

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN KATSINA-ALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE THROUGH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF EDUCATION

ORAYEV AVAAN AUGUSTINE

No. 5 Bayer Dzeramo Street

Judges Quarters, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

&

HARUNA, USUMAN (PHD IN VIEW)

Imo State University, Owerri

ICEP

Katsina-Ala Study Centre, Benue State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study is an assessment of the improvement of women participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State through the instrumentality of education. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Two research questions were raised and two hypotheses formulated for the study. The population for the study comprised all the 224, 718 citizens in the urban and semi-urban areas of the study area. The sample size for this study is 400 respondents which was 0.18% of the population which is 224,718 respondents from the study area drawn through multistage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled "Education and Women Participation in Politics Questionnaire, (EWPPQ) was used for data collection. The descriptive statistics of Mean Score was used to answer the research questions while Chi Square statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found out that there is significant influence of illiteracy on women's participation and that there is significant impact of higher educational attainment on women participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The study recommended that more women should be given ample opportunities to develop and empower themselves through the instrumentality of education as this will pave ways for their active participation in politics and national development and that more women should be given opportunities to acquire higher education as higher education has been found never to act as a barrier towards women participation in politics.

Keywords: Assessment, Improvement, Women Participation, Politics, Instrumentality, Education.

Background of the Study

In recent times, nations of the world have witnessed increased discussions and debates on gender issues with emphasis on women liberation, emancipation, empowerment, protection of women rights, and women's participation in politics among others. In order to ensure women's development in modern democracies, governments, world organization and various stakeholders at different levels have made declarations that are supposed to be binding on member States among which include the United Nations Declaration of Human

Rights, which prohibit all forms of discriminations based on sex and ensure the right of life, liberty and security, (Fanny & Adepoj, 2014). It is a well known fact that women's participation in Nigerian politics has been peripheral and trivial. This situation has impacted negatively on Nigeria's march to development. Politics is very important in every human society. According to Pena (2017), politics refers to the forces that constitute and shape the government of the state and its policies and actions while Goodnow, (2014) avers that politics involves the activities of the officials of the institutions of state. This can be ascertained that the stability, cohesion and level of socio-economic development that any society enjoys are reflective of its political leadership. It ensures that human, natural and economic resources are controlled by few people who are interested in the art of management, on behalf of the generality of the people. These are of course positions of responsibility that confer on the holders, certain rights, authorities and privileges of the politicians. In order to take care of all human interests, the two genders are supposed to be fully engaged in politics. However, the reverse is largely dominated by the male gender, often to the detriment of the female (Afolabi, 2008). The result is a "malevolent" militarization of politics in Nigeria.

Nigeria may not have met that requirement of committing a reasonable part of its resources to education, but it has nevertheless, done well in creating institutions that can help the nation develop its own manpower needs. These institutions are annually graduating people who are taking position of leadership in both the public and private sectors of the country. This can be seen in the objectives of the education ministry which is to provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities that prepare students with the knowledge and skill needed for success in an interconnected world (Otor, 2019). In her existence as a nation, Nigeria has produced many personalities of outstanding qualities among them women who have served at various levels, not just their country but to large extent, humanity in general through the education they obtained from educational institutions in the country. In spite of this all inclusiveness in education, the Nigerian woman feels that the Nigerian educational institutions or the country has not given her the much desired securitization required to compete with their male counterpart in order to actualize their rights. The Nigerian woman argues that she has a great part to play in the progress of our country as mental and physical contact of women with life is much more casting the comprehensive than that of men and so should be given a little breathing space to blossom and be their selves (Ezenekwe, 2008). Ezenekwe further said that the stigma that was attached to politics wherein every woman who looks to active politics was seen as 'a good for nothing woman' and was blackmail which is over. Women are now blazing in all spheres of life and according of Hon. Nkiruka Onyejeocha, a one-time member of the House of Representatives and Chairman house committee on Women Affairs, political participation by women in every state is very low as they are faced with many obstacles that undermine their participation in politics (Onyejeocha, 2009).

