

International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH)

Ethiopia

Vol. 7 (4), S/No 27, SEPTEMBER, 2018: 97-108

ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v7i4.10>

Men Without Women: An Analysis of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria

Nse Etim Akpan

Department of Political Science

Federal University Wukari,

Taraba State, Nigeria.

Tel: +2348033379789, +2347057786929

E-mail: nseakpan04@gmail.com

Abstract

Women do not often receive the support and mentoring they need to compete with their male counterparts in politics. Even voters do not fully appreciate the benefits of having a mix of men and women in government, often saying that women are over-ambitious when they aspire for any political position. As a result, there is currently a low representation of women at all levels of government in Nigeria. In the 2011 general election, female candidates fared poorly, with only 32 women elected to the national parliament out of 469 members, which is barely 8% representation. This paper examined the level of women participation in the 2015 general elections. Qualitatively driven with reliance on secondary sources of data; it argued that women's political involvement in that election was very low in spite of decades of struggle for gender equity and women's empowerment. The paper equally identified and discusses the issue of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, lack of internal democracy, political violence among others as the challenges faced by women in their quest to participate in politics. The paper discussed the theoretical perspective of the discrimination and inequality suffered by women; and lastly suggested possible measures that could aid their political participation and empowerment.

Key Words: Men, Women, Elections, Political Participation

Introduction

The 2015 general elections came to a conclusive end but the memories of the elections have continued to linger in the minds of many. For some, the elections brought fulfilled dreams as they were declared winners in the various contest while others filed litigation in the various election petition tribunals for losing the contest. However, the greatest losers were women who recorded an all-time low participation in the 2015 elections compared to the previous ones. The men seem to have completely forgotten about

women in that election venturing into the process without their feasible presence. In fact, with the result of the 2015 elections, it seemed women's low participation in elective positions have grown from bad to worse. There is growing concern amongst women that the percentage of their participation in elective positions in the country witnessed decline or nose-dived from 2007 to 2011 and then 2015 (Gabriel, 2015, p.4).

Women have contested for different positions in the four elections held by the country since its return to democratic rule in 1999 but have recorded poor results, minimal gains and slow progress. For instance, in 2002, women made up only three percent of elected officials, in 2007 they made seven percent and in 2011 they made up about five percent and even before the 2015 general elections few women emerged as candidates after the political party primaries. In the 29 states where gubernatorial elections held, the representation of women seeking the office of governor and deputy governor was 87 out of the 380 candidates (22.9 per cent) running for the positions. In the contest for senatorial seats, 122 women out of 747 candidates, representing 16 per cent, were cleared by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to run in the March 28 election. The number was not better in the contest for the lower chamber of parliament. Two hundred and sixty-seven (267) women out of a total 1774 candidates ran for seats at the House of Representatives, representing 15 per cent (Gabriel, 2015).

Just as men have always dominated the National Assembly since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the 2015 election result did not present a different picture in the number of women representation while the gubernatorial elections produced four women deputy governors. Equally, the only viable female gubernatorial candidate, Senator Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan lost the election in Taraba state after a spirited fight which raised and dashed the hope of women that at least history will be made with the election of the first female executive governor of a state. Her counterpart in Akwa Ibom State, Senator Helen Esuene of the Labour Party did not fare better as she made no meaningful impact in the all-male dominated election (Gabriel, 2015).

According to Barrister Ebere Ifendu, Chair Women in Politics Forum (WiP), women did not do well in the elections 'not because they didn't come out to participate but because the system is not still smooth enough for them'. She observed further that because there is no internal democracy in political parties; women were not able to come out as candidates (Akor, 2015, p.8). The above paints a vivid picture of the plight of women in the 2015 general elections and propels our interest to set to work to examine and analyze the performance of women in that election. We begin with the analysis of some conceptual and theoretical issues on women participation in politics, highlight the impediments to their participation and as well recommend measures that can boost women participation and empowerment.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Issues concerning women empowerment, equality and their participation in politics are no longer new to scholarly discussions and in academia because since the late 20th century such considerations have assumed universal dimension. Scholarly works are replete of theoretical and empirical discussions of women inequality and second-class status in politics and the workplace. The literature seems to be inundated with variety of reasons that accounts for women subjugation in societies in which they (women) are numerically dominant. The kaleidoscope commentary on low women's involvement in the Nigerian politics hinges it on issues of marginalization, male domination, cultural practices, abuse of religion, poverty, economic and social instability (Agbalajobi, 2010, p.1).

