and Contemporary Status of Nigerian Women in Politics**

In June 1985, the Nigerian government approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), although efforts to operationalise its thirty articles locally have faltered. The country also adopted Beijing World Conference on Women held in 1995 which articulated critical areas of concern considered as main obstacles to women's advancement in the Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA) (Legislative Quotas for Women, 2012). The platform provides guidelines for actions on the part of governments at all levels, member of civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) towards eradicating the barriers to achieving gender equality worldwide. It is also a powerful presentation of the recognition of women's unequal status globally. The platform is to ensure women's full participation in places of authority and decision making; develop education and training to increase women's capacity to participate in decision making and leadership; and aim at gender balance in government bodies and the composition of delegations to the United Nations.

However, the implementation of these important global and regional declarations at local level has remained weak. Although these declarations was captured in the NGP, launched in 2007 which asserts 35 % affirmative action in favor of women. According to section 40 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution guaranteed the civic and political rights of women to participate in active politics. It is worthy of note that the constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex as indicated in chapter 5 section 77(2) of 1999 constitution which stipulates that "Every citizen in Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purpose of election to the legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election" (Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN), 1999). Even though it is clearly stated that the constitution prohibits discrimination but this is far from what is in existence. Women in Nigeria are politically backward and underrepresented at different arms of government. It is discovered that even many women register as party members but they do not regularly participate in party meetings and caucuses where

important political policies and decisions are taken. Also, female politicians vying for political offices in Nigeria, do so in relatively unknown and unpopular political parties. For example, in addition to the unpopularity of the parties, in 2003, only one of the three women Presidential contestants, Dr.(Mrs.) Sarah Jubril, was relatively heard of before the election, others were politically unknown personalities (Fatile, Akhakpe, Igbokwe-ibeto and Oteh, 2012).

It is also observed that Nigerian women seems to be operating in a less liberal or democratic environment, the political climate of politics in Nigeria had not been encouraging women participation in the country’s election, the fear of violent before, during (at election polls) and all sorts of slander, libel after a winner must have emerged. All these factors encourage a structure of inequality in the country, so the need for women participation in decision making process and public affairs informed this study. On the basis of this, the study aims at investigating the involvement of women participation as an aspirant in 2015 election, given the 35% affirmative action in favor of women. It also intends to compare and ascertain if there is improvement in the level of women’s participation in 2015 election over past elections in virtually all decision making levels of the government and to determine those factors responsible for improvement / deterioration in women political participation

### **The Comparison of Female Contestants in 2011 and 2015 General Election.**

In an attempt to compare the women contestant in 2011 and 2015 general election in Nigeria, table 1 below shows the analysis of male/female political contestants in Nigeria between 2011 and 2015. It was discovered that in 2011 and 2015 the number of contestants from 40 to 14 for presidential post and for governorship post the number of contestants also dropped from 719 to 380. Others witnessed a fall in the total number of contestants except for the post of deputy governorship that rose from 347 to 380 with a percentage increase of 10% for male and 6.9% for female contestants. For the senatorial, house of representative and state house of assembly posts the percentages of women participants increased for these posts while the male counterpart experienced a fall in percentages as shown in the table.

**Table 1: Gender Analysis of Contestants in the 2011 and 2015 General Elections**

S/N	Type of Election	No of Male			No of Female			Total No of Candidate	
		2011	2015	% increase	2011	2015	% increase	2011	2015
1.	<b>Presidential</b>	35	13	-62.9	5	1	-80.0	40	14
2.	<b>Governorship</b>	646	353	-45.4	73	27	-63.0	719	380
3.	<b>Deputy Governorship</b>	289	318	10.0	58	62	6.9	347	380
4.	<b>Senatorial</b>	805	435	-46	92	124	34.8	897	559
5.	<b>House of Representative</b>	2220	1517	-31.7	224	266	18.8	2444	1783
6.	<b>State House of Assembly</b>	5512	4534	-17.7	527	758	43.8	6039	5292
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9218</b>	<b>6852</b>	<b>-25.7</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>1176</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>10139</b>	<b>8028</b>

*Source: Author’s computation*

Relative to the total number of contestants for these years, the percentage of Presidential women contestants dropped from 12.5% in 2011 to 7.1% in 2015. That of the gubernatorial election also witnessed a reduction from 10.2% in 2011 to 7.1% in 2015, while the percentage of women for deputy governorship positions was

relatively stable with only an increase of 0.4%.

