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Female Gender and Public Sector Leadership in Nigeria

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Nigeria has recorded significant contributions of women in public leadership before the colonialism. Such women as queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Kanbasa of Bonny and Adiaha Akpan of Ikot Abasi are remembered. Others to mention are Omu Okwei and Iyalode Epausetan, and Idiok Ibehe Owo. The political action in Eastern Nigeria during the 1923 and 1930's were spearheaded by women. In Akwa Ibom State women of Odoro Ikot native court area held a mass meeting which over on thousand attended (driving all the men away from all the political arena. The Nigeria women in different parts of the country also frustrated various colonial administration from Aba to Lagos. Such names as Mrs. Essang, Mrs. Margeret Ekpog, Mrs. Fumilayo Kuti are familiar to the ears of Nigerians and the colonialist of those days. Women participation in politics in Nigeria is not encouraging as the percentage of women who contest for political positions are very poor. There is an insignificant number of Nigerian women in leadership positions in the public sector and a few of them serve in both the National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly. An insignificant number of women also serve as ministers and commissioners in Nigeria. Obstacles preventing women from participating significantly in Policy-Making processes in Nigeria have been identified and solutions proffered.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, it is observed that a few women have been privileged to lead in the public sector. Given this, it is noted that policies and programmes initiated and led by them are successfully implemented. Such programmes as Better Life for Rural Women, The Family Support Programmes, and other related programmes have been initiated and successfully implemented. These programmes have had positive impacts on the Nigerian women and the Nigerian society as a whole. However, the number of women in policy-making globally, is very insignificant. Such countries like Israel, Indonesia, Philippine and Britain who have at one time or the other experienced female leadership happen to allow this, not as a sustainable pattern, but as a chance. The marginalization of women in policy-making globally has become an issue of much concern. A recommendation was made by African leadership that 20% of the policy-making vacancies be reserved for women in African countries. One notes here that the 20% reservation recommendation is not only meager but also conservative in nature. As the largest component in all African societies, women deserve to be encouraged to compete favorably with men in policy-making processes. Globally, women form only 1% of leaders of nations, while men form the remaining 99% (Umoh, 2001).

The discussion in this paper is limited to women who take part in policy-making processes and not women who feature in policy implementing structures.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When writing on women issues, two schools of thought are normally considered. The conservatives and the radical views, the radical view here refers to the group that considers a woman as having equal potentials as a man. The conservative view here refers to the group that considers a man as the head of the house and woman as the subject.

The conservative school of thought believes that the biological differences between sexes are the necessary causes of sexual division of labour. This school of thought is greatly derived from the works of (Murdock 1949, Tiger and fox 1972) and others. According to Effah-Attoe and Jaja (1993), women studies are normally discussed on the two main headings; namely, the negative and the positive views. In Esther Boserup's terminology, the negative view is sometimes termed the linear view (Boserup, 1970, Tiffany, 1979, Oakley, 1974 – 1976).

The first perspective, the negative view emphasizes that women are naturally subordinate to men in every African society. The conservative approach to women studies in Nigeria is not isolated from the early missionary's belief that God has made a woman to be subject to the man. Eve, as the Bible says, was created from a rib taken out from the ribs of a man. Since Adam was the first creation and out of him was produced Eve, therefore, by all norms and ethics, a woman needs to be subject to a man. This superiority of men over women is dominant since the colonization of the whites in Nigeria and there is very little hope that this belief will soon be shaken off the minds of our Nigerian society.

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This work also adopts the view of the critical feminists. As reported by (Ityavyar 1989) critical feminism as a theory of change holds that long established myths and even jokes that misrepresent or downgrade women should be abolished to allow room for a new and a better socialization process in society which will not deny women their rightful position. It is the attitude of the critical feminists to look critically at the language, style, and general attitudes of men towards women (Ogundipe-Lesile 1987). The critical feminists are optimistic that the future is brighter for women in the public sector.