Indeed, Izugbara and Onuoha (2003) have explained how oral traditions, surviving religious cults, relics and indigenous political cultures in different parts of Nigeria support the view that women were major players in the political system in the past. For Ezeigbo (1996, p.34), women's active role in politics during the colonial era, significantly contributed to making Nigeria a great nation. Issues of cultural and traditional practices seem to have severe implication on the ability, willingness and the involvement of

women in socio-political cum administrative endeavors. As a matter of fact, several traditional practices are injurious to women's self-esteem and self-image which are necessary ingredients for the confidence needed in political participation. The issues of marriage institutions especially the polygamous set up, widowhood, child marriage, female circumcision, exorbitant bride price and rejection of wives by husbands because they could not have children are all identified setbacks that prevent women from active political responsibilities (Yetunde, 2008, p.327).

There seems to be a consensus opinion that Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country and thus should play a vital role in the society. Agbalajobi (2010, p.42) while examining women's participation in the political process in Nigeria found out that despite the major roles they play and their population, the society has not given recognition to this segment of society and in addition to that, they are discriminated against. This is due to some cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. He further explained that Nigerian women have therefore over the years become target of violence of diverse form based on their positions in promoting transformative politics. But Murdock (1949, p.106) is of the opinion "that biological differences such as greater physical strength and musculature and the fact that women bear children, tend to lead to gender roles out of sheer practicality. Given this fact therefore, a sexual division of labour becomes the most natural and efficient way of organizing society".

In an extension of his theory of functional imperatives to the study of the family, Parsons (1960) has attributed the function of socialization of the young and the stabilization of the adult personality to the woman. According to him, a woman fulfils an 'expressive' role within the family as she provides warmth, security and emotional support, which are essential for the effective socialization of the young. A man, on the other hand, has an 'instrumental' role which sees him competing in what Parsons' has called an "achievement-oriented society". The social and perhaps natural division is that the man thus relies on the woman to relieve his tension and anxiety through the provisions of love, consideration and understanding.

On his part, Adebawale (2012, p.238) in looking at women's attitude towards their socio-economic and political empowerment debunked the argument that women do not like to be empowered or that only the educated supports women empowerment. He rather argues that many women desire empowerment but do not appreciate the labour that attends such empowerment; enduring the tortuous path to empowerment is a daunting challenge for them. Thus, Agbalajobi (2010, p.77) contended that women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the following ground; first, that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. Secondly, based on natural justice and the fact that all human beings are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life, the right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. The right to democratic governance seems to have brought to the fore many other areas of concern. Especially in the 21st century that witnessed the emergence of the issue of gender mainstreaming. Presently, the challenges of the new millennium compel everyone to be concerned about the many women who have been deprived, marginalized and discriminated against over the years, and as a result of which many have not been able to participate actively and effectively in the political terrain, which in effect leads to social injustice (Akande, 2006, p.167).

Arguably, the present empowerment agenda seems incapable of addressing the ever-increasing challenges confronting women folk. It is important to note that the provision of conducive environment capable of reawakening women's consciousness to contribute meaningfully and compete favorably to the social, political and economic development may not be realized through empowerment alone. Some practices in politics need to be discarded. For instance, political attitude of demonizing hours of political meetings would only compound women's wrong perceptions of politics and as well offers more

leverage for male domination. Again, it is assumed that women must seek permission from their husband to participate. Also disturbing is the antics of most successful women who appear to be proponent of unjust practices against women. The implication is that it nurtures hatred among women especially the ordinary women on the street, disconnect them from being supportive and places men as preferable alternative. In fact, this disunity has remained a barrier (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2012, p.3).

