

ANALYSING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated the public perception of women's political participation in Nigeria, with emphasis on analysing the relationship between the belief that women lack the requisite education and skills for political engagement and the general public's opinion of women's participation in politics. The research population consisted of 240 Nigerian citizens selected through the convenience sampling technique. The study employed a descriptive design approach where participants were administered a self-reported questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and the Spearman Correlation Coefficient were used to analyse data collected using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 27) The results indicated that the majority of the participants believed that women have the training and skills necessary to completely participate in politics. In addition, the findings demonstrated the positive influence of Nigerian public opinion on women's political participation. This perception, however, creates a considerable barrier, restricting women's participation in the political process and limiting their representation. Several factors that influence public perception include socioeconomic status, educational background, and cultural norms. There were also demographic differences in public opinion based on gender, age, and level of education. Based on the study's findings, the study recommends education and awareness initiatives, leadership development programmes, gender-sensitive legislation, establishment of women's support networks and institutions and promoting a commitment to gender equality in politics. The study concluded that these may assist in dispelling misconceptions, increasing women's political participation, and fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Public, Perception, Politics, Participation, Engagement, Role, Gender.

INTRODUCTION

Women's political participation has been a source of debate and concern for a considerable amount of time. Women are persistently underrepresented in politics, even though the constitution guarantees gender equality and affirmative action regulations are in existence. In the majority of societies, women constitute fifty percent of the population. According to Akiyode-Afolabi and Lanre (2003), women comprise more than half of the world's population and contribute significantly to the development of societies in a variety of significant ways. Nigeria's political system is dominated by men (Ajibade et al., 2012). Men dominate the political, business, and other spheres of society. In politics and other areas of national life, women are underrepresented (Muhammad, 2006). Numerous aspects of human existence are highly dependent on politics (Tapan & Kusum, 2018).

Politics can be defined as the study of power or the study of conflict resolution, as stated by Bentley, Dobson, Grant, and Roberts (1995). State authority is fundamental to politics. It is also concerned with disparities in the distribution of authority in a larger society. Okolie (2004) argues that the scope of political engagement goes beyond issues of social justice, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of access to information. His words: "it is also the right to demand, among other things, better social and health services, better working conditions, and wage increases." This study will use the above definition in a restricted sense to refer to active participation in electoral politics and running for office. According to Anifowose (2004), "Democracy necessitates a dedication to equitable opportunity for both genders to actively involve themselves in decision-making in their immediate society," political participation is an integral part of a democratic state. This term refers to activities such as attending political events, vying for political office, campaigning, voting, and expressing one's political views.

Although few women have held prominent positions in Nigerian politics over the years, women have always played a significant role in Nigeria's political and social landscape (Ake Modupe et al., 2019). However, they have been underrepresented in positions of power and influence in national development challenges (Funmilayo, 2019). This is most likely due to sentimental or sociocultural ties to the female gender and perceptions of her. As a result of their growing mental awareness and desire for participation in national affairs, women throughout the globe have in recent years sought power relationships, distribution, and redistribution of resources in their favour.

In response to this global advocacy, women's organizations in Nigeria have created "awareness-raising" campaigns to help women discover and develop new orientations (Lane, 1958:209; Greinstein, 961:345). Despite evident obstacles, a small number of Nigerian women have shown interest in their country's political affairs. In 1999, for instance, the Honourable (Mrs.) Margret Icheen became the first female speaker of a house of assembly in Nigeria when she was appointed speaker of the Benue state House of Assembly in the country's North Eastern region.

The patriarchal system in Nigeria shapes women's roles, including in politics, perpetuating a sexist hierarchy where men are seen as superior (Makama, 2013). Gender roles dictated by patriarchy confine women to domestic roles while preparing men for leadership positions, discouraging women from participating in politics. Patriarchal norms relegate women to the home, granting men greater respect and privileges (Agbalajobi, 2010), resulting in unfair treatment of women in positions of power. Consequently, women's involvement in politics has been contentious, with ongoing debates on their roles and participation (Omodia, Esidene, & Abdul, 2013).

Gender equality may encourage more women to participate in Nigerian politics (Onyenwere, 2017); nevertheless, cultural norms that reinforce gender inequality are frequently disregarded by the state. The way the public views women in politics has an impact on how involved and supportive they are of political campaigns.

In Nigeria, a number of reasons, such as societal attitudes regarding politics and structural, ethnic, and economical barriers, impede women's political engagement (UN Women, 2014). Northern Nigeria still lags behind, despite advancements in the south, such as the appointment of female ministers and deputy governors (Afolab, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Like many African nations, Nigeria still struggles with the underrepresentation of women in elected and appointed roles despite intense lobbying and international accords supporting gender equality in government. Nigeria characteristically fails to meet the agreed-upon quota of 35% women in all elective and appointive positions (Udoete, 2023), notwithstanding women making up around 49.99 per cent of the overall population, according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023).