A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Gender is used to refer to socially defined and enforced 'scripts' for females and males. It is believed that the roles and expectations as well as the opportunities and privileges of the different genders do change over time and vary across space being a social construction. A gender perspective is one in which women's knowledge experiences and perceptions are given validity and allowed to participate where their issues are presented and analyzed. It is a perspective that is often given second-class status, and the struggle to make it a part of the mainstream has had to be deliberated. The whole of human existence revolves round one philosophical theme - critical self-reflection. The issue of women in culture and development presupposes some sorts of marginalization of women. Boserup (1970) takes a radical view by observing that most development projects have failed because of government's lack of attention to women's roles in production. This view is also assumed to be dominant in Third World Countries. Also sharing the same view, Bereian (1982) comments on the less recognition of female role in production through neglect on the part of those concerned. Examining these views critically, it reminds us of the situation that is prevalent in Nigeria. Although women are greatly concerned and involved in the production of food and other social items, such encouragement is not given to them in terms of financing such projects - where such projects are funded, it is nothing to reckon with. The policy implications may quite be associated with the virtual absence of women leaders on decision-making processes.

Firestone, (1970) who spoke on the concept of gender said that the unequal division of labour between male and female is natural. Firestone's argument, that firstly, women have been made dependent upon their men folk through their biological vulnerability associated with menstruation, the menopause and other 'female ills', constant painful childbirth, wet-nursing and the care of infants is in line with the conservative's viewpoint which holds a minor part of the Forum's conceptual definitions. "Then since human being", she says, "take too long to grow up, their dependence upon adults is prolonged". In particular, she concludes, "there develops intense mother-child interdependency, which in turn helps to shape female psychology". According to her, these reproductive differences have underlain the sexual division of labour and power.

She also emphasizes the biological determinants of male dominance. Even though, she accepts such psychological factors as motherly feelings or men's enjoyment of power, she emphasizes that they are firmly rooted in biological differences between the sexes and would not exist without them. Although in her argument, she fails to conclude that men are superior or that male dominance is inevitable, her emphasis is seen in this quotation:

Human society is an antithesis - in a sense it is against nature; it does not passively submit to the presence of nature but rather takes over the control of nature on its own behalf (Firestone, 1970:18).

There could be a general conclusion that, given its basis in the relations of reproduction, male dominance can only be overthrown by revolution. Firestone calls on women to seize control of the means of reproduction with the object of destroying, not only male dominance, but 'the sex distinction itself'. Here one notes that, her mode of seizure of the means of production has not been clearly spelt out and therefore, no serious attention should be attached to this view.

Sharing in the same discussion and also examining the concept of gender in the British experiences Brown miller (1975) takes us further in her quest for the concept of male dominance. Still in the same argument Mary Daly (Randall, 1982) speaking on the London experience brings out ways in which women can transcend patriarchal culture in order to learn how to love the men. Commenting on her argument, it is observed that from time immemorial, men and women have been partners working hand in hand and sharing their love. It is, therefore, not necessary to start learning how to love the men when actually this has been in existence from beginning of creation. Sharing in the same discussion and examining gender on the English experience Richards, (1980) points out that even if men were found to be naturally dominant because of their hormone endowment, feminists would not need to deny it, but that it would still not entitle men to rule. His other idea that 'ought' cannot be derived from 'is' is emphasized in this quotation:

If male dominance has been a feature of virtually every known society, how can we explain it, except ultimately reference to what distinguishes men from women? Women's reproductive role originally made them both vulnerable and necessary to men. Any adequate explanation of women's oppression, any proper

understanding, as we shall see, of the birth of feminism and especially of women's liberation and any effective feminist strategy needs to take account of this physical basis of male dominance (Randall, 1982: 20).

Writing on the contemporary British experience Gough (1975) opines that the context of the responsibility of child rearing is the institution of the family, which is in itself seemingly universal. In his discussion on family roles, he describes the family as a married couple or other group of adult's kinfolk who cooperate economically and in the upbringing of children, and all or most of whom share a common dwelling. His argument that, women have more responsibility for children, their activities are more family-centered than men's which shape other aspects of their social role cannot be disputed. This situation is particularly true of some developing countries, especially in the poor families of the rural areas.

