

## **Mass Media and the Mobilisation of Women for Political Participation during the 2019 Gubernatorial Election in Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study was aimed at evaluating the role of the mass media in the mobilisation of women for political participation in the 2019 Gubernatorial election in Nigeria. The rationale for the study was to determine the extent to which the mass media mobilised women for political activities during the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Survey research method was used for the study, while questionnaire was used to elicit data from a sample respondent of 385 women in Lafia, Nasarawa State. Findings from the study indicated that 40.3% of the women were well exposed to media messages geared towards mobilising them to participate in the election; 37.7% of them affirmed that they received political messages via radio; and 51.9% said they participated to a great extent in the elections. Findings further showed that 58.4% of the respondents were of the opinion that the mass media did not project or give enough coverage to women contestants during the election. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that women should be encouraged by stakeholders in the society to venture into politics and that the government and civil society organisations should propose a law to ensure that the mass media do not discriminate against women who are contesting for political offices in the country.

**Keywords:** Politics, Women, Mobilisation, Mass Media, Gubernatorial Election, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Women have always been at the receiving end of the political equation in most countries. This is especially true in most African States and Nigeria is not an exception. In fact, women are always relegated to the background in Nigerian politics whenever it comes to both political appointments and elective positions. This does not come as a surprise because the history of politics in Nigeria has always been the history of political marginalisation of women (Edeh & Iloh, 2011). Women form 49.4 percent of Nigeria's population (Eyongi, 2019). However, female political representation in the 2019 elections was negligible relative to the approximately half of the population they constitute, with 2,970 women on the electoral ballot, representing only 11.36 percent of nominated candidates.

Despite governments efforts and civil society organisations to ensure that Nigerian women representation increase in the political space, women political representation has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions. For instance, several efforts have been made to address the low representation of women in elective and appointive positions in Nigeria; among such efforts are the establishment of women political empowerment office and Nigeria Women Trust Funds, Women Lobby Group. Other efforts include the institution of an INEC gender policy, the national multi-stakeholder dialogue; the initiation of several interventions to actualise affirmative action and the convening of the Nigeria Women Strategy Conference (Oluyemi, 2013).

This is against the backdrop of the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. In Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively (Eyongi, 2019).

The under representation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in Nigerian society, much of which were obvious from pre-colonial era till date. However, the re-introduction of democratic governance during the Olusegun Obasango administration has witnessed once again an increase in women participation in political activities both in elective and appointive offices. However, with the exit of Olusegun Obasango era the level of women political participation in both elective and appointive positions has continued to decline steadily over the years. For instance, during the 2019 General Elections, 235 women, forming 12.34 per cent of candidates, contested for a seat in the Senate of which seven (6.42 per cent) were elected. This remained constant in the 8th Senate, which also accounted for 6.42 per cent of the total number of elected senators. The two dominant political parties, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and its main opposition, the PDP, fielded seven and 10 candidates respectively.

A female senator from Northern Nigeria, Binta Garba, is among those who lost. The minority leader of the 8th Senate, Abiodun Olujimi, also lost her re-election bid. In the House of Representatives, 533 women contested, with the major parties fielding a total of 31 (15 APC and 16 PDP) candidates. However, only 11 (3.05 percent) have been elected. The figures from the 8th House have thus been halved, as it had 22 female lawmakers. At the state level, no woman was elected governor. They formed 3.07 percent of the total candidates. Of the 275 women forming 11.40 percent of candidates for the Deputy Governorship, four (in Enugu, Kaduna, Ogun and Rivers States) were elected. Thus, the number of female deputy governors has declined from six in the 2015-19 to four. While women have consistently held the position of deputy governor in Lagos State, the emergence of Obafemi Hamzat as Deputy-Governor elect marked a departure from the past (Eyongi, 2019).