Participation in politics refers to different ways in which people exercise their rights over the political process. It is seen as a means to an end, where the end may be referred to as political leadership. Mira (2015) sees it as ranging from voting to taking in decision process, attendance at political meetings, funding and holding public and private offices. Participation according to him involves discussion, debates, and lobbying (both formally and informally) in order to enhance national and personal development. Taking the census of political activities both in the country and in the world at large, the number of women political practitioners is quite

insignificant as it is infinitesimal compared with men. In African, with particular reference to Nigeria, no woman has been elected as a governor of a state either during the civilian or military rule. Few women have been appointed commissioners in the state or ministers at the federal level not to talk of emerging as a president. Though some critics may be quick to mention the case of Dame V. Etieba of Anambra State, but the truth remains that she was not elected. However, when the seat became vacant due to the treacherous and kangaroo impeachment of the PDP led House of Assembly, being the second in command she had to boss the show for the interim which she did credibly more than most of her male counterparts in other states. No other event can adequately represent the inhibitions and political road-blocks set for women than that in which even when Hon. Patricia Etteh managed to emerge as the first female speaker of the National House of Representatives, the male chauvinist working round the clock saw to her exist.

Lack of political awareness and solidarity among the women folk has been identified as one of the bane to their political emancipation. It has been suggested by Ihedieze (2010) that women should strive and understand themselves and present a formidable united force. Women organizations and various NGOs should enlighten and sensitize especially the rural women about what women would gain if they are politically conscious and active. Nigerian women should capitalize on their numerical strength, empower themselves politically and avoid the “pull her down syndrome.” For women to succeed politically they need to harness the cultural and educational institutions that empowered women in the pre-colonial period. This could be done through group networking. They should mobilize themselves and carry one another along.

Decades of internalization of debilitating cultural norms has led to women’s lack of participation in politics. Mira (2015) opines that women have thus come to accept their subjugated position as the norm and it has sapped their energy to achieve meaningfully in politics. This situation stresses the need to reeducate them on this negative mind set. They should be enlightened the more on their human rights. Women should be motivated by the great heights attained by the few women who have served and who are serving currently in Nigeria government. These women have proved their mettle in politics. Women face significant barriers to participation and leadership in Nigerian politics due to social norms. A lack of direct representation reduces women’s influence on community decisions and is more generally thought to hold back local economic development.

When women are underrepresented, their influence on community decisions is limited, and they are less likely to have access to resources available to be politically active and well-connected. Recent researches have also suggested that the exclusion of women from local decision-making positions can hold back local economic development. These barriers include social norms that politics is a “man’s game” and that men, rather than women, should take on leadership roles. Public forums that aim to challenge these norms may be an effective way to lower barriers to women’s political participation. A number of factors have been identified by Osoya (2018) as militating against women quest for political participation in Nigeria. They include the following.

1. Lack of formal education which has led to high prevalence of poverty among the women folk. This is mainly due to their unequal access to formal education with their

male counterpart. Another is unfavourable inheritance customs and lack of access to credit facilities.

2. Patriarchal culture and stereotyping of sex roles which has permeated the government, religions and the society subordinates women. The prolonged military rule in Nigeria which alienated women and distributed political position along patriarchal lines stereotyping of sex roles in the family and public life, which has led to the unacceptability of women for leadership roles by men.
3. Lack of political awareness and solidarity among the rural women as most women organizations and NGOs do not actually reach this all important grassroots political structure.
4. Women's lack of confidence and poor self esteem which results from years of internationalization of debilitating social norms.
5. Lack of effective and comprehensive national programme to ensure gender equality in Nigeria.

To assist the women to actively participate in politics, the instrumentality of education will come into play as Ezenekwe (2019) points that very seriously because we are an African society, we are still developing very conservative, we believe because people inherit along male times that is superior to the female where women are seen as chattels or property which belongs to men. Ezenkwe concludes that by educating them, by sensitizing them, women have a lot of potentials and when more are given chance, they blossom. Through education too, people become acquainted with their respective duties and obligations in the society and are also challenged to abide by them and their considerably contributes to the growth of the society. It is time that humans resources are a major requirement for the development of any society, be it social, economy or political. The test that is necessary for the availability of human resources in education as it make the citizens to be efficient great aid and value. When people are educated, they become knowledgeable retained and fruitful members in the development of the society through their various areas of specialization and competence. Hence, it in through education that we have women lawyers, doctors, lectures and even politicians, who will obviously contribute to the growth of the nation. Education plays a crucial role in securing economic and social progress in improving income by increasing the human capital that is inherent in the labour force which increases labor productivity and brings about higher output it also promotes the new knowledge of new technologies product and processor that promote economic growth. Evidently, women need education for tolerance and solidarity. They need knowledge and experience to deal with the rapid changing world. Essen (2019) avers that, education for women is capable of