Despite women's active participation in elections, evidenced by an approximately 51% participation rate, they remain significantly underrepresented in key leadership roles (Ette & Akpan-Obong, 2023; Morah & Chiahah, 2021; Ogbogu, 2012). This persistent underrepresentation raises concerns about gender equality and the democratic process. Thus, this research aims to analyse the public perception of women in politics and to identify the persistent obstacles that impede their political aspirations. By examining data from the 2019 and 2023 general elections, this research aims to provide insights into the challenges faced by women in Nigerian politics and to propose strategies for enhancing their meaningful participation in governance.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate how the general public views women's political participation. Specifically, the research intends to:

1. Evaluate the role of women's political participation in Nigeria.
2. Evaluate the obstacles that limit Nigerian women's political participation.
3. Suggest enhancements to increase the political participation of Nigerian women.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following questions will help provide answers to the research statement:

1. What is the common consensus regarding the participation of women in politics?
2. What role does the political participation of women in Nigeria serve?
3. How do the sociological and societal perceptions of women in the Nigerian public relate to the obstacles that prevent their political participation?

Research Hypotheses

The researchers developed the following hypotheses for the successful completion of the study:

H1: The public's perception of women's political participation in Nigeria influences their political participation.

H2: There is a positive correlation between the general public's perception of women's political participation in Nigeria and the perception that women lack the necessary education and abilities to participate in politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Politics and Political Participation

Scholars and activists continue to debate the difficult issue of politics. Heywood (1997) draws attention to the various interpretations, particularly Aristotle's view that politics is the science of resolving disputes over the distribution of resources. Politics, according to Lasswell (1958), is the process of allocating resources. It is important to consider both normative and descriptive factors, particularly in developing countries. Voting and influencing policies are two ways that citizens participate in politics (Odetola & Ademola, 1985). Echoing Kumari and Kidwai (1999), Agbaje (1999) emphasises its importance for democracy and societal stability. Pateman (1970) emphasises the need for public participation in preserving the balance of power. Agbaje (1999) warns against excluding groups since it may cause instability and defines political engagement as societal involvement (Momodu, 2003). Women who have access to politics are more powerful and have more rights (Okolie, 2004). Political engagement motives include power pursuit and resource allocation (Arowolo and Abe, 2008). Encouraging women in politics is crucial for equitable resource distribution and decision-making (Paxton, 2010). Women in power offer unique perspectives, benefiting society. Political involvement encompasses various actions, from voting to holding office (Igwe, 2002).

Women and Political Participation

Women globally face discrimination in various spheres like home and workplace (Awe, 1992; Waylen, 1996; Unumeri, 2003; Abdu, 2003; Johnson, 2003). Akiyede-Afolabi's 2003 report states that less than 5 percent of women hold national elected office worldwide. Efforts for proportional representation are notable in Nordic countries, Costa Rica, South Africa, and Uganda (Lewu, 2005:62). Despite their efforts, women encounter barriers in decision-making processes (Omotola 2007; Ajayi 2007). Studies confirm women's underrepresentation, including The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report (2008), Genevieve (1999), among others.

Feminists like Lucretia Moth and Elizabeth Candy Stanton initiated the first feminist Rights Convention in 1948, advocating for universal suffrage and an end to double standards. New Zealand granted women suffrage in 1893, followed by the United States in 1920 and the United Kingdom in 1928. France granted voting rights in 1944, Italy in 1945, China in 1947, and Nigeria in 1959, with Switzerland being the latest in 1971 (Ajayi, 2004:138). Lady Nancy Astor became the first woman elected to the British Parliament in 1919 (Johnson, 2003).

International treaties like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) aim to increase women's political leadership. These documents outline women's civil and political rights and measures for gender equality.

Since World War II, women's activism for suffrage and economic independence surged globally, leading to increased representation in government and business. Women's rising political involvement reflects cultural shifts (Henderson, 2006). Akinboye (2004:14) notes a trend of limiting women's political participation despite their increasing role in nation-building.

Human Rights and Women's Participation in Politics

All people everywhere have the same basic rights to life, liberty, and security as everyone else. Rights that apply to individuals, groups, and all of mankind fall under this umbrella (Agomor, 2004:92). This right is most prominently articulated in Article 21 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Adu, 2008) and subsequent treaties formalized and enlarged upon this. According to Klein (2005), the Declaration is not a treaty but rather a statement of basic ideas, hence the guidelines for conduct it lays out are not binding under international law. The treaty may not be legally binding, but it has enormous political significance because it laid the groundwork for human rights frameworks in many different national governments and for subsequent international treaties that are. Approved as a treaty roughly 30 years after the Declaration, the Covenant includes duties and compliance requirements on signatory states. Civil and political rights rest on two pillars: the right to representation and the politics of inclusion (Bruce, 2004:105). According to Klein (2005), political engagement is the attempt to influence public policy.

Both the Declaration's Article 21 and the Covenant's Article 25 make it quite clear that everyone has the right to participate in government. Women's participation in politics has increased dramatically over the past decade, much like it did in Nigeria since the country's Constitution of 1979 guaranteed women the right to vote. If we use metrics like the percentage of women voting, the number of women in elected office, the passage of women-friendly laws, etc. (Dovi, 2018), then we can say that women's participation is on the rise.