It is true that non-feminists have suggested that the sex-based division of labour is functional in some sense to the proper and stable ordering of society. Sharing the same opinion, Okin (1980) traces this theme from the writings of Aristotle through to the functionalist sociology of Talcott Parsons. Okin seems to be unaware that though Parsons maintains that biological differences between the sexes provide a logical basis for the sexual division of labour, he explains and justifies it primarily as the prerequisite of the modern nuclear family whose contribution to society is indispensable. Okin's argument that the family promotes social stability and continuity, in particular through its socialization functions, and the stability of the family in turn requires that wives specialize in child-rearing, housework and the articulation of 'expressive' as opposed to instrumental, masculine values is in line with the conservative view point held internationally. Parsons also does recognize the psychological strain such role-differentiation imposes on both sexes, and especially women, but sees it as a necessary price for the maintenance of the family. Such role differentiation is unacceptable by feminists, especially the radicalists, and even by the conservatives who invoke culture to explain the sexual division of labour. Arguing on the same perspective, Smith, (1960) also spoke on the British experience when he observes that, culture is brought in to bridge this logical gulf, though it is never quite made clear what it is about culture, or cultures, that otherwise vary so tremendously, and that brings nearly all of them to assign child-rearing to women.

Rosaldo, (1974) attributes the differentiation to the 'fact that in most traditional societies, a good part of a woman's adult life is spent giving birth to and raising children'. One notes that, this idea of Rosaldo does not only apply to the traditional societies, for such societies as Nigeria and her neighbours cannot be rightly referred to as traditional as they have the characteristics of both the traditional and modern societies which Fred Riggs refers to as a 'prismatic society'; hence the description of the duties of a woman as seen by Rosaldo still upholds. In the context of the discussion of this topic, Rosaldo defines the domestic sphere as 'those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organized immediately around one or more mothers and their children', while the public sphere comprises 'activities', institutions and forms of association that link, rank, organize or subsume particular mother-child group. Women's mothering role, which Rosaldo insists reflects organizational as much as biological constraints, limits their political and economic activities and focuses their concern on the domestic sphere. One observes here that this view has only a minor part of the Forum's conceptual definitions.

Emphasizing her point, Rosaldo (1971) observes that, such subjective 'compartmentalization', which does not preclude objective interdependence, fosters male dominance. To her, the implication is that first, by distancing from his family; the separation of public and private spheres lends him more authority within it. But, according to her, the man also has more time and opportunity to shape the public culture, which then evaluates women's role (Randall, 1982: 23)

In a similar discussion and also examining gender on the conservative perspective Ortner, (1974) offers an interesting development of this argument. She suggests that a major reason any women's role is universally deemed secondary is that it is isolated, because of its domestic setting as well as because of women's reproductive functions, with nature as opposed to culture. This perceived opposition of culture to nature then readily translates itself into the opposition of male to female.

In the same vein, Ayesha M. Imam in Yomi Oruwari (1996) argues that most analysis of the position of women in society are essentially a variation or combination of biology. One notes here that this view has a major part of the Forum's conceptual definitions. On the same issue, Desmond Morris, Robin Fox and E. O Wilson (Women in Nigeria today 1985) raised a point that human social organization corresponds on a parallel with innate human needs and drives which are biological in nature. This conservative view is widely held internationally and has a major part of the Forum's conceptual definitions.

Arguing on a radical perspective and on a contemporary Nigerian experience Judith Van Allen, (Women in Nigeria today 1985) argues that Igbo women became more economically dependent on males (and simply during periods of pregnancy and child birth), during colonialism and the development of Capitalism, despite the fact that precolonial Igbo society was predominantly patrilineal (Women in Nigeria today 1985).