1. Increasing women's level of awareness or understanding of political issues.
2. Increasing the capacity of rural women to understand the importance of political power and the need for them to participate in public affairs.
3. Educating women on the causes of mass poverty and how to combat it,
4. To educating women on their rights and duties citizens,
5. Educating women on their rights and duties citizens,
6. Educating and mobilizing women to appreciate the value of electoral process and to participate in it
7. Educating women on the dangers off unjust traditions, genders stereotypes and practices.
8. Mobilizing the women to gain the crusade against corruption

9. Mobilizing rural women to participate and appreciate women organization that chart the cause of women
10. Education women for capacity building for personal development.
11. Mobilizing women to acquire functional literacy necessary for advancement of advancement of knowledge on national issues,
12. Mobilizing women to aspire for and assume political offices and
13. Educating women on the constitution and electoral laws (Essen, 2019:12)

From the ongoing discussion, it becomes pertinent to research on the role of education in improving women's participation in politics, hence, the present research.

Statement of the Problem

In Benue State, the situation of low women's participation in politics is worrisome. Checklist by the researchers reveals that, since the inception of politics in the 1st republic up to now, only a few women have participated in the political activities of the state. During the second republic, Mrs. Elizabeth Ivase was made a minister of state from the state and a few others seen in the women's wing of both the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) and National Part of Nigeria (NPN) parties in the state. in the forth republic, Hon. Margaret Ichen became the first woman speakers of Benue State House of Assembly, which Mrs, Elizabeth Shuluwa, Awuese Torher and a few other woman were appointed into the state executive council as commissioners. This analogy is a pointer to low women's participation in politics.

Since the creation of Katsina-Ala Local Government in 1970 only a few women have attempted to vie of its leadership. According to Moses Ayavga, the local government informant officer, the 1st woman to participate in the local council was Mrs. Patricia Avaan, when she was made a supervisory councilor in 1986. According to research, from 1999 to date, Mrs. Nguyan Washiman and P.R.N Akiga participated as supervisory councilors while Mrs. Hembadon Amena, Miss Terfa Denen and Mrs. Agatha Tsar participated as elected Councilors. Mrs. Amena after the council service, went ahead into the State House of Assembly as member representing Katsina-Ala West State constituency. An analysis of the succession chart of chairman in the local government shows that Mrs. Victoria Enyi came in as a caretaker chairman; Mrs. Regina Abo was appointed sole administrator; Mrs. Vera Akua was appointed sole administrator Mrs. Virginia Kpindi, was appointed caretaker and elected chairman respectively. consequently, the number of woman participants in politics in the area of study when compared to the population of women in the local of government of over 124,000 (2006 census) in nothing but negligible, considering the percentage of women in the local government which is about 55% women cannot be completely left out the political leadership for the local government.

In Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State again, the researcher presumes that women are often underrepresented in local political party organizations, as we as in district assemblies. The researcher cogitates that there could be a large gender gap in political participation in the local government area where there abound clear social norms against women in politics where women are made to understand that only men should hold local leadership positions and having no preference about the genders of their leaders or preferring women leaders. Women empowerment through the instrumentality of education could be a revolutionary development in the political history of Nigeria, African and the contemporary

global society. Since Nigeria independence women in Nigeria have been given unfair representation in public affairs and with increased demonstration of their managerial capabilities in all spheres of human endeavours, there is therefore, the need to give attention to the quest for wider participation of women in public affairs especially in leadership. The problem of this research is how could women's participation in politics be increased using instrumentality of education?

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to examine the improvement of women's participation in politics Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State through the instrumentality of education. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine if illiteracy is an obstacle for women's participation in politics in the study area
2. Examine if higher educational attainment can negatively affect women's participation in politics Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

Research Question – The following research questions were raised for the study?