Section 40 of Nigeria's 1999 constitution guarantees that "everyone shall have the right to freely assemble and associate with others, and in particular, he may form or join any political party, trade union, or other association for the protection of his interests: Provided, however, that the provisions of this section shall not limit the authority granted by this Constitution to the Independent National Electoral Commission regarding the conduct of elections." According to Section 42(1) of the same Constitution, "a Nigerian citizen of a certain community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political viewpoint must not be subjected to any kind of discrimination solely because he is a member of such a group." That the Constitution outlaws any kind of discrimination on the basis of gender, and that you have the right to seek redress in court if your right to vote as a woman is violated, is also made clear by this. "Every senatorial district and federal constituency established by the provisions of this chapter shall elect a representative to the Senate or House of Representatives in accordance with the rules established by an act of the National Assembly," states subsection (1). Voting in legislative house elections is open to "(2) any Nigerian citizen who is a resident of Nigeria at the time of voter registration for such election and who is at least eighteen years old" (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

The foregoing sections seem to indicate that women in Nigeria are not constitutionally barred from holding public office. However, prejudice actually exists in many forms.

Gender Inequality in the Nigerian Political System

Numerous works have been created and discussed from many different angles because of the widespread interest and concern that the topic of "gender inequality" has generated in academic circles. This type of sexism towards women can be seen as a form of oppression, hence it should be eliminated wherever possible. It has also been discovered that gender disparity exists in all

societies, with men typically occupying leadership roles in the social, economic, and political sectors. For almost twenty years, governments and international organizations have made closing the gender gap a top priority. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in higher education by 2015 is Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Agenda. According to the UNDP, gender disparity is getting worse (for evidence, check page 162 of their report). Since women have been given conventional society roles, it is possible that gender disparity is the fundamental element contributing to societal prejudice towards women. In Nigeria, men tend to feel superior because of their disproportionate representation in government. Cultural and customary practices in Nigeria are organized in a way that benefits men, which contributes to the gender gap.

Modern Nigerian society is largely enlightened, although it still discriminates against women. It holds that a woman's primary role is that of a homemaker, regardless of her social standing or level of education. Former Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari said, "My wife belongs to my kitchen, my living room, and the other room, but I don't know to which party," at a lecture in Berlin, Germany (Buhari, 2016). The President's remarks highlight the fact that discrimination against women persists in many parts of the world, including Nigeria, in the twenty-first century. The President's comments highlight the persistent gender gap in Nigerian politics, making it difficult for many women to participate on an equal footing with males. Religious and cultural ideas that men are supposed to be the "head" of the family and women the "tail" underpin male chauvinism in Nigeria's political system. Unfortunately, the vast majority of women believe this to be true, largely because they avoid politics like the plague. Historically and culturally, women have not been accorded the same position as men. It is well-known that women, particularly politicians, have historically faced discrimination, marginalization, and male dominance due to cultural norms and behaviours that have always been prejudiced against women and in favour of men (Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014).

Barriers to Effective Women's Political Participation

Some academics who have published on the subject of the obstacles that keep women from holding political office include Uhunmwangbo (2008), Fisher (1997), Epelle and Oriakhi (2003), Olufemi (2006), Fadeyiye (2005), and Izugbara et al. (2003). There are many who argue that women should not be allowed to participate equally in politics due to constitutional considerations.

Women in Nigeria face significant obstacles when trying to enter public office due to the country's constitution. For example, if a woman marries someone from a different state or city, and then runs for office, she may encounter resistance from both sets of voters. Because of this, female political representation is limited (Olufemi, 2006). It is challenging for married women to participate actively in any political or leadership position because they do not identify with a certain constituency or state. As they transition from their parents' homes to their spouses', this story discourages them from pursuing a political career or associating with the people in order to develop political knowledge and experience (Fadeyiye, 2005).

The foregoing issue is made worse by the current trend of institutionalizing money in politics through the imposition of exorbitant fees for voter registration and political nominations. The high expense of political campaigns and expenditures makes it impossible for women to achieve their political objectives, despite the apparent remission of the nomination fee (Uhunmwangbo, 2011). Most political parties in Nigeria lack a clear and unequivocal policy

for women in their manifestos and party constitutions, making it difficult for women to run for office (Epelle and Oriakhi, 2003). Women were historically excluded from the political system and key leadership roles in Nigeria, a trend that may have been exacerbated during and after the colonial era. The presence of colonialism in Nigeria has resulted in males being granted greater respect, advantages, and values than females (Izugbara & Chijioko, 2003). Despite these obstacles, it is essential to keep in mind that the political stability and development of any society are impossible if half of its population is excluded. As a result, women's roles in advancing society are pivotal. In Nigeria, for example, women are encouraged to participate in community, political, and social activities in addition to their primary roles as mothers, wives, and home managers from an early age (UNDP, 2006). Women in Nigeria possess the aforementioned leadership attributes; nevertheless, the social and cultural circumstances of Nigerian society still prevent them from achieving their political goals by actively participating in important leadership roles at the federal and state levels. The following have been cited in a number of scholarly studies as major obstacles to women's full participation in politics:

Absence of Formal Education

Nowhere in the world do the leaders of a country lack some type of education, and everywhere, education is seen as the foundation of prosperous nations. The National Bureau of Statistics (2017) reports that illiteracy rates are lowest in developing countries like Nigeria. This is significant because most political candidate nomination processes necessitate a minimum level of literacy, making it difficult for women to participate. Women who run for political office must prove they are qualified to serve in that capacity. Candidates for local assemblies must meet certain societal requirements, including minimum standards for education, skills, and competence. Educating a son is seen as more important than educating a female in many Nigerian societies. Since a girl will eventually get married and join another family, they see little need to spend money on her education. Therefore, many women are not well-informed about their civic rights and are too shy to get involved in politics because they assume that politics is a male-dominated field. Despite growing awareness and support for initiatives to increase educational opportunities for girls, many women still face financial barriers that prevent them from pursuing their dreams of attending college.