With these staggering statistics, Nigeria still has a long way to go in its quest to integrate women into the political space in the country. It is an incontrovertible fact that the mass media are indispensable in mobilising citizens for political participation in a democracy. They are channels through which individuals and people are mobilised to actively engage in government policies and programmes. As instruments charged with the responsibility of educating and creating awareness in the society, they can serve as potent vehicles to mobilise women for political participation. It is upon this premise that this study investigated the role of the mass media in mobilising women towards participation in politics during the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

That Nigerian women ranking in politics have continued to slide down compared to some countries like Sudan, Ethiopia and Pakistan is a development that calls for serious action. The strategic role of women in political development cannot be overemphasised. In pre-colonial times women like queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Bakwa Turuku, Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin, Omu Okwei of Ossomari, Olufunmilayo Ransom Kuti of Abeokuta and Margaret Ekpo played significant roles in the development of their societies. Their input to the development of their domains cannot be forgotten in the annals of political history of Nigeria.

Research has shown that women are not given adequate mass media coverage like their male counterparts during electioneering campaigns and this has affected women's visibility in the political space (Oyesomi & Oyero, 2012; Ugbede, 2013; Ottah, 2018). Even when women are given space during political campaigns by the mass media they are not adequately and sufficiently given enough space or air time like their male political candidates. This development has discouraged the women folks in venturing into politics in their numbers. This is coupled with religious and traditional beliefs and practices that further hinder the participation of women in the body polity of the country.

For these encumbrances to be surmountable and thus liberate Nigerian women to recalibrate their minds from these age-long traditional belief systems, the strategic role of the mass media must come into play to educate and mobilise women to take their rightful place within the Nigerian political system. Hence this study explores the place of mass media in mobilising women for political participation during the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. determine the level of exposure to mass media programmes geared towards women's political mobilisation in the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Lafia, Nasarawa State;
2. ascertain the channels through which women were mobilised to participate in the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Lafia, Nasarawa State;
3. determine the extent to which the mass media projected women who contested for elective positions during the election in the State; and
4. find out the extent of women's political participation in the 2019 gubernatorial elections as a result of mass media mobilisation campaign in the State.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Agenda Setting theory can be traced to Walter Lippmann's 1922 book titled "Public Opinion." Lippmann argues that the mass media are the principal connection between events in the world and the images in the minds of the public. Following Lippmann, in 1963, Bernard Cohen observed that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. The world will look different to different people" (Asemah, Nwammuo & Uwaoma, 2017).

As early as the 1960s, Cohen had expressed the idea that later led to formalisation of Agenda-Setting theory by McCombs and Shaw. Thus, in 1992, Walter Lippmann's book on Public Opinion set the stage for the theory of agenda setting by arguing that "the news media construct our view of the world (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, cited in Asemah *et al.*, 2017). Lang & Land (1996) reinforced this notion by observing that the mass media pay attention to certain issues, they are constantly presenting objects, suggesting what individuals should think and have feelings about.

Agenda-Setting theory was formally developed by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in a study on the 1968 American presidential election. In the 1968 Chapel Hill study, McCombs and Shaw demonstrated a strong correlation coefficient between what 100 residents of Chapel Hill, North Carolina thought was the most important election issue and what the local and national news media reported that were the most important issues. Agenda Setting theory as noted by Ikpe (2012) cited in Asemah *et al*

(2017) metamorphosed from hypothesis to a theory and the rule has changed from agenda setting to agenda building.

The major assumption of the theory is that the media set agenda for the public to follow. The theory holds that most of the pictures we store in our heads, most of the things we think or worry about, most of the issues we discuss, are based on what we have read, listened to or watched in different mass media. The media make us to think about certain issues, they make us to think or feel that certain issues are more important than others in our society.

Folarin (2005) notes that the agenda setting theory implies that the mass media pre-determine what issues are regarded as important at any given time in a given society; Agenda Setting theory does not ascribe to the media the power to determine what we actually think, but does ascribe to them the power to determine what we are thinking about. The elements of the Agenda Setting according to Folarin (2005) include the quantity or frequency of reporting, prominence given to the reports through headlines display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics or timing on radio and television and the degree of conflict generated in the reports.

