



**The Roles of Education and Socio-economic factors on women political participation in
Chanchaga Local Government area of Niger State, Nigeria**

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Abstract

Women political participation has been a topic of discussion among scholars in several regions globally. It is against this background that the study investigates the roles of education and Socio-economic factors on women political participation in Chanchaga local government area of Niger State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive research survey design. A total of Ninety (90) respondents were sampled from total population of four hundred and seventy-eight (478) women politicians. Questionnaires were distributed as a means for data collection. Simple frequency count and percentage were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that educational qualifications do not have much hindrance to women political participation in the local government, and you don't need higher qualification to be an active politician. The study discovered that finance is one of the major stumbling blocks to women political contest in addition to political violence, cultural and religious barriers. Therefore, the study recommends that there should be equal opportunity in terms of political contest between men and women; by doing so, it will motivate the women political participation in the local government and the State at large. The government should make a law reserving certain political positions for women. Finally, the Political parties should wave or reduce registration fees for any woman contesting under its platform.

Keywords: Education, Socio-Economic factor, Political Participation, Culture.

Introduction

It is glaring that women participation in Nigerian politics is significantly low considering the fact that they constituted about 50% of Nigerian population. The low participation manifested since independence, but pronounced at the end of Military era, which marks the return of Democracy. Since the return of democracy in 1999, it has been observed that at the National Assembly, both the Senate and House of Representatives is dominated by males. For instance, in 1999 there were only 3 women out of the 109 members representing 2.8 per cent of the members of the Senate. The number increased to 8 in 2007, which represents 7.3 per cent. However, there was a decrease from 8 women members in 2007 to 7 in 2011 which is 6.4 per cent and 8 (7.3 per cent) in 2015. In 1999, the number of women in the House of representative was 12 out of 360 members which was about 3.3 per cent but increased to 21 (5.8 per cent) in 2003. It was 26 (7.2



per cent) in 2011, in 2015 the number of women in the House of representative decrease to 19 (5.3 per cent) out of 360 members. (Afolabi 2023).

In Niger State, the scenario is similar to what is happening at the federal level, since 1999, there were few representations of women at the State House of Assembly. For instance, from 1999 to 2003, there were only 7% of women at the State House of Assembly. For 2003 to 2007 the number reduced to only 1 woman in the Assembly as against 26 Men. The number increased to 3 representatives, which is 11% between 2011 to 2015. From 2015 to date, the number consistently remained 1 out of the 27 Members of the State Assembly. The low percentage of women in political positions such as Commissioners, Special Advisers, Special Assistance is nothing to write home about compared to the Men in the State.

Several factors had been identified to be responsible for the low involvement of women in politics in Niger State. One of such factors is their family responsibilities as wives and mothers in their matrimonial homes. According to Kalaivani (2019) Various roles of the women assume in the family are those of wife, leader, administrator, manager of family income and last but not the least important the mother.

The most common and popular definition of Democracy has been “Government of the People, by the People and for the People” there is no definition of Democracy that relegated or exempted Women from participating in politics. In addition, the Nigerian Constitution has clearly stated equal right on political participation for both Men and Women. Okolie (2014) perceives political participation as “freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision process and the right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise”. Political participation has been the key ingredients of democracy in any democratic setting.

In the same vein, DiLanzo (2014) Noted that women have the right to be voted for during an election, occupy government office through elections, engage in civil society, serve as boards Chair and Members, and make their voices heard in any process that will ultimately affect them, their families, and their communities. Kassa (2015) argue that greater participation of women in political parties and government would place specific interests of women on the political agenda, according to the author, several empirical evidence has shown that there are greater advantages of more women in political institutions. In countries with high percentages of women in political institutions, there is generally a substantial increase in equality bills and legislation on women’s issues, social policy, and on topics addressing new generations of human rights. Women politicians have also been shown to use different communication channels and different kinds of political networking. At the global level, it has been noted that women parliamentarians do indeed have an impact on the legislative process, particularly on legislation related to women’s issues, however “a dependency remains on a multiplicity of factors including the level of citizenship, democracy and democratization of society, governance structures, institutional roles and procedures, formative action and justice distribution, particularly resource distribution, and other structural and functional factors such as the role of media and gender role ideology, all of which come together to determine the performance of women parliamentarians.



The right for women to participate in politics has a significant impact in bridging the gap of Gender equality and can serve as a means of moving the society forward. Batha (2022) also remarked that; by investing in their right to political participation, the international community not only moves closer to achieving gender equality, but also to fulfilling several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets that depend upon it. While achieving gender equality and empowering women is the goal of SDG 5, the benefits from the inclusion of girls and women are cross-cutting, paving the way to more inclusive and egalitarian democracies, balanced economic growth, and enhanced peacebuilding capacities.