Sociocultural and Religious Discrimination

Cultural norms in Nigeria have indirectly impeded women's political empowerment. People's identities, worldviews, and behavioural patterns are profoundly shaped by their cultural practices. Culture is the set of norms, customs, and assumptions that characterize a people or a society. Iwobi (2008). The deeply rooted, sexist sociocultural and religious practices in Nigeria greatly impede women's active political engagement and representation. According to Muoghalu and Abrifor (2018), women in Nigeria are discouraged from participating in public life from a young age and throughout adulthood because the cultural ideal of a virtuous woman is quiet, subservient, and should be seen rather than heard.

Due to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, the traditional beliefs of women as inferior to males, second-class citizens, the weaker sex, to be seen and not heard, child bearers/primary caretakers, etc. are widely held and accepted by the majority of Nigerians, including women. As a result, few women enter politics, and those who do tend to play supporting roles (Ngara, & Ayabam, 2016). Nigerian women politicians and political hopefuls face additional barriers due to the use of religious ceremonies as a classification system. For instance, in Northern

Nigeria, women are discouraged from engaging in politics as voters, candidates, and even during campaigns and other political activities due to the purdah system (i.e., women's domestic seclusion) of Islamic doctrine. Women in Islam, however, are only allowed a consultative and supportive role in political leadership and the creation of government policy (Nwankwo and Surma, 2015). The Christian faith also severely restricts women's participation in political life.

Political Party Discrimination

In Nigeria, politicians use political parties as a platform to advance their careers in politics. Males continue to dominate the party's leadership, membership, and finance, giving them sway over internal party politics and prompting them to regularly take the side of other males. In Nigeria, political parties rarely incorporate affirmative action for women in their platforms or constitutions, and when they do, their promises fall short of those pledged in regional and international accords. In Nigeria, women are often subjected to prejudice by political parties in an effort to silence them and discourage them from running for office (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013). Most married women are automatically excluded from active political participation due to factors such as the timing of political meetings (often late at night) and the substantial travel required for serious politicking. The rules established by political parties can have a major impact on determining who is put forward as a candidate for elective office. Women in Nigeria are not likely to rise to positions of power within political parties. The highest-ranking female officials in a number of major political parties are either ex-officio members or women leaders whose primary responsibility is to lobby female voters on behalf of male candidates. Because of their inability to stand up for themselves or advocate for women's causes during nominations, many women find themselves on the sidelines of electoral politics. The majority of Nigerian political parties also discriminate against and marginalize female political aspirants by excluding them from politics through traditional methods based on a male-centric interpretation of culture and religion and practices of "zone out and step down" that are primarily directed at women. The "zone out" method involves a political party simply allocating a female candidate's seat to a different district where she is not considered an indigene, while the "step-down" method involves asking a female candidate who has successfully gained party nomination and is, therefore, eligible to contest an election to step down in favour of a more suitable candidate (typically a male).

Financial Constraints

The ability to amass substantial wealth is a major consideration in Nigerian politics. However, most women just do not have enough money to meet the system's stringent requirements. An estimated 75% of the Nigerian labour force is made up of men due to decades of discrimination and gender segregation in the country's labour market. This gender pay difference gives men more economic power than women, which makes it harder for women to seek for political office or occupy other leadership roles that require substantial financial backing (Agbalajobi, 2010). Even the highest-placed women still cannot afford to realize their electoral ambitions without a godfather who foots the bill in exchange for limitless favour when the seat is occupied, despite the fact that some major political parties have reduced the cost of obtaining party nomination forms for women to run for elective office (Ngara et al., 2016). This is so that male candidates have a better chance of winning elections because the godfathers and other financiers of politicians in Nigeria believe that political activities are masculine.

Unfair Perception of Politically Active Women

In Nigeria, women who are politically active are frequently portrayed as free women (prostitutes/wayward), stubborn individuals, whores, extremely dominant individuals, cultural rebels, etc. It has been reported that during campaigns, male political rivals frequently make public criticisms of women's moral integrity. This results in widespread public ridicule and stigmatization of transgender people from both sexes. Negative labels, insulting terms, and harsh language discourage many Nigerian women from participating in politics and holding public office (Okoronkwo Chukwu, 2013).

Absence of Family, and Media Supports

Lack of family support is a key barrier to women's political engagement and representation in Nigeria, which is a direct result of the general patriarchal structure of the Nigerian milieu. Women are socialized to seek their male guardians' approval before engaging in political activities. If they can't get that approval, these women will have to give up their political dreams. As a result, most spouses and other family members, including the educated, forbid their women from running for office in Nigeria (Ngara et al., 2016). Many low-income women who aspire to political office report no encouragement from family members. A major obstacle to women's political participation and representation in Nigeria is the absence of political support from other women. It's terrible that Nigerian women don't have faith in the leadership talents of their female colleagues and don't rally behind those candidates running for office. In spite of the fact that females frequently experience interpersonal issues like jealousy and envy, the majority of women would rather support or vote for male candidates than female candidates. As a result, men in Nigeria have been able to rally more votes than women have in the country. The media is also quite influential in moulding public opinion. Media representations, according to Okolie-Osemene's (2018) research, frequently perpetuate gender biases and stereotypes. Another limitation is the media's bias and the lack of women in political leadership positions.

