
SELF-ESTEEM, ALTRUISM AND PERSONAL SENSE OF POWER AS CORRELATES OF FEMALE STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN CAMPUS POLITICS

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Abstract

The study investigated self-esteem, altruism, personal sense of power as correlates of female students' participation in campus politics. A total number of 320 female students were purposively selected from eight faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their age ranged from 21 to 28 years, with a mean age of 23.46 and standard deviation of 2.09. Four instruments were used namely: The Political Participation Attitude Scale by Falade (2012), Index of Self-esteem (ISE) by Hudson (1982), the Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRA) by Rushton, Chrisjohn and Fekken (1981) and Personal Sense of Power scale by Anderson, John and Keltner (2012). The study was a correlational design and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient used for data analysis. The result revealed that the three hypotheses were all confirmed as there were significant and positive relationships between self-esteem and female political participation, altruism and female political participation, and personal sense of power and female political participation. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that training the girl child in this part of the world should incorporate psychological paradigms to foster these characteristics: self-esteem, altruism, and personal sense of power, which are germane to raising good female political leaders.

Key words: Self-esteem, Altruism, Personal Sense of Power, Female Students, Campus Politics

Introduction

In many countries of the world, women are yet to be visible in politics and high level economic activities, despite the several post Beijing 1991 conference meetings and affirmations. In Nigeria, through prominent women groups and associations under the auspices of the National Council of Women Societies and Federation of Female Lawyers, women have been making collective statements: that they have "come of age" to take a pride of place in the political life of the country. Again, after the orchestrated 35 percent as ministers and 20 percent as commissioners in states, affirmative action bill on women participation in government, Nigeria's immediate past president: Dr. Goodluck Jonathan made the mark of being the most gender sensitive president by recording up to 30 percent women participations in his administration. The gains have been lost, and it seems that women beg to be given opportunity; as if power is allocated to people in a democracy. Interestingly however, many Nigerian women who have had the opportunity to serve in exalted political positions did well, lending credence to the widely proffered view that having more women participate in policy making and supervision is likely to significantly reduce corruption and improve delivery of dividends of democracy .

Participation in politics derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as

a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. It may best be described as the involvement of the citizens in the political system. Adelekan (2010), described participation in politics as the process through which the individual plays a role in the political life of society, and has the opportunity to take part in deciding what common goals of the society are, and the best way of achieving these goals. To Akamare (2003), political participation is an aspect of political behaviour and it focuses on the way (in which) individuals take part in politics. It is a voluntary activity and one may participate directly or indirectly. The various ways by which the people can be involved in the political system include selection or election of political leaders, formulation of policies, community activities and other civic engagements. Booth-Tobin and Han (2010) opined that: participating in political discussions, volunteering for campaigns, being active in community politics and using mass media to obtain political information which is not limited to a specific sex are means of participating in politics.

In many parts of the world, females have started making very significant contributions in politics. In many others, they are yet to be visible, hence researchers have been interested in finding out, and addressing factors (besides polity issues) that facilitate and inhibit female full participation in politics. In this connection, a study as this, interested in understanding the extent to which personal factors like self-esteem, altruism and personal sense of power may explain female participation in politics at the prime of their lives 'becomes apt.

Schiraldi (2011) defined self-esteem as a realistic, appreciative opinion of oneself found on a continuum between self-defeating shame and self-defeating pride. Both ends of the continuum produce low self-esteem. It is in the balanced mid lie c-f the continuum that healthy and high self-esteem is found. It is an evaluative judgement which individuals make of themselves and their abilities. It is also described as a variety of beliefs about oneself, such as appraisal of one's appearance, beliefs, emotions and behaviours (Cherry,2018). It is usually seen as a personality trait which tends to be stable and enduring.

Self-esteem seems to be one of the strongest factors that may affect political participation. Higher levels of self-esteem have been found to lead to higher levels of political efficacy (Cohen, Vigoda & Samorly, 2001). Higher levels of self-esteem were found to lead to higher levels of women's leadership aspiration, and to be a strong predictor of presidential voting among Black communities (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003). In a study that examined women's mental health recovery in post conflict Peru, researchers found that women were using political activism as a way to recover their mental well-being and increase their self-esteem (Laplante, 2007). Fedi, Greganti and Tartaglia, (2001) found that political activists had higher levels of self-esteem than apolitical individuals.

In addition, Sabedashvili (2002) investigated the impact of transitional developments on women's positions in Georgia. The research focused at the electoral system including: electoral formula, district magnitude, apportionment, electoral threshold, assembly size and the possibility of linked lists. The result indicated women's lack of political organization and financial support, having a low priority which can be

portrayed as low self-esteem because of social and economic hardship and the legislative framework hinder women to get involved in politics.