1. Is illiteracy an obstacle for women's participation in politics?
2. Is higher educational attainment an impediment to women's participation in politics?

Research Hypotheses - The following hypotheses are formulated for the study

1. Illiteracy is not an obstacle for women's participation in politics.
2. Higher educational attainment will not act as an impediment to women's participation in politics.

Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. A descriptive survey research design deals with data collection from a large population by drawing a representative sample of such population for the purpose of describing, interpreting, evaluating and analyzing the existing perceptions, conditions or variable and prevailing situations through the formulation and testing of relevant hypotheses for drawing inferences. This research design was appropriate for this study because it enable the researchers to get opinions or perceptions of a sample of respondents drawn from the responses of the sampled respondents that was generalized on the entire population.

Population of the Study

The population for the study comprised all the 224,718 citizens in the urban and semi urban areas of the study area. The sample size for this study is 300 respondents which was 0.18% of the population which is 224,718 respondents from the study area. Multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents form the urban and rural settlements in the area of study. In the first state, the researcher selected the twelve settlements in the area of study. In the first stage, the researchers selected the twelve settlements are they were not too many for all of them to be studied (The urban areas were Katsina-Ala Township, Amaafu, Gbor, Abaji-Kpav and Tor Donga; while the semi urban areas surveyed were Joo Mbatoyugh, Gbishe, Gawa, Ayua Ikowe, Harga). In the second stage, after deciding the number of respondents to be sampled form settlement, the researcher adopted simple random sampling to draw sample

size. The researchers got the names and locations of the households in the settlements from the traditional rulers and information officer in the local government secretariat, which were then written on pieces of paper that were folded uniformly, dropped in a baskets and picked one at a time with replacement.

Instrumentation

One instrument was used for data collection. It was a structured questionnaire titled “Education and Women’s participation in Politics Questionnaire, (EWPPQ). The questionnaire consisted of Parts ‘I’ and ‘II’. Part ‘I’ was a letter of introduction. Part ‘II’ of the questionnaire consisted of two (2) clusters named Section A and B. Section A contained items eliciting information on the role of illiteracy in women’s participation in politics in the area of study. It had five items related to the theme of the cluster. Section B elicited information on the impact of higher educational attainment on women’s participation in politics. The response format was Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered on the respondents by the researcher within a period of four months. A total number of 300 copies of the questionnaire were taken to the field and administered to the respondents and all copies were recovered for data analysis. A four point modified rating scale was used to establish the disparity in the respondents’ opinions. Thus, Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) =3; Disagree (D) =2; Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 were used by respondents to respond to each item in each cluster. The descriptive statistics of Mean Score was used to answer the research questions. A cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision making. The Boundary for Decision Making with respect to positive items was 1.00-1.49= SD; 1.50-2.49= D; 2.50-3.49= A; 3.50-4.00= SA while the reverse was the case for negative items. Chi Square statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The SPSS 23.0 was used for analysis of the data collected.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: Is illiteracy an obstacle for women’s participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

The analysis on this research question is presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Scores on the influence of illiteracy on women’s participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Item No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Illiterate women see politics as a dirty game and avoid it	300	150	98	47	5	3.34	Agree
2	Literate women see participation in politics as a means of escaping extortion and exploitation by the male folk	300	155	98	46	6	3.52	Agree
3	Illiterate women are politically apathy	300	147	122	31	0	2.55	Agree

4	Literate women see participation in politics as a means of exercising their fundamental human rights	300	182	95	13	10	3.69	Agree
5	Illiterate women see women's participation in politics as acting against societal norms and ethics	300	212	82	6	0	2.79	Agree

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2024).

Table 1 shows the mean score of respondents' opinions on the influence of illiteracy on women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. This result reveals that all items had a mean score above 2.50. The cluster Mean Score 2.84 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50 which implies that the respondents agreed that all the items are statements relating to the influence of illiteracy on women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Hypothesis 1: Illiteracy is not an obstacle for women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

The collected and analyzed data relating to the hypothesis stated above is presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis on the influence of illiteracy on women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Decision
Chi square	34.651	85.33	83.22	23.23	22.82	Ho not rejected
df	4	4	4	4	4	
Asym. sig	.140	.085	.037	.021	.073	

(*P-value=0.00; P=0.00<0.05; Ho rejected; Significant Difference*).