Although, Christine Delphy's (*Women in Nigeria today 1985*) argument is still based on a radical perspective, her emphasis is based on social relations within the family rather than biology. Delphy argues that women form a distinct class as the subordinate group in what she terms the domestic mode of production. Examining Delphy's view that men form a ruling class who appropriate the labour of their wives whether in serving them and their children or in producing goods which may have exchange value as well as use-value, one observes that, she fails to mention that this view does not hold at all times. In the same discussion, Imam argues that, this domestic mode of production exists with other modes of production, within which men form a ruling class who appropriate the labour of their wives, whether capitalist, feudalist or socialist.

For Delphy

Women are outside the class relations of social production except in as much as they themselves directly engage in work outside of the domestic (Women in Nigeria today 1985).

Dissociating herself from Delphy's prejudice, Imam (*women in Nigeria today 1985*) calls on women to fight as she is already interpreting Delphy's mind as patriarchal relations of the domestic mode of production being 'the main enemy'. Imam quotes Delphy and Firestone's work as applying Marxist method (historical materialism) in their analysis of patriarchy in the society in which it exists. There is no dispute that the Marxist analysis has had distinct gaps in the treatment of women, neither Delphy nor Firestone Imam claims, have used this method of analysis. Imam recollects that Firestone has done nothing to raise the standard of her job in terms of relating the position of male dominance to Marxist approach. Imam's contention on the various viewpoints already discussed in terms of the Marxist approach is expressed in her work:

In Imam's example, she quoted Nigeria where the practice of purdah is seen in the North, which portrays dependent capitalism, and with women in the United States of America, which can be regarded as practicing mature capitalism. Imam quotes Sartre as saying (of "Vulgar Marxist" economic determinists). It is "an inflexible refusal to differentiate", "a bath of sulphuric acid" in which everything is attributed to an abstract patriarchy and any qualitative differences are soaked away.

THE NIGERIAN WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Pre-Colonial Era

In South Eastern Nigeria, chief (Mrs.) Margrete Ekpo and Mrs. Essang featured prominently in public sector leadership. Mrs. Kuti worked together with Mrs Ekpo in resolving the 1945 strike action in Nigeria (Mba, 1982). Enugu women's Association (EWA) was formed in 1945 to raise funds for the striking workers. Women subscribed per head, and as a result of their cooperation about 70 pounds was realized to ease the problems of the striking workers. Other leaders included Mrs. G. I. Okoye and Madam Peter Okoye who later joined the NCNC (Mba, 1982: 169). A delegation of FNWS led by Mrs. Kuti on August 23, 1958 demanded the franchise for women in the North to vote during elections. (WAP, 8/24/58). Queen Amina of Zaira was also a notable figure who led an army to war.

WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA TODAY

Are women politically superior or inferior in politics today? It is true that women are less political in conventional manner than men, but it is quite different from sayings that they do not appreciate the political dimension in social life. (Evans, 1980 :221). He is of the view that women can get involved in politics when its concerns and mechanisms are accessible to them. Jaquette, (1974), Iglitzin (1974) are men, suffering from 'insufficient masculinisation'. According to Randall (1982), women are firstly more percipient than men, seeing through the façade of conventional politics. She is of the view that women's own experience has shown them that politics, as currently practiced, is about power. She, however sees real political power as being concentrated in the hands of men and is little affected by apparently democratic process of popular participation. Abunsen (1971) suggests that one of the reasons affecting women's political voting is that they reject the present political system. Bonoque and Grossholtz (1974) are of the view that women's tendency to rate their political efficiency and their evaluation of candidates on the basis of personality is evidence not of political system. Randall (1982) believes that women are more democratic than men since they eschew power as an end in itself. Their experience of male dominance, she said, has alerted them to the ways in which power can be abused. Can it be true that an emphasis on democracy is a particular feature of the women's liberation movement as speculated by Randall?