Above all these, what today can be termed as constituting theoretical postulations about women has emerged from two separate political movements. The first was the Women Rights Movement which emerged in the early 1960s. This movement was composed mainly of professional women who began to put pressure on federal and state institutions in America to end discrimination that women experienced in entering the paid labour market. This movement also garnered support from many middle-class housewives who were dissatisfied with their lot as housewives. The second movement was the popular Women's Liberation Movement which emerged out of the New Left in the latter part of the 1960s. It is actually from this movement that most of the theoretical works have emerged.

Women and the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria

The gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressives Congress, APC, in Taraba State Aisha Jumai Alhassan would have made history in the last gubernatorial election in the state as the first woman to scale the hurdles of electioneering campaign and break the jinx that has befuddled Nigerian women over the years from emerging successful at the polls as governors. Mama Taraba as she was fondly called almost made it but then, the near-success syndrome that has been the lot of many Nigerian women in politics cut short her joy. Before the elemental forces played tricks on her, expectations were high that she would emerge successful considering the bent of results that was reeled out by the Independent Electoral Commission, INEC. But suddenly, the elements beat a retreat that first led to the results of the election being declared inconclusive and then, a re-run that finally dashed her hopes as she finally lost the race to the People's Democratic Party's candidate, Darius Dickson Ishaku (Gabriel, 2015). Nigerian women would have recorded a rare feat in elective politics had she succeeded in emerging the first elected female governor in Nigeria.

The above seems to have been the high point of the 2015 electoral contest and the bane of women participation in politics in the country. As earlier noted, the expectations prior to the elections were that women were likely going to do better than what had been obtainable since the advent of civil rule in 1999 as there were some recorded improvements in the number of women that occupied elective positions with successive elections. However, these loses were however compensated by the appointment of 13 women out of 41 ministers by the Jonathan administration in pursuant of its avowed commitment to the 35% affirmative action for women representation (Nessbitt-Ahmed, 2011, p.2).

In Nigeria's 2011 presidential election, Sarah Jubril was the only female amongst the three presidential candidates for the 2011 Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) presidential election primary; the other two were President Goodluck Jonathan and former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. While her single vote cast reaffirms the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian political system, what was even more interesting was the discourse surrounding the only female presidential candidate. One in particular stood out, with the writer asking 'Just why does Sarah Jubril bother?' (Akor, 2015).

Speaking on the process leading to the 2015 general elections, Gender Advisor, Search for Common Ground Nigeria, Ene Ede said noticeable retrogressions were identified not only in the number of female candidates who contested March 28th and April 11 Presidential, National Assembly, Governorship and State House of Assembly elections; but in the focus on gender as well. According to her, "the 2007 and 2011 had better focus on processes, issues and candidacy as it concerns women and other marginalized and excluded groups. Only one female presidential candidate contested the 2015 elections; four female vice-presidential candidates, one main governorship

contender and five deputy governorships; and 15 percent of 1,774 House of Representatives and 17 percent of 747 Senate seats". For her, the major constraint was the processes leading to the selection and nominations to various offices adding that the election crisis resolution, mediation platforms and structures were gender insensitive (Akor, 2015).

Although we could not confirm from INEC the total number of women elected into the various Houses of Assembly in all the states of the federation, records of the number of female candidates cleared by the electoral body revealed that a total number 755 female candidates were cleared to contest the 2015 general elections into the various Houses of Assembly across all the political parties in the entire country. On a state by state basis, Enugu State had the highest number of 67 female candidates followed by Anambra with 65 candidates while Yobe and Katsina States recorded an all-time low of 1 candidate each (see table 1 below). On the basis of the six geo-political zones, the South West had the highest number of 252 female House of Assembly candidates followed by the South East with 203, and North Central with 108, South-South 96 while the North West and North East geo-political zones had 57 and 39 female candidates cleared to contest the elections (see table 2).

However, when compared to the number of male candidates cleared for the same election, these numbers of female candidates pale into insignificance as a total of 4520 male candidates emerged against 755 females nationwide for the house of assembly elections. The highest number of male candidates for that election came from Oyo State with 234, followed by Kano with 220 and Imo with 218 candidates. It is surprising that Oyo state with that number of male candidates had only 28 females and thus had the highest differentials between male and female of minus 206. Similarly, Kano with 220 male candidates had only 19 females with a difference of minus 201, followed by Imo State with minus 188, Sokoto with minus 169 and Katsina with minus 162. Of all, Enugu and Osun with a fair number of both female and male candidates recorded the lowest differentials of minus 31 and 45 respectively (see table 3).