Afolabi (2023) comment that, political participation of women in Nigerian politics is an issue of great importance. Women are left behind and have been put at the background politically for years; this has engendered a consciousness of women under-representation in public life. He noted that women's political roles have contributed immensely to the shaping of the Nigerian politics not only in democratic governance; but also, during the pre-colonial era. So, it will be unthinkable to wash away the critical efforts of women in the making of Nigerian state while arrogating political powers to the male folk.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the roles of education and socio-economic factors on women political participation in Chanchaga local government area of Niger State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of educational qualification and socio-economic status of women regarding political participation in Chanchaga local government area of Niger State?
2. What are the strategies that can improve women political participation in the Local Governemnt?

Methodology

A survey design was used in the conduct of this study. The work entails collection of data through questionnaires from the respondents, and the questionnaire was designed in such a way that respondents understand the content of the questions.

Population and Sample

According to Creswell (2007), Population is the entire, comprehensive group of individuals, objects, or events that share common characteristics and are the focus of a study. It represents the total set of units from which a researcher wants to draw conclusions or make inferences. The population of the study comprises of active women politician from Chanchaga local government in Niger State, from the ruling party (APC), Sources from the political party revealed that there are about four hundred and seventy-eight (478) active women politicians in the local government. Simple random sampling techniques were adopted, and a sample of 90 respondents were randomly selected.



Instrument and Data Collection

Data for the study were collected through questionnaire. A total of 90 questionnaires were produced and personally distributed to the respondents through Research Assistants.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using frequency distribution and percentage. A 4-point likert scale was used, which contained "Strongly Agreed" "Agreed" "Disagreed" "Strongly Disagreed"

Findings and Discussion

This section focuses on the presentation of findings obtained from the questionnaire on the roles of educational qualification and socio-economic status of women regarding political participation in Chanchaga local government area of Niger State, Nigeria.

Table 1.1 Roles of Education in women political participation

Table with 2 columns: Statement and Frequency. It contains data for two statements: 'Educational qualifications are necessary for political participation' and 'Women with higher qualification are more active in politics', each with a breakdown of responses (Strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagreed, Strongly Disagreed) and a total frequency.



Strongly agreed 67%	60
Agreed 33%	30
Disagreed 0%	0
Strongly Disagreed 0%	0
Total 100%	90
Men dominate political positions because of their qualifications Percentage	Frequency
Strongly agreed 6%	5
Agreed 13%	12
Disagreed 59%	53
Strongly Disagreed 22%	20
Total 100%	90

Responses from table 1.1 indicate that more than half of the population disagreed with the assertion that you need to have educational qualifications before you participate in political activities in the community. Only 11% and 13% strongly agreed and agreed respectively. For being active in politics, 48% disagreed and 44% strongly disagreed that you don't need higher qualifications to be more active in politics. The numbers that go with strongly disagreed and disagreed are insignificant, with just 2% and 6% as indicated in the table. With SSCE one can be elected to many political positions in the State were the major responses from the respondents in the study. 67% strongly agreed that you can be elected to a political position without higher qualifications, 33% agreed with the same assertion, none of the respondents disputed with that. Overwhelming majority disagreed that Men dominate political positions because of their qualifications, 59% disagreed and 22% strongly disagreed. Few from the respondents 13% agreed that men dominate political positions because of their qualifications, while 6% are in line with them.

Table 1.2 Roles of Socio-economic status in women political participation

Gender inequality impedes politics and women participation in Nigeria Percentage	Frequency	
Strongly agreed	45	50%
Agreed	28	31%



Disagreed	12	13%
Strongly Disagreed	5	6%
Total	90	
100%		
Cultural and religion barrier affect women political participation	Frequency	
Percentage		
Strongly agreed	45	50%
Agreed	40	44%
Disagreed	5	6%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Total	90	
Political violence has effect on women political participation	Frequency	
Percentage		
Strongly agreed	40	44%
Agreed	25	28%
Disagreed	15	17%
Strongly Disagreed	10	11%
Total	90	
100%		
Lack of finance affects women participation in Niger state	Frequency	
Percentage		
Strongly agreed	53	59%
Agreed	37	41%
Disagreed	0	0%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Total	90	100%

Looking at the socio-economic status regarding women participation in politics, few questions were asked, and the responses are presented at the table above. When asked on the effects of gender inequality in relation to women political participation, 50% strongly agreed and 31% agreed that gender inequality exist and is becoming a stumbling block to women success in political participation, while only 5% disagreed. Culture and religion are playing an important role in restricting women to participate in politics. 50% strongly agreed and 44% agreed on the effect of culture and religion as a barrier to their political participation. Only 6% have different opinions with the overwhelming majority. On the effect of political violence, 44% strongly agreed, while 28% agreed that it has effects on women political participation, only 17% and 11% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Money has a very vital role in political participation. 59% strongly agreed that lack of money has effect on women political participation in the state, 41% agreed on the same effect. None of the respondent go contrary to the facts on effect of finances on women political participation.