Going by the Agenda Setting theory, the mass media set agenda for the public to follow, and they can equally change the views of social reality of its individual's audience-members by indicating which issues are being discussed by voters or political candidates.

The relevance of this theory finds significance to this study because as part of political advertising in elections periods the mass media can set agenda on women issues and women aspirants can equally use the media to bring to the fore fundamentals issues in their campaigns which can be reported by both the traditional and social media. Through the agenda setting role of the mass media, citizens can make informed decisions on whom to vote or not to vote for during elections

## **Conceptual and Literature Review**

It is generally assumed that within the democratic political system citizens should have sufficient opportunities to communicate their preferences towards political decision makers. Of equal importance, however, is the mobilisation aspect. Citizens have to be mobilised and recruited in order to be able to participate in the political process. Enjolras, Johnson & Wollebaek (2011), cited in Arthur (2011) note that political mobilisation refers to the process by which candidates, parties, activists and groups induce other people to participate” in politics to win elections, to pass bills, to modify rulings and to influence policies. In most instances, mobilisation is a key prerequisite before any participation can occur.

Political mobilisation can be further seen as the way in which citizens organise people to put pressure on the political representatives. Thus, it could be any sort of movement who in the end results in a change in policy. Rosenstone & Hansenn (1993) note that empirical research demonstrates that mobilisation and recruitment processes

are essential preconditions before citizens can be become engaged in any form of civic or political action. Katerina (2011) distinguishes between the direct and indirect types of mobilisation. According to her, the direct form of mobilisation includes canvassing on the streets, television campaigning, direct mails and phone calls. Indirect mobilisation takes place through social networks individuals are embedded. Citizens are indirectly mobilised by their family members, schoolmates, football team mates or in religious places.

Political mobilisation increases the participation of people in any social change issue such as election; it provides for the participation of everyone that is of age. It is a strategy used in making people aware of political developments and are motivated to be involved and possess the necessary knowledge and attitude required for participation. It is at this point that one can begin to think of peaceful atmosphere for peaceful election (Ucheanya, 2003). In developing countries like Nigeria for instance, the mass media are considered to be an integral part of the political structure. This is because they provide information on what the people base their political judgments and form their political activities. The level of awareness, responsibility and participation in any democratic society such as ours depend largely on the activities of the mass media. It is worthy to note here that politics in contemporary times has assumed a different dimension and as such demands the participation of the citizens in a democracy. And this is why the media of mass communication are more being used as means of sensitising the citizens towards political activities (Ucheanya, 2003).

On the other hand, political participation is an essential component that is required for ensuring the stability and legitimacy of every political system. Political participation is one of the fundamental ideas of a democratic society. It is critical for democracy because it involves a commitment to equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacity (Agbaje, 1999, cited in Oyesomi & Oyero, 2012). Political participation is the most common way in which political activities are conceived and measured by academics and political institutions. Traditionally, definitions of participation in politics have refereed narrowly to voter turnout and party membership. More recently measures of political participation have been widened to include more informal modes of participation such as signing a petition, and joining demonstrations (Opcit Research, 2003).

According to Nifowose (2004), political participation can be defined as those voluntary activities such as holding public and party office, attending election campaigns, voting and exposing oneself to political stimuli. Political participation encompasses the involvement in decision making by which individuals acting singly or through group organisation attempt to influence decision making or alter the manner in which power may be distributed and the principles by which it may be exercised in a particular society.

Participation involves taking part in an event or activity (Oyesomi & Oyero, 2012). Verba & Colleagues (1995), cited in Opcit Research (2003) provide eight point



scale of civic political participation in the context of American democracy which is referred to as political participation of young women; they include voting, working in and contributing to electoral campaign and organisations, contacting government officials, attending protest, marches or demonstrations, working informally with the others to solve some community problem, serving without pay on local elected and appointed boards, being active politically through the intermediation of voluntary associations and contributing money to political causes in response to mail solicitations.