The task of restructuring the future needs the cooperation of both men and women. Bernard sees the need to have a woman as a partner in politics when he said that women may have a special role to play in the 'task of restructuring the future (Bernard, 1979. Every day happening portrays that women are more pacifist than men although very insignificant number of women exhibit the contrary. Randall (1982) is of the view that women are more ethical than men because they participate in conventional politics thus bringing concern for ordinary human beings and for ethical standards of conduct. Stopper and Johnson (1977) shares the view of Gloria Steinem's assertion that women in politics can contribute 'by tempering the idea of

manhood into something less aggressive and better suited to the crowded, post-atomic planet'. Bernard (1997) speculate that 'the contribution of women to general policy has actually tended to be altruistic, on the human side and their contributions to political life. Randall strongly re-iterates her view that women's political superiority has yet to be systematically advanced (Randall, 1982:59).

Chile Dike in his article 'The Women's Revolt of 1929, proceedings of national symposium to mark 60th anniversary of women uprising in South Eastern Nigeria said that the Nigerian middle-class women have, "however to insist that there cannot be equality without the sharing of responsibilities." He is also convinced that there cannot be dignity and the sharing of power without the sharing of the burdens of responsibility and power. Dike still has a strong conviction that women cannot claim equality with the men that support them. He reports in his article that his discussions with some of the males he sampled showed their strong view that they cannot allow their wives to share the financial burden of their homes. Dike, however, admits that the story is different today. This is evident in his speech.

Today in the presidential system, the woman's visibility and leadership opportunities are negligible, though the political and personal liberties of women are theoretically and fully guaranteed in 1979 constitution. (Dike, 1992).

Dike quotes a speech by a notable Nigerian women novelist, Flora Nwapa who delineated statistically the scanty number of women in visible positions despite the existence of women voters as majority and the exploitation by political parties of women's enthusiasm to work during the election process. "Women", she said "are pre-empted from leading political roles by the attitude of men who cannot see women in leadership role over them". In strong terms, the events of the constitution drafting committee for the 1979 constitution, is quoted as an instance.

Women were not considered fit to sit among the "fifty and later forty-nine "wise men" who drafted the 1979 constitution, despite the large number of professional women in the country. Political parties are alleged to be unwilling to field women candidates. Women are also pre-empted by the lack of capital to conduct campaign in their own stream if they are not fielded by the male dominated fields. Women are additionally disadvantaged by their own unwillingness as mothers within a polygamous society to commit themselves to the vagaries of public life without the assurance that their children will be supported (Dike, 1992).

What actually captured the author of this work 's mind was Dike's strong remarks that "women become their worst enemies and the worst enemies of other women in an effort to please males, as is typical of the psychology of servitude, the constant desire and anxiety to please the master until constant failure produces a dielectrically and revolutionary change in the servant". Dike also points out that "Women also typically engage in self-check, blaming their own oppression on themselves."

T. A. Olurin of Ibadan in his article titled "the practice of physical Planning Profession in Nigeria: A Gender Appraisal says that the near exclusion of women from participating in decision making, in evolving policy options or in the planning, execution and management of projects that affect them is a great omission since women are the primary users of community level of infrastructure and housing (Moser and chant, 1985).

Mrs. Ruth Penry, former interim Head of State of Liberia, at a summit of African First Ladies in 1997, in reacting to a question in respect of women's suitability to holding public offices. She said:

I would like to tell them that as a woman, when a job is given to you, you don't look at the job as a play toy. You should be firm in decisions, with a clean clear conscience towards your fellow men and always remember to be prayerful, ask the Good God to take control of your endeavours. With that, you are bound to be successfully. (The Guardian, May 10, 1977 p. 1).

It is worthy of note that the newspaper correspondent commended Mrs. Perry for the kind of patience she exhibited which he said, was quite a deviant from that male heads of States.

Jerry Uhwo in his article titled "Women in Politics," said that the African Women is characterized by female subordination, whereby roles of woman are defined only in their relationship with men. Palestinians she said, women are regarded as creature without souls. For the Greeks, Uhwo laments "women deserve no song and story because they can neither perform great deeds on the battlefields nor give great speeches in the assemblies of men". Who ever make such a comment should be seen as living in an era close to the last fifty decades. Women like Madeleine Alright of the United States, Margaret Thatcher of Britain, Indira Gahndi of India, Corazon Aquino of Philippines, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Mrs. Megawatti of Indonesia, and Condi Rice, the most influential woman in wartime Washington are women who remain monumental shakers and movers of history.