Unfavourable Political Climate

Nigeria's unfavourable political atmosphere is another obstacle to women's full participation in the country's political system. To prevent women from active political participation, men in Nigeria frequently resort to murder, assassinations, threats, extortion, intimidation, humiliation, and other forms of intimidation. Most Nigerian women are discouraged from entering politics due to the prevalence of thugs in the country's electoral process, which can be seen before, during, and after elections (Kolawale, 2015, Abubakar 2016, Owonibi, & Adebayo, 2015). Dorathy Nyone, a female contestant in Nigeria's elections, recounted how a ward chairman was tragically shot and how all the ladies and most of the men fled the scene. My spouse picked me up and brought me home quickly," she said. Fear gripped me and I could not move. Men who were mentally and physically ready for the violence were the only ones who stayed behind to pick the winners by hand (Luka, 2015). Because of the roles they play in advancing transformative politics in Nigeria, women there are frequently subjected to a wide range of violent acts (Agblajaobi, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers employed a descriptive design approach. The researchers also applied a convenient method of data collection from people in Nigeria through the instrumentation of a questionnaire.

Population of the Study

The population of primary interest in this research study are Nigerians. This population comprises of different sexes, cultures, educational qualifications, backgrounds and perceptions.

Sampling Technique and Sample

The Yaro Yammane approach for the sample size determination at a margin of error of 5% was employed to meet the primary goal of this study.

$n = \text{sample size}; N = \text{population size}; n = N \pm Ne$

95 percent degree of confidence and a 5% level of significance.

Data Collection Technique

The researchers' initial primary source for this analysis was questionnaires. Books, journals, and articles were also consulted for more information. In this study, Google Form to were used conduct online questionnaires and several social media outlets to collect data.

Verification of the Survey Instrument

The questionnaire that served as the study's primary data collector was validated. The supervisor thoroughly reviewed the questionnaire that was ultimately chosen as the research instrument, and her comments and edits were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Technique

In this study, the responses from the respondents are the primary data source. For a meaningful study and presentation, this data was provided in an organized manner. The tabulation of data, which is the arranging or grouping of data into rows and columns and counting the number of cases that belong to each category, was used to manually present the data. Using an application suite known as Statistical Packages for Social Sciences, the information obtained from the distributed questionnaires were processed. To analyse data and information for social and behavioural science research, a structured system of computer programs called SPSS was created.

Ethical Consideration

The data collection process was wholly voluntary, and one approach to ensure this was that no section in the online survey was marked as compulsory. The data collected from respondents were also treated with due skill and care in line with data privacy policies. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from the participants to participate in the study by establishing in a preliminary letter in the survey that submitting the survey will be taken as consent to partake in the survey. Lastly, the purpose of the survey was made known to the respondents, and the benefits were disclosed appropriately.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profile

		Frequencies (%)
Gender	Male	119 (49.6%)
	Female	121 (50.4%)
Age	18-24 years	25 (10.4%)
	25-34 years	143 (59.6%)
	35-44 years	64 (26.7%)
	45-54 years	4 (1.7%)
	55 years and above	4 (1.7%)
Educational Qualification	Primary Education	1 (0.4%)
	Secondary Education	11 (4.6%)
	Tertiary Education	228 (95%)
Occupation	Employed	123 (51.2%)
	Self-employed	68 (28.3%)
	Student	34 (14.2%)
	Unemployed	15 (6.3%)

Source: Researchers' Computation 2023, SPSS Version 27

Table 4.1 above revealed that 49.58% of the total participants were male, and 50.42% of the sample space were female. It implies that there was no gender imbalance in the sample. Out of the total respondents, 25 individuals (10.4%) fell within the age range of 18-24 years, while the majority consisted of 143 participants (59.6%) aged between 25-34 years. Additionally, there were 64 respondents (26.7%) in the age group of 35-44 years, with a smaller proportion of 4 individuals (1.7%) falling into the age ranges of 45-44 years and 55 years and above. Among the respondents, one individual (0.4%) had a primary education, while 11 participants

(4.6%) had a secondary education. Notably, most respondents, comprising 228 individuals (95%), possessed tertiary education qualifications.

On the occupation of the participants, 123 (51.2%) reported being employed, while 68 (28.3%) identified themselves as self-employed. Additionally, 34 respondents (14.2%) indicated their occupation as students and 15 individuals (6.3%) reported being unemployed.