Prior to the colonial period Nigerian ethnic groups were operating a system of self-governorship or leadership. This is popularly known as self-governing kingdoms and in most of those kingdom, women were hardly part of the decision-making bodies. Some Kingdoms at that time had dual political system that allowed women to participate (Ugbede, 2013). During this era, in some societies women even occupied revered political positions, leading men in communal decision making and in warfare (Nwankwo, 2003, cited in Ugbede, 2003).

Oral tradition has it that women played prominent roles in the political history and decision making process in traditional society. The legendary roles played by princess Inikpi of Igala land and Moremi of Ife as saviours of their societies during warfare, to the extent of sacrificing their lives to ensure victory were remarkable. Other notable women of valour in pre-colonial era include Queen Amina of Zaria. When the colonial government administers the country they change the existing political set up of the country. The communities with dual political system were eroded, kingdoms were abolished, women were no longer reckoned with in the decision making process. With specific regards to position and power, women were ignored, they were not considered for appointment in the colonial administration. Even in the markets where women were used to wielding power in the allocation of stalls and imposition of levies, the government appointed men to take charge (Nkechi, 2003, cited in Ugbede, 2003).

Women participation during the colonial rule was very poor. The British preferred using able bodied men to meet their capital demand. Thereby reducing the women to mere housewives, drawers of water and reproduction factories. Women protested both on political and economic grounds against the colonial authority; their protest took place in different parts of the country during the colonial rule. For example, in the eastern region, 1925 Nwaobiala movement that metamorphosed to the Aba women riot in 1929. There was the Abeokuta women union protest led by Mrs. F. Ransome-Kuti in 1946 on taxation and loss of power over markets and a host of other protests led by women.

Since independence, the presence of women in electoral politics started showing in the Second Republic. In the First Republic, no woman was able to win election into the federal legislature, though three women were elected into the Eastern House of Assembly in the 1961 regional elections. In the Second Republic, the high point of

female achievement was the election of the only female Senator, Franca Afegbua into the Senate in 1983 (Oleru, 1999, p. 47, cited in Edeh & Iloh, 2011). Unfortunately, she served for only three months before that Republic collapsed.

During the transition programme of Ibrahim Babangida in 1992, out of the 300 gubernatorial aspirants, only 8 were women, representing a paltry 2.6%. Even at that, none of them was able to make it to any of the Government Houses, as all the states were won by men. Also, of the party executive positions of the parties that existed then, women had only 4%. In fact, in the studies conducted by (Ako-Nai, 2005; Mohammed, 2006; Okoosi-Simbine, 2006, cited in Edeh & Iloh, 2011), the inability of women to occupy party executive positions has been seen as a major cause of women marginalisation in politics, especially during nominations.

Ottah (2018) reported that in the year 1999 when democracy was returned into the country, out of 978 seats in the 36 Houses of Assembly, men occupied 966 leaving 12 seats (1.2%) for women. There was an upward movement in 2003 where women occupied 39 out of 951 seats representing 4%. In 2007, women occupied 54 seats out of a total of 990 with the percentage of 5.5. In the House of Representatives, in the year 1999, out of total 360 seats, women occupied 13 representing 3.6%. In 2003, men occupied 318 out of 339 leaving 21 seats for women of 25 3.6%. In the same vein, statistics of the 2015 elections shows that the National assembly has 7 (6.4%) female members in the Senate and 19 (5.2%) females in the House of Representatives. Only 1 female presidential candidate contested the 2015 elections. The representation of women seeking the office of governor and deputy governor were 87 females' candidates out of three hundred and eighty (380) representing 22.9 %. For Senatorial seats, one hundred and twenty-two (122) contested out of seven hundred and forty-seven (747) representing 16% and 267 representing 15% of females contested (Emeafor & Ani, 2016). From the above analysis, it is obvious that women are still been marginalised when it comes to both elective and appointive positions in Nigeria politics.