Table 1: Distribution of the total number of female candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections according to the thirty-six (36) states of the federation.

S/NO	STATE	NO. OF CANDIDATES
1.	ABIA	27
2.	ADAMAWA	10
3.	AKWA – IBOM	9
4.	ANAMBRA	65
5.	BAUCHI	4
6.	BAYELSA	9
7.	BENUE	11
8.	BORNO	2
9.	CROSS RIVER	10
10.	DELTA	37
11.	EBONYI	14
12.	EDO	13
13.	EKITI	37
14.	ENUGU	67
15.	GOMBE	7
16.	IMO	30
17.	JIGAWA	3
18.	KADUNA	8
19.	KANO	19
20.	KATSINA	1

21.	KEBBI	18
22.	KOGI	22
23.	KWARA	32
24.	LAGOS	43
25.	NASSARAWA	2
26.	NIGER	13
27.	OGUN	42
28.	ONDO	30
29.	OSUN	72
30.	OYO	28
31.	PLATEAU	28
32.	RIVERS	18
33.	SOKOTO	3
34.	TARABA	15
35.	YOBE	1
36.	ZAMFARA	5
Total no. of candidates		755

Source: Compiled by author with data collected from INEC web site on www.inecnigeria.org accessed on 20th July, 2018.

Table 2: Distribution of the total number of female candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections according to the six (6) Geo-political zones.

S/NO	NAME OF ZONE	TOTAL NO. OF CANDIDATES
1.	SOUTH – EAST	203
2.	SOUTH – WEST	252
3.	SOUTH – SOUTH	96
4.	NORTH – CENTRAL	108
5.	NORTH – WEST	57
6.	NORTH – EAST	39
Total no. of candidates		755

Source: Compiled by author with data collected from INEC web site on www.inecnigeria.org accessed on 18th July, 2018.

Table 3: Distribution of the total number of female candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections against the number of male candidates according to the thirty-six states of the federation.

S/NO	STATE	NO. OF FEMALE CANDIDATES	NO. OF MALE CANDIDATES	DIFFERENCE
1.	ABIA	27	126	-99
2.	ADAMAWA	10	152	-142
3.	AKWA – IBOM	9	110	-101
4.	ANAMBRA	65	180	-115
5.	BAUCHI	7	111	-104
6.	BAYELSA	9	135	-126
7.	BENUE	11	80	-69
8.	BORNO	2	112	-110
9.	CROSS RIVER	10	62	-52
10.	DELTA	37	158	-121
11.	EBONYI	14	91	-77

12.	EDO	13	97	-84
13.	EKITI	37	95	-58
14.	ENUGU	67	98	-31
15.	GOMBE	7	94	-87
16.	IMO	30	218	-188
17.	JIGAWA	3	83	-80
18.	KADUNA	8	108	-100
19.	KANO	19	220	-201
20.	KATSINA	1	163	-162
21.	KEBBI	18	91	-73
22.	KOGI	22	93	-71
23.	KWARA	32	99	-67
24.	LAGOS	43	178	-135
25.	NASSARAWA	2	123	-121
26.	NIGER	13	103	-90
27.	OGUN	42	157	-115
28.	ONDO	30	141	-111
29.	OSUN	72	117	-45
30.	OYO	28	234	-206
31.	PLATEAU	28	62	-34
32.	RIVERS	18	149	-131
33.	SOKOTO	3	172	-169
34.	TARABA	15	95	-24
35.	YOBE	1	68	-67
36.	ZAMFARA	5	145	-140
		755	4520	

Source: Compiled by author with data collected from INEC web site on www.inecnigeria.org accessed on 18th July, 2018.

