



Women in Politics: A Study of Adamawa State Gubernatorial Election (2015-2023)

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Abstract: This study underscores women in politics: a study of Adamawa State Gubernatorial election (2015-2023). The study employed three research objectives and research questions. The study adopted quantitative research method of the descriptive survey design type. The study employed 120 respondents using the Taro Yamane's formula of sampling. In collecting the data, the research used closed-ended questionnaire. Frequency counts and simple percentages was the statistical technique used to analyze the data. The following are major findings from the study: that notable women in Adamawa State played significant roles in the politics of Adamawa State. That the major causes of low women participation in politics include; skewed religious teachings, barbaric cultural practices and poor educational qualifications. The study therefore recommended; equal rights and privileges to women and men in all aspects of political processes and formal education especially at the post senior secondary school level.

Keywords: Women, Gender, Politics, Leadership, Governance

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the potentials and efforts put in place by women and the female gender at a whole, there seems to be little deliberate effort made by our government, stakeholders and the society to grant them the opportunities to showcase these potentials. 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.

Globally, women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies, women assume some key roles, which are: mother, producer, home-manager, and community organizer, sociocultural and political activists. Of these many roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by women movement (Oluyemi, 2016). In line with global trend, Nigerian women constitute nearly half of the population of the country. But despite the major roles they play with their

population, women roles in the society are yet to be given recognition. This is due to some cultural stereotypes, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. In Nigeria the awareness about the role of women in development of a nation came up in 1980s. The International Conference on women in Beijing in 1995 enhanced the effective participation of women in politics in Nigeria.

Women's representation in Nigerian politics has been on a downward slide since 2011, and the 2023 elections in Africa's largest economy confirmed the expectations of poor outcomes for women. The number of women in Nigeria's National Assembly has fallen by 19 percent compared to the last assembly, with women now occupying 3 percent of seats in the Senate and 4 percent in the House of Representatives (Nkereuwem, 2023). To understand why Nigerian women performed so poorly in the recent elections, the 2022 primary elections provided insight into the challenges and barriers faced by women aspirants and candidates. The results of the various parties'

primary elections highlight enduring limitations to women's representation in competitive politics in Nigeria. The country ranks in the bottom ten globally in women's representation in national parliaments, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). This challenge of representation persists in spite of the near parity of voter registration between men and women in past election cycles.

Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. However, data show that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide and that achieving gender parity in political life is far off (UN Women, 2023). In many countries, women have been under recognized in politics, not because they lack the interest or the will to participate, but due to marginalisation in the society (Ajogbeje, 2016).

In Nigeria, women make up to 50 percent of the population and about 51 percent of voters in elections, yet they do not enjoy their full rights as their male counterparts who dominate the political landscape and occupy an overwhelming majority of decision-making positions in the country (Ogbogu, 2012). Across all national and subnational categories, women represented just over 10 percent of more than 15,000 candidates who ran in the 2023 elections for president, the National Assembly, governorships, and state assemblies. Furthermore, 90 percent of women candidates ran on the platforms of small parties. Barring a rare upset by a relatively small party—for example, the Labour Party—candidates from smaller parties have historically had limited chances of being elected into office. Yet, the 2023 elections took place against the backdrop of a social media-sparked citizen movement, (Chukwurah, 2022) mostly made up of young people who appeared determined to upturn the political system, which has typically favored traditional candidates, especially men from the major parties. The effect of this renewed youth involvement on Nigeria's growing voter apathy and the potential effect on women's candidacy are key points of interest. Indeed, in the 2023 elections, heightened youth involvement—and support for the disruptor Labour Party—hurt outcomes for women candidates, especially those representing Nigeria's main political parties. The Labour Party's upset,

paradoxically, had negative consequences for women in parliament who were standing for reelection as candidates of Nigeria's dominant parties but lost their seats to male candidates running on the platform of the Labour Party.

The poor women participation in politics and governance is against the recommended 30 percent prescribed by the Beijing platform of Action to which Nigeria subscribes. In fact, the Nigerian National Gender Policy (NGP) had even recommended 35 percent affirmative action to include more women in both elective positions and appointive public service positions, (Oluyemi, 2005) 5 percent over what was recommended in Beijing. However, the percentage of seats occupied by women in the Nigerian government is not near half of the proposed percentage.

Adamawa state in Northeast Nigeria is experiencing an increase in the number of women joining political parties and participating actively in politics. The social landscape of the region is traditional, conservative and male-dominated. As a result, it is a context in which women have long been marginalized from political and electoral processes. Ordinarily, expectations for women's political participation would be very low.

But women in Adamawa are swimming fast against that tide. Honorable Wilbena Jackson, a member of the Adamawa State House of Assembly (SHoA), confirmed that women have increasingly joined political parties and registered with the election commission to get their voter cards. Jackson says the greatest strength and potential of women in Adamawa is their ability to mobilize themselves and others (NDI, 2018).