Nodia and Scholtbach (2006), in their research discovered that cultural and psychological stereotypes are the key factors that hinders high rate of female participation in politics. In addition, Shvedova (2007) investigated the hindrances for women to participate in parliaments and the result was categorized into three factors namely: political, ideological and psychological, and socio-economic obstacles. Under ideological and psychological, it was discovered that traditional roles, lack of self-confidence which entails self-esteem and sense of power, perception of politics as dirty and the role of mass media.

Edward (2011) examined the relationship between adolescent's personal competence and their political involvement, focusing on self-esteem and locus-of-control. The study revealed that both dimensions of personal competence had effect on the affective, cognitive and participatory modes of political involvement. More importantly, the evidence indicated that political salience is a crucial meeting influence on the personal competence-political involvement linkage. Personal competence has a little effect on the political orientations of those adolescents for whom politics is no: significant. But when politics is salient the influence of personal competence is substantial Adolescent's personal competence acquires political significance to the extent that politics is a salient dimension of their psychological environment.

UN women (2012) carried out a study on the status of women's political participation in Bhutan and the result indicted that about 57 percent of women are interested to join politics but are constrained because they suffer from low self-esteem and poor self-image combined with their duties as house wives, mothers and providers. Succinctly put, empirical evidence has proved beyond doubt that a female's environment and perception which encompasses self-esteem, altruism and sense of power determines the ability to participation in politics.

Altruism, the next factor of interest to this study is seen as the engagement in activities that benefit others, often at costs to oneself, but always for no gains. Oliner (2002) asserts that a behavior is altruistic if it meets four criteria: it : a) is directed toward helping another, (b) involves a high risk or sacrifice to the actor, (c) is accompanied by no external reward, and (d) is voluntary. Altruism according to Fowler and Kant. (2007) is a willingness to pay a personal cost to provide benefits to others in general, regardless of the identity of the beneficiaries. This can be distinguished from feelings of loyalty, in that whilst the latter is predicated upon social relationships, altruism does not consider relationships. That is, it involves rendering help to others without even considering any form of relationships and reciprocity. Hence, altruism or selflessness is generally understood to be behaviour that benefits others at personal cost. It is the principle or practice of unselfish concern for the welfare of others.

People seem to engage in acts of altruism, or behaviour intended to benefit another, in as much as it risks possible sacrifice to the welfare of the actor (Monroe 1996,). Altruists do not usually target individuals from certain groups for benefits. Monroe further explains that individuals who are eager to participate in uncommon acts of altruism

express a sense of universalism in viewing human conditions. Instead of viewing self specifically, as tied to specific social groupings, altruists believe that all people in the world are one. Fowler and Kam (2007) in their research discovered that people who are altruistic, appear to be more likely to participate in politics than egoists. Conclusively, people who are altruistic and want to support others irrespective of their group affiliation may have a larger motivation to participate in politics than those who are merely self-interested. However, this will only be true when political outcomes are perceived as generating benefits for everyone, that is, if political products are perceived as being distributive, altruists gain nothing from distributing resources to everyone.

Personal sense of power: the third factor can be referred to as the perception of one's ability to influence another person or persons (Anderson, John & Keltner, 2012). It may also be described as disproportionate control over valuable resources in some settings or contexts (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2013). Specifically, it comprises two distinct facets: the capacity to control other individuals or resources as well as an independence from the control or authority of other individuals (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Linjenquist, 2008). This independence most likely underpins the observation that individuals who experience a sense of power are sometimes less constrained by social norms, and thus are more creative as well as often insensitive.

Personal sense of power influences the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of a person. It is not always compatible with the social position, status in the sight of others, possessed authority, or objective control over resources (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012). The personal sense of power as a psychological construct is thus similar to expectancy beliefs or cognitive models of relationships (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). It involves generalized expectancies of significant others and beliefs about how close and trustworthy or how punitive and rejecting those others are on one hand; and how much control, power, and agency one has vis-a-vis others, which is often called the power dimension on the other hand.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

This study is anchored on the social cognitive theory propounded by Albert Bandura (1986) which asserts that an individual's knowledge acquisition can be linked to the interaction with the environment, observation of significant others, and cognitive processes. It further argues that cognitive processes mediate the interactions between personal factors, environmental influences and behaviour. This implies that an individual's ability to participate in politics is determined by the person's evaluation of oneself as been worthwhile (Self-esteem), social factors like having the ability to help others without seeking reward (altruism) and having a sense of power or authority over others (cognitive process). This theory is of the view that certain social factors (like Altruism) and perceptual & cognitive process (like self-esteem and personal sense of power) determine the level of an individual's participation in politics. From this perspective, any female who wishes to participate in politics must have certain leadership skills in appropriate dimensions that can be motivated by observing other women who had succeeded in politics, thinking positive about politics and believing in

oneself. A female with high sense of self-worth and sense of power is more likely to participate in politics and vice-versa.