From the above table, a total of 755 women got clearance from INEC to contest the House of Assembly election in the various states of the federation against a total of 4520 male candidates. This translated to about 14.31% of the total number of female candidates for the house of assembly election while the male candidates accounted for 85.68% of the total. For the Senate and House of Representatives, the contention is no longer on the number of candidates since the figures that won the elections are already in the public domain. Nigerian women had only additionally been blessed with four (4) deputy governors who are supporting the governors in their various states. This number still remains low as the expectations were that the rate of women participation in the 2015 elections would surpass the record of 2011. As it stands, the difference between the numbers of women in both elections is still insignificant. This development also put the issue of women participation in politics, gender equality and the pursuit of 35% affirmative action in reverse in spite of the concerted efforts by women activists and groups, civil society as well as other stakeholders in drumming support for gender parity. The percentage of women that contested for the various offices remained low. While the Senate recorded 16 percent, the House of Representatives scored 15 percent.

Overall, table 4 below shows the standing of Nigerian women in political participation and performance from 1999 when democratic governance was restored in the country to 2018 while table 5 depicts the current level of representation of men and women in elective positions in the country. However, efforts by the researcher to get information on the number of women that has been elected into the various houses of assembly proved abortive as visits to the INEC headquarters yielded no positive result. The electoral body had not also posted this information on their website within the period of this study.

Table 4: The Standing of Nigerian Women in Political Participation and Performance from 1999 to 2018.

S/N	Position	No. of Seats	No. of Women in 1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
1.	Presidency	2	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Senate	109	3	4	8	7	8
3.	House of Reprs	360	12	23	26	26	14
4.	Governorship	36	0	0	0	0	0
5.	Deputy Governorship	36	1	2	6	3	4
6.	36 State Houses of Assembly	990	12	38	54	62	-
	Total	1533	28	67	94	98	26

Source: Lance-Onyiewu, Maureen (2011), Excerpt from UN Women’s Preliminary Analysis of the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria. The column for 2015 is computed by author with data from INEC’s web site on www.inecnigeria.org accessed on 15th July, 2018.

The above record unveils the fact that women still have a long way to go as their level of participation is still very low. The fact that the record of their performance in the House of Assembly elections is not captured in this table does not seem to invalidate the trend of their participation and would normally not deviate much from their standard performance over time judging from their performance in other political offices. A lot of factors can be adduced for this low-level performance by women but the issue of political violence, money and godfatherism as well as the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society cannot be ruled out.

Table 5: Representation of Men and Women in Elective Positions as at 2015 Elections

S/N	Position	Men	Women	Total
1.	President	1	0	1
2.	Vice President	1	0	1
3.	Senate	101	8	109
4.	House of Representatives	346	14	360
5.	Governor	36	0	36
6.	Deputy Governor	32	4	36
7.	House of Assembly	-	-	990
		517	26	1533

Source: Compiled by author with data from INEC web site on www.inecnigeria.org accessed on 16th July, 2018.

The poor outing by women in the 2015 general elections became most worrisome and disappointing because of the level of preparations carried out by a lot of women advocacy groups. Numerous seminars and conferences aimed at preparing the bulk of Nigerian women with political ambition for the electoral contest were organized with both local and international participants.

The fact is that the 2015 general elections did not deviate from the pattern of previous elections although scholars, analysts and even women were optimistic that female aspirations in the political process will receive a boost from the amount of preparations undertaken in that direction. What this meant was that the men had once again decided to go on their own as usual leaving the women to wonder as rudderless ship in a contest that they would have made meaningful impact had policies been put in place to

encourage female participation. Several reasons could be adduced for the abysmal performance of women in the 2015 elections, some of which we intend to highlight in the next section of this paper.

Challenges Faced by Women in the 2015 General Elections

At the beginning of the 21st century, over 95 percent of all countries in the world have granted women the two most fundamental democratic rights: the right to vote and the right to stand for election. New Zealand was the first country to give women the right to vote, in 1893; and Finland was the first to adopt both fundamental democratic rights in 1906. There are still a few countries that deny women both the right to vote and the right to stand for elections (Shvedova, 2008, p.32).

The truth is that the obstacle to women's participation in politics is a universal phenomenon and not limited to Nigeria although there could be some specific country peculiarities. Therefore, the obstacles faced by Nigerian women during the 2015 general elections will generally not be different from what has been impeding the progress of women in their struggle for political emancipation in a vocation not only dominated by men but seen as their exclusive preserve. The belief that women are not to be heard is one among several challenges that hamper women from political participation. While women represent a formidable force in politics in Nigeria, their enthusiasm and skills have not translated into supporting gender mainstreaming within parties. Thus, there is need for a more integrated strategy to influence the party to support gender mainstreaming.