One of the largest states of Nigeria, Adamawa has only five women in 58 elected offices in all of its local government councils, its state assembly and the national legislature. Its low number of elected women representatives is symptomatic of a larger national problem. In 2017, according to UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Nigeria ranked a low 180 out of 190 countries worldwide for the number of women in parliament. It is the lowest of any other country in Africa.

Adamawa is also an especially challenging state for women to make political inroads for other reasons. With an economy driven by

male-dominated trades like farming, cattle herding and fishing, Adamawa also entered a state of emergency in May 2013 due to the Boko Haram insurgency, which has caused the displacement of some 136,000 people fleeing violence. If obstacles presented by traditional gender roles were not already enough, insecurity from the insurgency has marginalized women even further from challenging men for public offices. In Adamawa, as with any other environment, women's political representation and empowerment are essential for equitable and sustainable development for women as well as men. Hence, this study is on women in politics: a study of Adamawa State Gubernatorial election (2015-2023).

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the numerous international laws that exist, women still are not recognized and given the rights to participate in politics like their male counterparts. Consequently, women participation and progress in government and politics in Africa still lingers behind the men (Nebolisa, 2009). This, explained Nebolisa (2009), may be because of socioeconomic factors, poverty, religious beliefs, cultural values, and simply not knowing their rights under the international and local laws. Although there has been an increase in the numbers of women in legislative bodies, research indicated that African women continue to be under-represented in all structures of power and decision-making (Chuku, 2009; Nebolisa, 2009).

Being a democracy, all Nigerian citizens are entitled by law to full political participation at all levels, implying that there is no legal barrier to the participation in governance. It is the patriarchal system coupled with religious and cultural inclinations in the country that serve as major impediments to their full participation. Politics centres on power and influence, involving contentious views on the allocation and distribution of resources. 'It determines who gets what, when and why' (Ajogbeje, 2022). Thus, it is essential that women participate fully and at all levels in politics because it is through politics that they can determine their priorities, values and the allocation of resources. Against this background, this study focused on the issue of women's participation in Nigerian politics, with specific reference to Adamawa State

gubernatorial election (2015-2023). This is not a bid to down play the effect of the challenges of women in politics in the entire country. The situation of women in Adamawa state exposes some of the major challenges confronting women in the North in the political landscape of the country. This study therefore is bent on women in politics: case study of Adamawa State gubernatorial election (2015-2023).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aim at women in politics: case study of Adamawa State gubernatorial election (2015-2023). While the specific objectives include:

- to determine the role played by outstanding women in politics
- to ascertain the causes of low women political participation

Research Questions

The following research questions were put forward in order to guide the study towards successful achievement.

- What are the roles played by outstanding women in politics?
- What are the challenges women faces in political participation?

METHODOLOGY

The survey design was employed in this study. The study considered the case study design as more appropriate for conducting this research because it is a research design that entails a detailed and extensive analysis of a single case and is concerned with complexity and particular nature of the case in question Tar (2014).

Population of the Study

The population of this study was the entire people of Adamawa State with an estimated population of 5.7 million people (NPC, 2023).

Sample size and Sampling Technique

Using the Taro Yamane's formula of sampling on the population of the state, a sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was drawn.

Method of Data collection

In collecting data for this study, the researcher used quantitative method, the use of closed-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire is made up of sections A – D.

Method of Data Analysis

This research used descriptive analysis of frequency counts and percentages and used tables to present the data.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Questionnaire Analysis

Table 1: Have the women in politics displayed outstanding performances that boosts confidence of the electorates on women leadership in Adamawa State?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	81	67.5
No	39	32.5
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the above table, it reveals that 81 (67.5%) of the respondents agreed that the outstanding performances of women in politics has boosted the confidence of the electorates on women leadership in Adamawa State while 39 (32.5%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 2: Do religious practices/teachings cause low political participation of women?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	86	71.7
No	34	28.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the above table, it reveals that 86 (71.7%) of the respondents agreed that religious practices/teachings cause low political participation of women while 34 (28.3%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 3: Does Gender-Based Violence cause low political participation of women?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	63.3
No	44	36.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table above, it shows that 76 (63.3%) of the respondents agreed that Gender-Based Violence cause low political participation of women while 44 (36.7%) of the respondents refuse to agree to the question.