Table 2 shows the calculated Chi-square (χ^2) value between 22.82 and 85.33 and a critical value between .021 and .140. Since the calculated value is less than the probability value at 0.005 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that illiteracy is not an obstacle for women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State was rejected. This implies that there is significant influence of illiteracy on women's participation in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Research Question 2: Is higher educational attainment an impediment to women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

The analysis on this research question is presented on Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Scores on the impact of higher educational attainment an impediment to women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Item No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Decision
6	Highly educated women are good political and grassroots mobilizers	300	199	77	16	8	3.94	Agree
7	Highly educated women posses vital skills in politicking	300	112	75	11	2	3.86	Agree
8	Highly educated women can defend their political rights politely	300	121	144	23	12	3.62	Agree
9	Highly educated women are more politically active than their uneducated or less educated counterparts	300	118	232	9	4	2.72	Agree
10	High educational attainment enables women's capacity building for political and personal development	300	135	129	28	8	2.58	Agree

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2024).

Table 3 shows the mean score of respondents' opinions on the higher educational attainment acting as an impediment to women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. This result reveals that all items had a mean score above 2.50. The cluster Mean Score 2.84 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50 which implies that the respondents agreed that all the items are statements relating to the impact of higher educational attainment on women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Hypothesis 2: Higher educational attainment will not act as an impediment to women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

The collected and analyzed data relating to the hypothesis stated above is presented on Table 4.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis on the impact of higher educational attainment on women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10	Decision
Chi square	11.98	18.24	13.63	17.14	2.98	Ho not rejected
df	4	4	4	4	4	
Asym. sig.	.00	.000	.00	.001	.003	

(P -value=0.00; $P=0.00>0.05$; Ho not rejected; Significant Difference).

Table 4 shows the calculated Chi-square (χ^2) value between 2.98 and 18.24 and a critical value between .000 and .001. Since the calculated value is less than the Chi-square critical value at

0.005 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that higher educational attainment will not act as an impediment to women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State was not rejected. This implies that there is significant impact of higher educational attainment on women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this research reveals that illiteracy is an obstacle to women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The implication of this finding is that the more literate a woman is, the more the chances of her exercising her franchise and choosing to be a participant in the leadership processes of her community. This research finding resonates previous findings by Anekwe (2023) who found out that when people are educated, they become knowledgeable, retained and fruitful members in the society that work for the development of the society through their various areas of specialization and competence. Hence, it is through education that we have women lawyers, doctors, lecturers and even politicians, who will obviously contribute to the growth of the nation. In a related finding, Uba (2023) found out that education plays a crucial role in securing economic and social progress in improving income by increasing the human capital that is inherent in the labour force which increases labor productivity and brings about higher output; it also promotes the new knowledge of new technologies, products and processes that promote economic growth.

The second finding of this research reveals that higher educational attainment will not act as an impediment to women's participation in politics in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. This implies that no matter how highly educated a woman is, it does not act as a barrier to her participation in politics; rather, it creates more opportunities and opens up more avenues for her active and contributory participation in politics. This finding corroborates previous findings by Ezenwe (2019) who found out that higher education has the propensity of increasing woman's level of awareness or understanding of political issues, increasing the capacity to understand the importance of political power and the need for them to participate in public affairs, exposing women to the dangers of political apathy and ignorance, expanding the frontiers of their rights and duties as citizens, mobilizing them to appreciate the value of electoral process and to participate in it and mobilizing women to participate and appreciate women organization that chart the cause of womanhood and the promotion of women's rights.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that to assist the women to actively participate in politics, the instrumentality of education will come into play as education will be able to remove barriers such as social norms which see politics as a "man's game" and that men, rather than women, should take on leadership roles. The end result will be rapid social integration, economic transformation and political emancipation of the entire nation since training a woman trains the whole nation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. More women should be given ample opportunities to develop and empower themselves through the instrumentality of education as this will pave ways for their active participation in politics and national development.
2. More women should be given opportunities to acquire higher education as higher education has been found never to act as a barrier towards women's participation in politics.

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