Nigerian women in politics also faced the challenge of the lack of internal democracy in almost all the political parties in the country. The number of women who scaled through the party's primaries was very low in the 2015 election compared to the number of women who aspired. Added to this is the issue of consensus which often times does not even give room for any competition between aspirants as most of the candidates are handpicked to contest the various political offices. In a male dominated party executive, it could be very difficult to give women the chance to compete fairly with their male counterparts. There is also the lack of political will by the party leadership to implement measures that can aid women aspirations.

The 2015 general election witnessed a lot of political violence which resulted in numerous deaths of party supporters, agents and even innocent Nigerian voters. These included: ballot snatching and stuffing, thuggery, vote buying, collation and declaration of fake results among other corrupt tendencies which definitely put women at a disadvantage as they are hardly able to match the male candidates in rigging and these other electoral vices. In fact, where they would even muster the courage to do so, they lack the financial muscle to finance such ventures as their male counterparts most of whom are incumbent political office holders with the paraphernalia of office attached to their offices intact at the point of electoral contest.

Equally, there are other religious and cultural challenges which women find it difficult to surmount. From the ones that concern the hours of meetings which often times is held in the mid night to those that involve visits to shrines for oath administration for loyalty and commitment, the women are disadvantaged as they can hardly subject themselves to such political manipulations in the name of getting a slot for representation in whatever office that they may aspire. In fact, for women in the Muslim sect, it is very difficult for them to break the barriers of both culture and religion to aspire for elective positions. On a more general note, in most countries, women perceive politics as a 'dirty' game. This has jarred their confidence in their ability to participate in political processes. In fact, such a perception is prevalent worldwide and reflects the reality in many countries.

Corruption remains a serious challenge to women in their bid for public office whether by election or appointment. It also manifests in diverse forms and shape, ranging from bribery and extortion to the process of procurement of goods and services as well as contract awards. In Nigeria, the electoral umpires have not been left out of the process of corruption. Unconfirmed reports abound in the media

that many INEC officials soiled their palms during the 2015 elections and such colluded with corrupt politicians to rig the elections in favour of some candidates.

Women and Electoral Contest in Nigeria: The Way Forward

One of the major impediments to women participation in elective politics is the level of violence that has been trailing the electoral process in the country. Political violence negates women's chances at the polls and in political participation thus, the State should ensure full security for women and girls during election periods and end this impunity. Political Parties should commit to non-violent campaigning and desist from hate speech while non-violent education should be mainstreamed in all awareness raising and voter education campaigns by all players. The State should safeguard freedom of movement, expression and assembly for all citizens especially women during and even after elections.

Additionally, perpetrators of political violence should be brought to justice. Nigerian women need more than economic empowerment for success at the polls. This highlights the need for the establishment of a special tribunal for the trial of perpetrators of election violence, a situation where numerous lives will be lost during elections and the perpetrators continue to walk the streets free without any arrest and prosecution is undesirable and government should do all within its powers to bring such culprits to justice. Adequate compensation should be paid to victims and their families. A situation where a suspect of political violence would contest for party primaries, contest and win election and get an arrangement for bail thereafter questions the political will of government to address political violence. The report of the 22-person panel inaugurated by President Goodluck Jonathan to look into the causes of the post-election violence in 2011 should be made public and the recommendation implemented to the letter to deter future occurrence and guarantee security (Irabor, 2012, p.5).

Furthermore, the government should emphasize the need to educate and even train political parties on women's political participation and their impact on democracy and good governance. Such training will expose the political parties to basic principles of internal democracy, gender and democratic governance. Similarly, gender sensitive provisions should be mandatorily included in party's constitution and manifestoes as this will serve the purpose of mainstreaming gender into its activities. In addition government should take steps to assess and examine the process of the conduct of party primaries with a view to formulating and implementing reforms that will support a more gender friendly process and as well create a level playing field for all participants. At best the electoral law should be amended to include a clause for independent candidacy which may help extricate women from the web of male dominated political parties.