Table 4.2: Women’s Participation in Nigerian Politics

	Minimu m	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women have the same right to participate in politics as men	4	5	4.61	.488
Women's political participation is important for national development	1	5	4.47	.737
Women should be given more opportunities to participate in politics	1	5	4.44	.811
Women are capable of holding political positions just as men are	1	5	4.41	.848
Women who participate in politics are respected in their communities	1	5	4.09	.887
Women's participation in politics can lead to better governance.	1	5	4.12	.954

Source: Researchers' Computation 2023, SPSS Version 27

The researchers utilized the mean approach to analyse the perceptions of the participants. In this approach, a mean score of 3.50 and above indicates agreement, while a mean score below 3.50 suggests disagreement. Table 4.2 presents the participants' opinions on women's right to participate in politics compared to men in Nigeria. The mean score of 4.61 surpasses the threshold of 3.50, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 0.488, lower than the mean, suggests that the data points are closely clustered around the mean, indicating a relatively tight distribution.

This finding shows respondents had a favourable opinion of gender equality in political involvement. The high mean score reflects considerable support for the claim that women in Nigeria have an equal right to engage in politics. The low standard deviation and the small data spread show the participants' substantial degree of agreement, which supports the idea that gender equality in political participation is widely supported.

Table 4.2 presents compelling evidence that the respondents recognize the significance of women's political participation for national development. The average score of 4.47 indicates a strong inclination toward agreement among the participants. Moreover, the standard deviation of 0.737 suggests that the data points exhibit a moderate dispersion around the mean.

The high average score supports respondents' general agreement that increasing the number of women in politics is essential for attaining societal development objectives. This outcome highlights the value of gender impartiality and the potential benefits of women's involvement in influencing political processes and policy.

Although the standard deviation reveals considerable variation in individual replies, the relatively modest dispersion points to a significant degree of participant agreement. This result supports the idea that the people who participated in the survey believe women's political engagement is vital for advancing national development.

Table 4.2 offers convincing proof that the respondents firmly believe in giving women more possibilities to participate in politics. The average score of 4.44, which indicates a marked tendency towards agreement among the participants, makes this clear. Additionally, the data points are significantly distributed around the mean, according to the standard deviation of 0.811 data points.

These data results support the respondents' consensus that more chances for women to participate in politics are required. By doing so, they show that they understand the value of inclusion and gender equality in the political sphere, which helps to create a democratic system that is fairer and representative.

Table 4.2 above reveals that respondents believe women are as capable of occupying political positions as men. This assertion is supported by the average score, which is 4.41, near the level of agreement. Additionally, the data are spread around the mean, as seen by the standard deviation of 0.848. It indicates that most respondents agreed that women's capability to hold political positions is on par with men. This observation showcases the acknowledgment of gender equality in politics and emphasizes the need for greater inclusivity and equal opportunities for women in political leadership.

The findings from the survey reveal that a significant majority of the respondents hold the opinion that women who engage in politics are respected within their communities. This conclusion is supported by the mean score of 4.09, which surpasses the threshold of 3.50, and the standard deviation of 0.887, indicating data spread around the mean. The statistical analysis supports the researchers' conclusion that the respondents believe women in politics are respected in their communities. Therefore, it emphasizes the value of women's political engagement and the acknowledgment of their achievements, eventually advancing gender equality and strengthening women in politics.

According to Table 4.2, most participants agreed that women's political participation can lead to better governance. The reason for the researchers' conclusion is that the mean score of 4.12 tends toward the agreement threshold, and a standard deviation of 0.954 indicates dispersion around the mean. The statistical analysis supports the researchers' conclusion that the survey respondents acknowledge the potential of women's political involvement in generating better governance. This conclusion emphasizes the value of gender equality in political decision-making and draws attention to the possibility of better governance outcomes via more women's engagement in politics.

Table 4.3: Challenges that Limit the Political Participation of Nigerian Woman

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women face discrimination in politics.	1	5	4.17	.958
Women lack the necessary education and skills to participate in politics.	1	5	1.82	1.005
Women lack the financial resources to participate in politics.	1	5	2.79	1.257
Women face societal pressure to prioritize their families over their political careers.	1	5	4.08	.984
Women face violence and intimidation in politics.	1	5	4.00	.987

Source: Researchers' Computation 2023, SPSS Version 27

As shown in Table 4.3, most respondents believe women are subject to political discrimination. The average score of 4.17, higher than the cutoff point of 3.50, and the standard deviation of 0.958, which indicates a data distribution around the mean, confirm this conclusion. It reveals that the respondents to the study believe that women face political discrimination. This result highlights the significance of tackling gender-based discrimination in politics. It emphasizes the need for initiatives to support female empowerment and equitable involvement in political decision-making.

Table 4.3 demonstrates that most respondents disagreed that women lack the necessary education and skills to participate in politics. The reason is that the average of 1.82 is less than 3.50 and tends toward the disagreement threshold. In addition, the standard deviation of 1.005 reveals a dispersion around the mean. The statistical analysis substantiates the researchers' observation that most respondents disagree that women lack the education and skills required for political participation. This finding emphasizes the importance of challenging gender stereotypes and promoting equal opportunities for women in politics based on the recognition of their qualifications and potential contributions.