Here, there was only one female presidential contestant with 4 running as vice presidents making the total of 5. However, there was a double increment in the contestations for Senatorial posts from 10.3% in 2011 to 22.2% in 2015. Also, the number of women candidacy into the House of Representative and State Houses of Assembly recorded an increase of 5.7% and 5.6% respectively. However, when it comes to actual successes at the polls, the outcomes were not encouraging. With the exemption of deputy governorship slot that improved from 2.8% in 2011 to 13.8% in 2015, all others witnessed a sharp decline.

As it has always been from history, in 1999 to 2015 election, there was no elected female President and Vice-President, even though there were aspirants. In senatorial post the number of elected female increased from 4 to 9 in 2007 but dropped to 7 in 2011 and later to 6 in 2015 election.

**Source: Data compiled by Author from INEC, Research and Documentation department**

**Note: Percentage in parenthesis**

S/ N	Position Seat	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
		A	E	A	E	A	E	A	E	A	E
1.	Presidency	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
2.	Vice presidency	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
3.	senatorial	109	3	109	4	109	9	109	7	109	6
4.	House of representative	360	7	360	21	360	27	360	25	360	13
5.	governorship	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
6.	Deputy governorship	36		36		36		36	1	36	4
7.	State house of assembly	990	24	990	40	990	57	990	68	990	
8.	SHA Committee Chairpersons	829	18	881	32	887	52	887	-		
9.	LGA Chairpersons	710	13	774	15	740	27	740	-		
10.	Councillors	6368	69	6368	267	6368	235	6368	-		

These figures for 1999–2015 are indications of gradual improvement but a poor representation of about 75 million women in the country. More worrisome is the drop in the number of successful female candidates in 2011 elections. Also figures from the database of the Independent National Electoral Commission cited by Agbalajobi (2010) indicates that in 2003, states like Adamawa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Kano, Kastina, Kebbi, Nassarawa, Oyo, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara no woman was elected member of House of Assembly. In states where they managed to secure election, they were very few indeed.

### Female Participation in Election: Major Constraints

Women around the world and at every socio-political level are always under-represented in decision making process and sometimes totally removed. Factors responsible for this are those that are somehow beyond the women themselves, for example, the perceived patriarchy role of women in the society has curtailed and made women to be seen and not to be heard, whose duties are to produce food and majorly serve as care giver to the family. In every family in Nigeria, female children are not as celebrated as their male counter-part and they are

giving less attention in term of access to education, formal employment and as rightful owner of family property. The reproductive make-up of women may also constitute a barrier. In formal sector, women are constrained on when and how often they can be pregnant or ask for maternity leave as this is seen to be detrimental to the goals of the organization, nonetheless seeing a pregnant woman campaigning or holding an elective post, even if credibly won. Sometimes religious doctrines militate against active participation of women in politics and holding of position of authority, because as it is always said “men are the head of the home” and as such should head any position of authority. Inadequate knowledge of human right about written and unwritten rules guiding women rights, social participation and governance. The men dominating feature of Nigeria political arena; they are the ones that make political rules and dictate the tone of the game and mode of evaluation, this male dominated model and style seems to make women not to be interested (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010).

The cost of involving in politics in Nigeria and other part of the world is high and most women cannot afford the financial implication. Most of the few women in politics have a strong political affiliation either by virtue of their parents (e.g Iyabo Obasanjo Bello), spouses (Senator Oluremi Tinubu, Senator Fatimot Raji-Rasaki, Aishat Buka-Aba Ibrahim) or either close relatives political cleavage with some strong financial base can aspire or contest for election. Table 2 of this study, showing participants and elected gives credence to this fact. Thus, political participation seems to be opened only for a selected privileged few leaving majority with humble background from participating and contributing their quota in democratic governance. Women’s poor financial base contributes majorly to their marginalization in politics and governance in Nigeria.

## **Conclusion.**

Women representation in politics and governance around the world is a subject of concern because of the low percentage recorded. This is far from the assertion of gender equality postulated by the United Nations General Assembly and by extension the 35% affirmative action and incentive introduced by political parties in Nigeria, in favour of women. Though there is an improvement over previous elections especially 2011 election but women participation is still relatively low compared to men. This trend of low participation of women was clearly revealed in this comparative analysis of women candidature and eventual outcome of 2011 and 2015 general election in Nigeria. Women have to be encouraged, supported, motivated and, mobilized by all and sundry (government, private and public sector, NGO’s) so as to take their place in politics and governance. In addition to legislation for the abolition of all forms of harmful traditional practices and discrimination against women, the society needs to be sensitized on the importance of women in development with main focus on the four agents of socialization (family, religious organization, peer group and mass media). Nigerian women can furthered be encouraged by exempting them from all forms of payment. Equitable representation of women in all aspects of national life including party organs, e.g in employment.

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