In support of the above, Dighe (1995) identified an empowered woman as someone with a sense of self-worth and self-confidence, someone who critically analyses one's social and political environment and thus exercise control over decisions affecting one's life.

The foregoing buttress the need for empirical investigation into the factors requisite for active female participation, Accordingly. The following **hypotheses** were proposed:

1. Self-esteem will positively correlate with female students' participation in politics.
2. Altruism will positively correlate with female students' participation in politics.
3. Personal sense of power will positively correlate with female students' participation in politics.

Method

Participants

320 female students were selected from all the faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Campus. They comprised of female students of various academic levels that have aspired, campaigned, held or are currently occupying any political position on campus. Their ages ranged from 21 to 28, with the mean age of 23.46 and standard deviation of 2.09.

Instruments

Four instruments were used for this study namely the Political Participation Attitude Scale by Falade (2012), Index of Self-esteem (ISE) designed by Hudson (1982), Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRA) by Rushton, Chrisjohn and Fekken (1981) and Personal Sense of Power scale by Anderson, John and Keltner (2012).

Political Participation Attitude Scale is a 9 -item scale that assesses the willingness to engage in politically related behaviour, quantified through different constructs: political activity, and aspirations to run for office. Through a pilot testing with 100 female students of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, the researchers obtained an internal reliability coefficient of .89.

Index of Self-esteem (ISE) is a 25-item scale developed by Hudson (1982) which measures the self-perceived and self-evaluative component of self-concept, which is the sum total of the self-perceived and the other-perceived views of the self, held by a person. It was scored on a 5-point likert scale 1 = Rarely or none of the time, 2 = A little of the time 3 = Some of the time, 4 = A good part of the time and 5 = Most or all of the time. Hudson (1982) obtained a coefficient alpha of .93 and two-hour test-retest coefficient of .92. For the purpose of the present study a Cronbach Alpha of .89 was obtained.

Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRA) is a 20-item scale developed by Rushton et al., (1981) which measures altruistic tendency by gauging the frequency one engages in altruistic acts primarily towards strangers. It was scored on a 5-point likert scale of: 1) Never, 2)

Once, 3) More than Once, 4) Often and 5) Very Often. A construct validity coefficient of .86 was reported by Rushton et al., (1981) for the Self-Report Altruism Scale. Also Rushton et al., (1981) reported an internal consistency reliability coefficient of .84 for the Self-Report Altruism Scale. Furthermore, the researchers obtained a Cronbach Alpha of .91, after subjecting the scale to pilot test.

Personal Sense of Power scale is an 8-item self-report questionnaire that assess one's perception of his/her ability to influence another person or persons. It has an internal reliability coefficient of .90 through a pilot test, conducted by the researchers.

Procedure

The researchers visited eight (8) faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka campus with copies of questionnaire, which were administered to every female student known to have campaigned, aspired, occupied or is occupying a political position on campus; a purposive approach. This was done after adequate rapport was established and information about the study clearly stated to the participants. They were assured of confidentiality of their responses even as their consents were obtained. It took average of 30 minutes to complete the questionnaires; the responses were collated and statistically analyzed. Out of 350 copies of the questionnaire administered, 320 copies were properly filled and returned.

Design and Statistics

This is a correlational design, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used for data analyses.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations of the Study of the Study variable

		Self esteem	Altruism	Persona l	Female Politics
Self esteem	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (1-tailed)				
	N	320			
Altruism	Pearson Correlation	.114	1		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000			
	N	320	320		
Personal Sense	Pearson Correlation	.025	.093	1	
	Sig.(1-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	320	320	320	
Female Politics	Pearson Correlation	.361**	.301**	.685**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.070	
	N	320	320	320	320

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).*

The result above revealed a positive significant relationship between self-esteem and female students' political participation /• (320) = 69. $p < .00$. From the results, it could be summarized that, hypothesis 1, which stated that Self-esteem would positively correlate with female students' participation in politics,' was confirmed. This however suggests

that the higher the self-esteem, the higher the ability and willingness to engage in political activity. Also a positive significant relationship between altruism and female political participation $r(320) = .36, p < .00$ was obtained. Therefore, hypothesis 2, was confirmed. It suggests that an increase in a female student's devotion to the interests of others as an action-guiding principle leads to an increase in the willingness to engage in politics.

Hypothesis 3, which stated that "Personal sense of power would positively correlate with female students' participation in politics," was confirmed. This further suggests that the higher the female student's perception of her own ability to influence another person or persons, the higher the urge to engage in political activity and aspirations to run for political office on campus.