Women's participation in Nigeria politics is one that can be said to be the lowest in the African Continent and indeed the world at large. This is validated with statistics from previous elections and the one provided above (Odunola, Babafemi & Adegoke, 2015). Many factors can be attributed to the low participation and representation of women in the political system of Nigeria. One of which is the gender roles of women in the society, considering the conflicting demands on the time of women candidates due to natural, domestic and social responsibilities. The adage, “women's education ends in the kitchen” is very popular in the society, and it is quite sad that most parents tend to transmit this attitude towards their female children (Odunola, Babafemi & Adegoke, 2015).

The situation becomes worrisome when political figures and leaders in the country seem to endorse and accept this position. It will be recalled that president Muhammad Buhari while answering questions from a journalist's in regards to the



statement made by his wife concerning the state of the nation openly remarked before the world that “as far as he is concern the responsibility of his wife end's in the living room and the other room”. This statement did not go down well with most women folks in the country. Little wonder it is obvious that under his administration, the percentage of women appointed and elected into government offices kept reducing compared to previous regimes.

Abdu, Al-Sadique, Halilu & Aliyu (2018) explored women exposure to Facebook and its influence to their political participation in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The objective of the study was to investigate social media and women's political participation in Bauchi state. The study employed multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between Facebook use, interactivity with political figures, perceived Facebook information quality, political interest and offline political participation among the women.

The results of the study show that Facebook use, interactivity with political figures, perceived Facebook information quality and political interest significantly correlated with women's of fline political participation. Findings from the study further revealed that social media allow marginalised women from political activities to interact with friends and political figures about political issues share and express their opinions, which encourage them to vote or participate in political party activities. The study concluded by recommending that targeting and tailoring political messages online to women through Facebook and what motivate women to develop interest in politics should be an important factor in future campaign strategies.

Several factors have been identified by scholars as constituting impediments to women political participation in Nigeria. For instance, Agomor (2004), cited in Ogbiti & Ononu (2012) argued that social, cultural and religious factors such as fear of accusation of sexual impropriety, incidence of sexual harassment and lack of confidence hinder women from participation in active politics. He states that the status of women vis-à-vis men is one of systematic subordination, determined by forces of patriarchy which act across classes, region and rural/urban divide. All these factors have robbed women of vital positions in government that would help them participate fully in the day-to-day governance of the society, contribute meaningfully in the decision making processes of the country and protect their interest.

Ogbiti & Ononu (2012) argued that a cursory observation of the impact of mass media in the promotion of gender fairness in politics indicates that women's exposure to the mass media and media agenda setting for continued public discourse is often marginal and unsatisfactory. This perhaps explains why women politicians are covered less by the mass media than their male counterparts and events and issues of importance to women are not covered as much as other issues. This reduces women's interest in politics. Mass media also reinforces gender and cultural stereotypes about the role of women which prevent women from engaging in politics (Opcit Research, 2003).

Bansel (2008, p.10) equally share this view when he notes that “it appears the mass media have not been effective instruments to inform and prepare women to play their roles in the society. He further notes that that despite development measures and constitutional legal guarantees women have lagged behind men in all sectors. The lack of adequate coverage of women who participate in politics by the media has further dampened the spirit of most women to vie for positions of leadership in the country. Oyesomi & Olusola (2012) studied newspaper coverage of women participation in the 2011 general election in Nigeria and found that out of the 464 stories covered by *The Punch* and *Guardian* newspapers from December, 2010 to August 2011, only 62 stories were on women's participation. The study shows that the minimal visibility and coverage of women political actors in Nigerian newspapers is well revealed with 90 percent of the stories found inside the pages of the newspapers while there were no stories on the back pages.

It is instructive to note that the gender discrimination against women is also compounded by the general news media. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project, in 2010 men were 79% of news subjects, and news continue to portray a world in which men outnumber women in almost all occupational categories, the highest disparity being in the professions”, with obvious implications for the visibility of women in politics...(ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2013: 18 cited in Oyewole, 2015).