In Nigeria, women such as Mrs. Ransome Kuti, Professor Alele Williams, Professor Bolanle Awa, Queen Amina of Zaria, J.J. Ayorinde, Aisha Jimetta, Mrs. Emma Brown, Nina Emma Mba and others have left their footprints in the sands of history. Within the hierarchical class of First Ladies, Mariam Babangida and Maryam Abacha are classical examples of women revolutionaries who have secularized the purdah system of the Moslem religion. Not to exhaust the view of Uhwo, it is pertinent to mention his other point of argument.

The problem with our present day women revolutionaries is that they prefer to be more fashionable instead of selling their ideas. They prefer to be seen by men who donate the case. They want to wear the most costly jewels and clothes, paint lips and hands and take front seats in launchings and parties where cameras can easily pick their faces. Our present women prefer to win contacts with their bodies rather than engage in any strenuous activity. Women today prefer 'a dash' of the latest cars in town rather than sit down and project ideas or development. (The Guardian, May 10, 1977).

The author of this work wishes to comment that Mr. Uhwo is not abreast with recent researches carried out by female professionals; one prominent one which is cited is Dr. Ositelu who has carried out a 19 year Bitter Kola Research for Glycoma. Many other researches carried out by women professionals counter the view of Mr. Uhwo. I hope that he does not expect our women to be poorly dressed and back to the kitchen. As regards the issue of women revolutionaries, new ideas are never invented and put to practice without some aspect of revolutions.

Dominic Laka in his article titled "Irony of women Liberation" (*The Guardian* on Sunday, March 1, 1998: 27) is worried that advocate of women liberation should simply canvass for active participation in national development and leadership processes. Looked at from the angle of the Holy Bible, he said "the evolution of mankind and the first of its unit reminds us of Adam and Eve. He added that the instructions that were given to them at the garden of Eden, and the one given domineering authority is clearly stated in that account of creation in the book of Genesis. He concluded by saying that there is no doubt about who should be leader in our households or in the larger society.

PARTICIPATION IN THE 1999 DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS-NIGERIA

Women who participate in politics in Nigeria are quite insignificant. For example Tables 1 and 2 are clear evidence of the women contestants for political positions in spite of mass campaign carried out in Nigeria for the past ten years. Women need much time to adjust to the nature of politics in Nigeria, which contrasts the kind of politics played in developing countries.

Table 1: 1999 Democratic Elections in Nigeria

The presidency (i.e. President and Vice President)	2
Senatorial seats	109
House of Representative seats	360
Governorship (i.e. Governor and Deputy Governor	.92
State House of Assembly seats	990
Local Government Chairman and Vice Chairman	1548
Councillorship seats	8800
Total	11,881

Source: Women in Public Life Vol. 2 No. 1 – 3, 1999

Table 2

Position	No of available seats	No of women Contestants and % Total	
Presidency	2	Nil	0%
Senate	109	5	4.58%
House of Representatives	360	29	8.05%
Governorship	72	2	5.55%
State House of Assembly	990	39	3.93%
Chairmanship	774	46	5.94%
Councillorship	8,800	510	5.79%
Total	11,107	631	5.68%

Source: Women in Public Life Vol. 2, No. 1 – 3, January – March, 1999.

Table 2 is self explanatory as the percentage of women contestants stood at 5.68%.

The results of the May, 1999 election produced few women in policy-making positions. No female governor was produced by the 36 states. Only one female Deputy Governor emerged from the 1999 elections. In the Federal House of representatives, women won twelve (12) seats. Three (3) out of 108 seats went to the women in the Federal Executive Council. Two (2) female policymakers were appointed into the ministries of Women Affairs and Aviation.