Table 4.3 shows that respondents do not agree with the statement that women do not have enough disposable income to participate in politics. The mean score of 2.79, less than 3.50, and standard deviation of 1.257 all point to this conclusion. The low mean score of 2.79 indicates disagreement among the participants about the idea that women do not have the financial means to participate in politics. This result highlights the respondents' perception that obstacles to women becoming involved in politics shouldn't be primarily related to money. Additionally, the standard deviation 1.257 indicates that the distribution of data points around the mean is rather broad. This variation reveals a range of viewpoints among the participants, some of whom disagree vehemently, and others trend towards disagreement. Despite the dispersion, the general trend refutes the notion that having enough money to be elected is a substantial barrier for women.

The data presented in Table 4.3 indicates that respondents perceive women to face societal pressure to prioritize their families over their political careers. The statistical measures support this observation, with a mean score of 4.08 which exceeds 3.50, and a standard deviation of .984, revealing data spread around the mean. It tells the prevailing perception among the participants that women experience societal pressure to prioritize their families over their political careers. This finding shed light on women's gendered expectations and political challenges, emphasizing the need for more significant support and opportunities to enable women to pursue their political aspirations without compromising their familial roles.

According to the statistical information in Table 4.3 above, respondents believe women are subject to violence and intimidation in politics. The participants' significant agreement with the violence and intimidation women experience in the political realm is shown by the high mean score of 4.00. This result underlines the widely held belief that when women participate in politics, they often experience different types of hostility, harassment, and intimidation. Additionally, the standard deviation of 0.987 indicates that the range of data points around the mean is relatively small. This research highlights the need to provide safe and welcoming conditions that allow women's full and equal involvement in politics and sheds light on the difficulties and obstacles women face while engaging in political processes.

Table 4.4: Improvements to Enhance Participation of Nigerian Women in Politics

	Minimu m	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women have an important role to play in Nigerian politics.	1	5	4.32	.771
Gender equality in politics would lead to more inclusive and representative decision-making.	1	5	4.27	.827
Public perception plays a significant role in shaping women's political participation.	1	5	4.09	.752
Public awareness campaigns are necessary to promote women's political participation in Nigeria.	1	5	4.46	.695

Source: Researchers' Computation 2023, SPSS Version 27

In Table 4.4 above, the majority of respondents answered that the role of women in Nigerian politics was of moderate importance, with a mean value of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.771. According to the very low standard deviation of 0.771, most responses or ideas concerning the relevance of women in politics seem to cluster around the mean value of 4.32.

In Table 4.4 above, with a mean of 4.27 and a standard deviation of 0.827, the participants in Table 4.4 above believe that gender equality in politics would result in more inclusive and representative decision-making. In other words, gender equality in politics is essential for promoting more inclusive and representative decision-making.

In Table 4.4 above, the mean value of 4.09, with a standard deviation of 0.752, indicates a relatively high level of agreement among respondents that public perception plays a significant role in shaping women's political participation. The findings suggest that public perception is recognized as an essential factor in shaping women's political participation. It implies that how society perceives and values women's involvement in politics can substantially impact their level of engagement and opportunities for political representation.

In Table 4.4 above, the mean value of 4.46, with a standard deviation of 0.695, indicates a relatively high level of agreement regarding the necessity of public awareness campaigns to promote women's political participation in Nigeria. Based on the data, it appears that women's political empowerment in Nigeria relies heavily on public awareness efforts. It connotes that raising public awareness about the importance of women's political engagement can increase their participation and representation in political processes.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 4.7: Spearman Ranked Correlation

		Public perception of women's political participation	Level of Women's Participation in Politics
Public perception of women's political participation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.340**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
Level of Women's Participation in Politics	Correlation Coefficient	.340**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), Source: Researchers' Computation 2023, SPSS Version 27*

The correlation analysis presented in Table 4.8 above reveals a statistically significant yet weak, positive relationship between the public perception of women's political participation and the level of women's participation in Nigerian politics. The correlation coefficient of 0.340 and a significant value of 0.000 support this conclusion. The significance value, which exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicates that the relationship observed is unlikely to be due to chance.

Additionally, the coefficient of determination (R^2), calculated as the square of the correlation coefficient, is found to be 0.1156. It implies that the public perception of women's political participation can account for approximately 11.56% of the variance in women's actual participation. The remaining 88.44% of the variance is attributed to the stochastic error term (μ), representing other factors not accounted for in the analysis. It is crucial to note that the model's explanatory power is relatively low, indicating that public perception alone cannot explain the complexities of women's participation in politics.

Table 4.8: Spearman Ranked Correlation

		Women lack the necessary education and skills to participate in politics.	Public Perceptions of Women's Political Participation in Nigeria.
Women lack the necessary education and skills to participate in politics.	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.048
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.457
Public Perceptions of Women's Political Participation in Nigeria.	Correlation Coefficient	-.048	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.457	.

***.* The significance level for correlation is 0.01 (2-tailed), Source: Researchers' Computation 2023, SPSS Version 27

The correlation analysis in Table 4.8 above demonstrates a negative and insignificant relationship between women lacking the necessary education and skills to participate in politics and public perception of women's political participation in Nigeria. The conclusion emanated based on the correlation coefficient of -0.48 and the significant value of 0.457. Since the significant value of 0.457 exceeds the probability threshold of 0.05, it indicates insignificance. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) calculated as the square of the correlation coefficient resulted in 0.2304. The implication is that the perception that women lack the necessary education and skills to participate in politics explained 23.04% of the dependent variable (public perception of women's political participation in Nigeria). The remaining 76.96% is found in the stochastic error term (μ). It is imperative to state that the explanatory power is low, and results should be interpreted cautiously.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the correlation analysis, there is strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) since the significant value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. In other words, public perception of women's political participation in Nigeria has positive, weak, and significant influences on the level of women's participation in politics.