Discussion

This study examined self-esteem, altruism and personal sense of power as correlates of female students' participation in campus politics. The first hypothesis was confirmed. Result revealed a significant and positive relationship between self-esteem and female political participation. This implies that the higher a female student self-esteem, the higher the willingness to engage in political activities and to run for political office. Thus, female students overall subjective emotional evaluation of self-worth is very essential to their willingness to engage in political activity and aspirations to run for political office. This finding is consistent with a previous finding (Edward, 2011), and the assertion by Cohen, Vigoda & Samorly (2001) that levels of self-esteem are implicated in levels of women's leadership aspiration, and a strong predictor of presidential voting. One possible explanation of the finding is that females who have high self-esteem possess self-confidence, are active and optimistic, and have a very strong motivation to excel. As a result, they draw upon these dispositions and engage in politics which seems to be a male's world in Nigeria.

This could be further explained with the social cognitive theory which states that an individual is influenced both by the person's environment and perception of an event as well. That is, for a female to be involved in politics she must have favourably assessed her resources in juxtaposition with other women involved in politics, and with the charisma attached to the profession.

The second hypothesis, which stated that altruism would positively correlate with female students' participation in politics was confirmed as well. This again suggests that increase in altruistic behavior by a female student may lead to corresponding increase in political participation by same. Thus, a female student's devotion to the interests of others as an action-guiding principle is more likely a condition precedent to willingness to engage in political activity and aspirations to run for political office on campus; especially in Nigeria where political power accrues economic power that is required to solve other people's problems. This finding is supported by Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, Birch, and Cialdini, (2007) who emphasized, that helping behaviour engenders social identity and social involvement.

Every female seems to have a heart to help and whereby the female is rich and financially stable, she is believed to have the ability to engage in campus politics

because politics involve being available for the masses. Without adequate finance, help may not be rendered as and when due. Women who are empowered financially have less difficulty in playing active roles in politics as they can assert themselves and are unlikely to become hostages in the hands of political godfathers with threatening ends (Luka, 2011:30). 'Furthermore, women are known to possess certain important qualities that are suitable for leadership which includes hard work, dedication, patience, endurance, tolerance, thoroughness, honesty and transparency all of which are great assets in public relations and public acceptance (Tashi, 2000).

Finally, hypothesis three, which stated that personal sense of power would positively correlate with female students' participation in politics was confirmed as well. It implies that increase in personal sense of power suggests increase in political participation. It is also credible to think that a female student with adequate and positive perception of influencing ability on others will certainly want to participate in political activity and even to run or aspire for a political office. This is in agreement with the opinion of Sassenberg, Ellemers, and Scheepers (2012) who asserted that sense of personal power is an opportunity to fulfill personal aspirations, and a responsibility to act appropriately and to fulfill the needs of other individuals. A female with charisma, good leadership skills and experience will likely be involved in campus politics. Any female that is assertive and open to issues as a result of past experiences and even age can be involved in campus politics. It can also be explained based on the social cognitive theory which implies that being involved in politics is affected by the interaction between the individual's perception of oneself and events, environmental and social conditions such as family support, religious belief and values, finance, social support and many others. The value an individual places on self and aspirations in life determines if she will be involved in campus politics notwithstanding that some people believe that women should be seen and not heard and for which reason some females, who desire to engage in politics decline (Muoghalu & Abrifor, 2012).

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it has shown that participation in campus politics by female students is a function of how one views self, how far one has inclination to offer help to others and how much a person thinks he or she can influence other persons. This, however add to the existing knowledge in the area of female participation in politics. A consideration of the above statement may be significant considering the situation of Nigerian politics in the present times, which is faced with corruption, God-fatherism, embezzlement of funds, and more-promises-less-work. Again, a practical implication is that if these qualities are inculcated into the female child, more females will actively participate in politics on campus, and by extrapolation, more women will actively participate in the Country's political arena.

Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of the study is the scope: many more campuses in Nigeria could have been sampled to make for generalization.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that training the girl child in this part of the world should incorporate psychological paradigms to foster these

characteristics: self-esteem, altruism, and personal sense of power, which are germane to raising good female political activists/ leaders. Furthermore, there should be special leadership trainings for women in politics and gender sensitive programs to empower women.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings revealed that self-esteem, altruism and personal sense of power are crucial factors to female students' engagement in political activity and aspirations to run for political office on campus. The girl child should be trained early in life to discover her real self and hidden talents and abilities made to manifest so as to make it in politics. Those with aptitude for caring and helping others without expecting a reward should be encouraged to consider participation in politics which will ensure peace and equity in the Nation.

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