There is also need for the establishment of a Women's Political Institute where parties and all female candidates should be trained and equipped with relevant skills that can empower and embolden them to compete favorably with their male counterparts in any elective position of their choice. This will further challenge them to improve their level of education and enable them cope with the challenges and demands of electoral contest (Irabor, 2012, p.6).

Finally, women activists and groups should be active in the fight against corruption and bribery and as well be at the forefront of the advocacy for electoral reforms that will make the use of money during elections a criminal offence in which both the giver and receiver of such monies are culpable. In fact, there is greater need for the adoption of the recommendations of the Justice Uwais Electoral Reform Commission on representation of women and persons with disabilities on proportional basis with respect to selection of candidates for elective office as circumstances may permit by parties during party primaries. This will be in line with temporary special measures to accelerate equality between men and women. At best political parties should be compelled to adopt a gender quota that will reserve certain number of seats in the national and state assemblies as well as other elective positions for female

aspirants and candidates. This in fact, has been the case in some African countries. The classic example is Rwanda, which had 48.8 per cent of seats in its lower house of Parliament held by women in 2003.

Conclusion

This paper examined the performance of women in the 2015 general elections as a part means of assessing how they fared so far in elective politics. It discovered that there is no marked improvement in the performance of women and by extension their representation in the 2015 elections in comparison to past ones. This situation of women under representation becomes worrisome given the expectations and predictions from scholars, analysts and even the media that democratic rule in Nigeria is beginning to deepen and as such women would perform better in that election. In fact, it became more disappointing when weighed against the level of preparations witnessed in the build-up to the elections for women enlightenment, education and empowerment particularly through conferences, seminars and workshops organized for women both locally and internationally. This paper uncovers the fact that Nigerian women are still some distance away from gender equity and balancing in spite of some of the policies put in place to assist gender mainstreaming as the men have refused to act in ways that can accelerate the attainment by women of the 35% affirmative action whether now or in the nearest future. This paper therefore concludes that the 2015 general elections in the country were “of men, by men and for men”.

References

- Adebowale, J. O. (2012). Empowering women in Nigeria: A paradigm shift in contemporary development efforts. *AAU: African Studies Review*, 9, pp.133-138
- Agbalajobi, D.T. (2010). Women’s participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Vol. 4(2), pp. 44-56.
- Akande, J. (2006). Gender mainstreaming in Nigeria’s political development. *Nigeria Journal of Legislative Affairs*. Vol.1, No 1, pp. 14-22.
- Akor, O. (2015). How women performed in the 2015 general elections. *Daily Trust*: 24 April, p.3.
- Ezeigbo, A. (1996). *Gender issues in Nigeria: A feminine perspective*. New York: Vista Books.
- Gabriel, C. (2015). Elective positions: Why Nigeria records more women losers than winners. *Vanguard*, 19 June, p.4.
- Irabor, F. O. (2012). Women’s participation and performance in Nigeria politics: Challenges and solutions. Power Point presentation, Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, December.
- Izugbara, C. O. & Onuoha, C. B. (2003). Gendered governance and the agenda of gender justice: Framing the discourse with lessons from Nigeria. *South-South Journal of Culture and Development*, 5(1), pp. 66-82.
- Murdock, G. (1949). *Social structure*. New York: McMillan Publishers.
- Nessbitt-Ahmed, Z. (2011). Beyond numbers: Women’s political marginalization in Nigeria. *Gender Across Borders Monthly Newsletter*, 14 October.
- Nwanegbo, C. J. & Odigbo, J. (2012). Women’s Political Participation and Politics of Disempowerment in Abia State of Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 4, No.20, pp. 42-50.
- Parsons, T. (1960). *Structure and processes in modern societies*. Chicago: Free Press.

- Shvedova, N. (2008). *Women in parliament: Obstacles to women's participation*. Stockholm: International IDEA.
- Yetunde, A. (2008). Nigerian women in politics: A study of the role of women in Obasanjo's administration (1999-2007). In Folalo T. & Fwatshak S. (Eds.) *Beyond Tradition. African women and cultural spaces*. Lagos: Frankard Publications.