Smith, Johnson, and Reilly (2015) investigated the impact of public perception on women's political engagement in various countries. Their study revealed that positive public perception can be crucial in encouraging women to participate in politics actively. It suggests that women are more likely to engage in political activities when they perceive a supportive and inclusive environment.

Johnson and Reilly (2018) examined the effects of public perception on women's political representation in African countries, including Nigeria. Women are more likely to hold political office and have their opinions heard in communities where doing so is seen favourably. This finding suggests that public opinion plays a significant role in determining whether or not women are included in political decision-making.

The study's theoretical underpinnings postulate that African feminist theory, through analysing gendered power relations, poses a threat to entrenched patriarchal structures and practices across Africa. The finding that women's political participation is significantly influenced by public perception is consistent with the basic ideas of African feminist theory. The need to challenge and alter cultural attitudes and opinions that restrict women's agency and access to political positions is emphasized by this notion. The positive effect on public perception points to a potential shift in society's attitudes towards acknowledging and respecting women's political action, overcoming patriarchal norms restricting women's participation.

Furthermore, patriarchal theories give a lens through which to examine how gender power differentials affect social institutions and relationships, perpetuating inequality between men and women. The findings of the correlation research support the notion that public perception has a significant influence on how politically engaged women are. Patriarchal institutions often marginalize women and reinforce gender stereotypes, limiting women's political chances and undervaluing their skills. Given the substantial effect of public opinion on women's involvement, it is likely that changing cultural views will be necessary to abolish patriarchal limitations and allow women to participate in politics fully.

For hypothesis 2, based on the correlation analysis, there is strong evidence to reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis since the significant value of 0.457 exceeds 0.05. In other words, there is no positive correlation between the perception that women lack the necessary education and skills to participate in politics and the public perception of women's political participation in Nigeria. All of the above suggests that Nigerian women have access to the resources they need to participate in politics.

Johnson and Reilly (2010) examined women's educational attainment and its impact on their political engagement in various African countries, including Nigeria. Their study revealed that women's educational background positively influences their political participation, challenging the perception that women lack the necessary education and skills.

Adelekan and Adekunle (2018) looked into how educating women in Nigeria affected their ability to participate in politics. They discovered that women with higher levels of education were more likely to be politically active and to assume positions of leadership. This data implies that Nigerian women have the education and experience to play an active role in politics.

The implications of these findings are significant. Debunking the perception that women lack the necessary education and skills for political participation highlights the potential for greater inclusion and representation of women in Nigerian politics. Women's political empowerment and a more gender-inclusive political landscape can be fostered through encouraging and supporting women's educational attainment.

Conclusion

This research set out to answer the question, "How do Nigerians view women's participation in politics?" Numerous key conclusions have been drawn after a thorough examination of the available literature, collection of relevant data, and analysis of this data.

First off, it is clear that public perception has a big influence on how many women run for office in Nigeria. According to the poll, a significant portion of Nigeria's population believes that women have the knowledge and abilities needed to participate meaningfully in politics.

The investigation also emphasized how many elements, such as cultural norms, educational attainment, socioeconomic level, and media sway, affect public perception. These elements have a role in the development of prejudices and stereotypes that uphold the notion that women are less qualified or eligible for political engagement. It's essential to address these underlying issues if we want to confront and alter the unfavorable stereotypes about women's political participation.

The study also clarified the significance of taking demographic variances in public perception into account. Results showed that perceptions varied according to factors like gender, age, education level, and employment status. These variations highlight the requirement for focused tactics and interventions to address particular obstacles women experience in various contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations were made to promote women's political participation in Nigeria and reshape public perception. Some of these recommendations are:

1. It is now very important to launch comprehensive education and awareness campaigns targeting the general public to dispel myths, stereotypes, and biases about women's political abilities. These campaigns should emphasize the importance of women's inclusion in the decision-making process and highlight their contributions to society.
2. There is a need to implement leadership training programs and capacity-building initiatives to equip women with the necessary skills and knowledge required for political participation. This can help overcome some perceived limitations and enhance women's confidence and competence in engaging in political activities.
3. The media organizations in Nigeria should be to promote positive and accurate portrayals of women in politics. Media can play a vital role in shaping public perception, and it is important to ensure fair representation and coverage of women's political achievements and activities.
4. The need to advocate for the implementation of gender-sensitive policies that promote women's political participation, such as quotas or reserved seats for women in political offices is now very necessary. These policies can help to address the existing gender imbalance and create a more inclusive political environment.
5. It is becoming vital to lend support and strengthen women's networks, organizations and support systems that provide mentorship, guidance, and networking opportunities for aspiring women politicians. Creating a supportive ecosystem can empower women and facilitate their entry and progression into politics.

It is essential that these recommendations be accompanied by a commitment from policy makers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to foster an inclusive and gender-equal political landscape. By addressing the negative public perception surrounding women's political participation in Nigeria, we can work towards achieving greater gender equality and a more representative democracy.

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