Table 4: Do cultural practices cause low political participation of women?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	70	58.3
No	50	41.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the above table, it reveals that 70 (58.3%) of the respondents agreed that Do cultural practices cause low political participation of women while 50 (41.7%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 5: Does lack of access to education cause low political participation of women?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	81	67.5
No	39	32.5
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the above table, it reveals that 81 (67.5%) of the respondents agreed that lack of access to education cause low political participation of women while 39 (32.5%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 6: Does high cost of running political activities causing low political participation of women?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	63	52.5
No	57	47.5
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the above table, it reveals that 63 (52.5%) of the respondents agreed that high cost of running political activities causing low political participation of women while 57 (47.5%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.7: Is lack of cooperation among women causing low political participation of women?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	64	53.3
No	56	46.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the above table, it reveals that 64 (53.3%) of the respondents agreed that lack of cooperation among women causing low political participation of women while 56 (46.7%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 8: Would enlightenment by religious leaders increase women political participation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	109	90.8
No	11	9.2
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table 4.11 above, it shows that 109 (90.8%) of the respondents agreed that enlightenment by religious leaders would increase women political participation while 11 (9.2%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 9: Would campaigns against Gender-Based Violence increase women political participation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	98	81.7
No	22	18.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table 4.12 above, it shows that 98 (81.7%) of the respondents agreed that campaigns against Gender-Based Violence will increase women political participation while 22 (18.3%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 10: Would enlightenment by traditional leaders increase women political participation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	54.2
No	55	45.8
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table above, it shows that 65 (54.2%) of the respondents agreed that enlightenment by traditional leaders will increase women political participation while 55 (45.8%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.11: Would more school enrollment of the Girl-Child increase women political participation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	98	81.7
No	22	18.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table above, it shows that 98 (81.7%) of the respondents agreed that more school enrollment of the Girl-Child would increase women political participation while 22 (18.3%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table12: Would forming women groups lead to increase in political participation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	112	93.3
No	8	6.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table 4.15 above, it shows that 112 (93.3%) of the respondents agreed that forming women groups would lead to increase in political participation? while 22 (18.3%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 13: Would low cost of running an election increase women political participation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	96	80
No	24	20
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the table above, it shows that 96 (80%) of the respondents agreed that low cost of running an election would increase women political participation while 24 (20%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In relation to research question 1 which was employed to ascertain the roles played by outstanding women in Adamawa State politics found out various women and those whom ran for political offices in the last elections. Worthy of mention and of significance to this study is the courage displayed by the All Progressive Congress gubernatorial aspirant in Adamawa

State in the 2023 elections: Sen. (Engr.) Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed (Binani). She was a symbol of women breakthrough in Nigerian politics whom was able to break all odds to emerge as the flag bearer of her political party (the ruling party in the country) and the only female gubernatorial flag bearer of a major political party in the country. The finding of this study is in disagreement with numerous scholars whom saw women as only appointees not heads (Rilwan, Garba & Tunde, 2009) but in agreement with other gender sensitive scholars whom feel women are denied opportunities but when given the chance, can outperform the men (Anigwe, 2014) and Okolie (2004) whom stated that democracy entails holistic decision making.

The finding of the study in relation to research question 2 was enriching. The study found out numerous challenges women face in trying to get involved in politics, some of the challenges found out includes; lack of economic (money) power which is a vital tool in Nigerian politics; ranging from party primaries to general elections. Gender based violence which most times is backed by some religious teachings and cultural barriers which deny women access to public appearances and excludes them from participating in decision making processes. The findings of this study is in consonance with the studies of Iloh and Ikenna, 2009 & Nda, (2003) whom revealed the ego displayed by men while suppressing women and high cost of elections.

Research question 3 seeks answers from the ways forward on women participation in politics. The study found out that if cost of electioneering is subsidized and gender sensitive policies are put in place, our political processes will be better and women's potentials will be enhanced and felt. More so, it was found out that women should form political groups to support themselves and collectively agitate for gender equity. This finding is in agreement with the reasoning of the UN Women (2023) whom stated that political accountability to women begins with increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, but it cannot stop there what is required are gender-sensitive governance reforms that will make all elected officials more effective at promoting gender equality in public policy and ensuring their implementation.

CONCLUSION

Despite the large population of the female gender, they suffer undue marginalization in almost every angle beginning from the family to the larger society. There must be a deliberate effort by religious leaders, traditional leaders and the government to mobilize for the emancipation of the female gender in occupation of political offices and being part of decision-making process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this research study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Gender equality in the political participation is a vital facet of any democratic governance. Women should have equal opportunities and the same rights as men to be able to fully participate in all levels of the political processes of any community.
2. The findings indicated that Nigerian women still do not have the same access and are not able to exercise the same equality rights as men. The study is also recommending that laws that will provide equal rights and opportunities to both women and men in all aspects and levels of the political processes of Nigeria should be enacted.
3. The study is also recommending for gender sensitivity training for men, women, and children. This kind of training would be of benefit to both men and women in eliminating stereotypes and creating open-mindedness.
4. The study is also recommending for the support of the effective participation of women at all levels of government, especially in leadership. Women need to be provided opportunities to participate by increasing their participation in all levels of governments and providing funding for them to participate in the political process because election financing was a key concern and expressed as a barrier for seeking elected positions.
5. Education is determined to be the most effective way to enhance Nigerian women's political awareness and effective participation. Therefore, there is need to address the attitude of both men and women toward formal education at the higher level beyond secondary school.

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