Table 1.3 Strategies to improve women political participation

Sponsor more women in political contest	Frequency	
Percentage		
Strongly agreed	36	40%
Agreed	54	60%
Disagreed	0	0%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Total		
Reserve some political positions for women	Frequency	
Percentage		
Strongly agreed	53	59%
Agreed	37	41%
Disagreed	0	0%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Total		
Ensure fair treatment on women politician	Frequency	
Percentage		
Strongly agreed	35	39%
Agreed	55	61%
Disagreed	0	0%
Strongly Disagreed	0	0%
Total		

Above table presented the respondents views on the strategies that can improve women political participation in Niger State. When asked if sponsoring more women to contest for political positions will help improve their participation, 40% strongly agreed that it will improve, while 60% agreed that sponsoring more women will go a long way on women political participation. None of the respondents had disagreed or contrary opinion on the sponsoring of women to contest political position. To reserve political position for women in the State, 59% strongly agreed that having some positions meant for women will improve their political participation, 41% agreed with the same assertion, 0% disagreed. The treatment for women in politics is usually an issue, 39% strongly agreed that there should be fair treatment between them and their male counterpart, just as with the other two items on the table, none of the respondents disagreed.

Discussion.

It is glaring on the first responses in table 1.1 that educational qualification is not too necessary for women political participation, majority of the responses received indicated that you don't need to have an educational qualification before you participate in politics, even those with lower educational qualification and those without qualification are actively participating in politics, this findings is in line with the findings of Amal (2023) that you don't need high



educational qualification to participate in politics. Looking at table 1.1 entirely, it indicates that educational qualification has no effect on women political participation, hence, majority of their responses indicates that you don't need higher qualification to be an active politician, even those without qualification can be active. All the respondents agreed that with your SSCE you can be elected to many political positions and the dominance of Men in politics is NOT as a result of their qualification.

Table 1.2 is on socio-economic status of women in political participation. Gender inequality is among the factors hindering women political participation, the society tend to see women as inferior and as such there was no equal treatment between them and the men counterpart. Asase (2003) has indicated the gender inequality as a factor and barrier to women participation in politics. Culture and religion are another major factor as indicated in the responses of the respondents. The culture tends to see women's roles within the family circle. They are mothers and their major responsibility is to look after the family, not to participate on an engagement that will warrant them mingling with Men. The religion also restricts women from interacting with Men that are not legitimate to them. Kehinde (2016) opined that traditional believe, ethical values and virtues exclude women in political participation in Nigeria. Political violence is another factor, the Nigerian politics is associated with violence, which many women cannot withstand the heat of such violence. Money is the major ingredient characterized in our political activities. Ako-nai (2015). observed that partisan politics in Nigeria is characterized with money which exclude women participation. His study also discovered that Lack of finance make women not to participate in political parties' primaries which is the steppingstone for political contest.

Table 1.3 is on strategies to improve women political participation. All the respondents agreed that sponsoring more women to contest political positions is a great avenue that will encourage their participation in politics, hence majority of them responded in Table 1.2 that finance is one of the factors affecting women participation in politics, so the sponsorship will bridge the gap and serve as a means of encouragement for their participation. Reserving political position is another issue raised in the table, all the respondents had the same opinion that there should be position earmarked for women. Although, the Niger State Government has taken a bold step in ensuring that all the Vice Chairmen positions in the forthcoming November 2025 Local Governments Elections are reserved for women. There should be fair treatment between men and women in politics, all the respondents agreed that having fair treatment in scene of politics will encourage women to actively participate and even contest more political positions in the state. This opinion is in line with that of Kura (2005) that discussed fair treatment in the findings of his study.

Conclusion

Women political participation in Niger State, Nigeria is an issue of great importance. Women have been relegated with less consideration for years, this has drawn them backward politically and it affects their political consciousness which has resulted in under-representation in terms of policies particularly the ones that affect them. This study investigates the role of education and socio-economic status as it affects women participation in politics and the strategies that will



improve their political participation. the findings discovered that for women to actively participate politically in Niger state, there is the need for proactiveness in encouraging them by way of sponsoring and earmarking certain political position specifically for the women, this will enable them to contribute to the nation building and enhancement of effective gender balance representative in governance. Their participation in political process in the State will enhance and strengthen democracy and democratic consolidation and provide an enabling ground for competition on good governance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are provided:

1. There should be equal opportunity in terms of political contest between men and women; by doing so, it will motivate and instill courage for women political participation in the State.
2. It should be a law that certain political positions be reserved for women.
3. Political parties should wave or reduce registration fees for any woman contesting under its platform.

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