OBSTACLES PREVENTING WOMEN FROM PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY IN POLITICS

1. **Women are unable to sponsor themselves in politics:**
Men are not willing to sponsor women in politics, as the chances of women winning in elections are very slim. Investing in politics is like investing in any business venture and wise people do not invest in businesses that are not viable. (Umoh 2001).
2. **Women are considered as a weaker sex than the men:** Research results show 26% of the men objecting to women holding political position in Akwa Ibom State while 65% of the women wished that the state should be given to the women to lead.
3. **Religious Institutions are also Barriers to women participating in politics:**
Most religious institutions prohibit women from joining politics. In fact, the few women that join politics are considered evil within the societies in which they operate.
4. **Some cultural and political institutions contribute to insignificant number of women participating in politics:**
In Nigeria, the practice of pudah has refused to fade. Till today, women are still caged in the pudah and are refused to even move out freely not to talk of joining politics.
5. **Some husbands refuse to allow their wives to join politics:**
Most husbands refuse to allow their wives to join politics. This is as a result of the fact that politics in Nigeria as well as other third world countries are played in a very derogatory manner.
6. **The management and conduct of elections do discourage women participation in politics:**
An election is supposed to be free and fair. For example, the Israeli election for the post of president 2003 shows the real manner in which elections should be conducted. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Benjamin Natayau were still campaigning while still working on the same table and when eventually the elections came, it was free and fair. The result of the election was also released the same day. Also Lepeng and Schroeder in Germany played election free of rioting and thugery. The result of the election was also free and fair. Women are a set of people who are not willing to hurt fellow human beings. Very few women will be willing to either assent to the elimination of political opponents nor condone thugery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Since the most important obstacle for women participating and contesting for political position is lack of funds, government and men who are able to support women financially are advised to do so.
2. Religious institutions should see politics as an arena that will produce leaders for the society and as such should allow honest people to vie for political positions.
3. Women should realize that women in pre-colonial years were actively participating in leadership and that they also were outstanding leaders. The present day women should also learn by example and determine to lead Nigeria of today.
4. Men should realize that women are also capable of playing politics and in a better and cleaner manner for that matter. Women's perception of a fair process in elections will enhance their participation since they believe that privilege should not be given to one party because it is government party to the detriment of the others.
5. The society should be better concerned about the cultural, political and religious institutions that stand against women participating in politics. As observed by Ekpo (1990) a cursory look into the numerous harmful traditional practices will reveal that there is hardly any practice against the men. According to her, men have always been the designers of tradition, be it in the secular or religious circles.
6. Appointments of women into political positions should be stepped up. The ratio of male/women in Akwa Ibom State executive council 2000 – 2002 stood at 15:4.
7. Women should be encouraged to acquire education at higher levels. This is because the education helps then overcome social prejudice, take control over their lives and assume a status and identity beyond child bearing. (Women challenges to the year 2000).

CONCLUSION

The few women leaders who have been opportuned to participate in policy-making processes have done their work appreciably well. Women representation in policy making bodies at all levels of government in Nigeria have failed to increase appreciably. The Minister of Finance in Nigeria in the year 2003 is a woman; this development is very much appreciated by most Nigerian women. There are also a few other women from the various states in Nigeria who are participating in policy-making processes in both Senate and The House of Representatives in this democratic dispensation-2003. Judging from the number of contestants for political positions, female gender in leadership positions is still quite insignificant. For example the number of contestants in Imo State for the 2003 elections, the Governorship, Senate, House of Representatives, and State House of Assembly totaled 439 candidates, female contestants constituted about 2.28 per cent. (Women and Politics in Nigeria Today).

About 6.8 per cent of women have been privileged to participate in policy making processes in Akwa Ibom State from the year 1987 to 2001. Those women who have been privileged to be in leadership positions have revealed that the men have been instrumental to their successes. This shows the difficulty for the sole effort to reach the pinnacle without the active support of women by the men. It is doubtful whether female participation in politics in Nigeria will change appreciably in the next few decades, if most Nigerian men still hold to their conservative view that women cannot be successful public sector leaders.

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