The disparity occasioned by bias reporting of women in politics has affected the extent of projection of women in politics in Nigerian newspapers when compared with their male counterparts. According to Oyesomi (2007), out of a total of the 422 reports or news items he content-analysed, 366, amounting to 86.72 percent, were that of male politicians at the expense of 56 reports, representing 13.27 percent belonging to female politicians. A breakdown of the result shows that 21 reports in *The Punch* newspaper were simply “news stories” while there were three other features, three personality profile reports and a photograph. On the other hand, *The Guardian* has report 21 news stories for women in politics, nine features and three personality profiles, all of which were within the eight months of coverage.

Nsude & Onu (2016) investigated newspaper coverage of women during the 2015 general elections. Three Nigerian newspapers namely *Punch*, *The Nation* and *Daily Sun* were content analysed to show the level of coverage given to women politicians during the election. Findings from their study indicated that in terms of coverage the newspapers accorded low coverage to female politicians. Only 13.1% coverage was given to women politicians. In terms of prominence the study reveals that most stories on female politicians did not enjoy prominence on the pages of the newspapers. Most of the stories about female politicians appeared on the inside pages. This is an indication of not attaching importance to the stories and this affects the salience of such issues. From the literature analysed so far, most of the findings still

show that the mass media have not adequately provided space for Nigerian women in the media landscape of the country.

## **Research Method**

The study employed survey research design, having the questionnaire as the instrument for the collection of data. The population of the study comprised women in Lafia, which according to the National Population Commission (2017) was 925,576. A sample size of 399 was obtained, using the Taro Yamani formula for determination of sample size. Out of the 399 copies of the questionnaire administered, 385 copies were returned and found usable. The data analysis was done, using the 385 figure of the return rate of the questionnaire.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 1: Level of Exposure to Mass Media Messages towards Women Mobilisation**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Very High	140	36.4%
High	155	40.3%
Low	65	16.9%
Very Low	25	6.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The data in Table 1 show the level of exposure to mass media messages towards women mobilisation in the 2019 gubernatorial election. The implication of the data in the table is that a high proportion of the women were exposed to media campaigns on women mobilisation. This is based on the fact that a total of 76.7% ticked very high and high respectively.

**Table 2: Mass Media Channels through which Women were politically mobilised for the Election**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Radio	145	37.7%
Television	65	16.9%
Opinion Leaders	30	7.8%
Social media	55	14.3%
Newspapers	20	5.2%
Magazines	15	3.9%
Billboard	20	5.2%
Posters	35	9.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 shows information on the various media channels through which women were mobilised for the gubernatorial election. The data show that radio (37.7%) and television (16.9%) were the major channels that were used to mobilise women for the elections.

**Table 3: Extent of Women Political Participation during the Election**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Very great extent	125	32.5%
Great extent	200	51.9%
Low extent	35	9.1%
Very low extent	25	6.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table above indicates the extent of women political participation during the election. Going by the data in the table, majority of women in the area of study took part in the election. This is based on the fact a total of 84.4% ticked very great extent and great extent respectively.

**Table 4: Extent of Mass Media Projection of Women Aspirants during the Election**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
Very great extent	45	11.7%
Great extent	35	9.1%
Low extent	225	58.4%
Very low extent	80	20.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 shows the extent mass media projected women aspirants during the 2019 gubernatorial election. The data in Table 4 show that the mass did not give enough coverage to women candidates during the election.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings showed that majority of the respondents were exposed to mass media messages geared towards mobilising women to participate in the 2019 gubernatorial elections in the Nasarawa State. From the data obtained, 140 (36.4%) respondents said they were to a very high extent exposed to mass media mobilisation campaigns, 155 (40.3%) of the respondents said to a high extent, 65 (16.9%) respondents ticked low extent, while 25 (6.4%) of the respondents were of the opinion that it was to a very low extent.

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that Lafia women were well-exposed to media messages urging them to fully participate in the 2019 elections in the State. These results further validate the importance of mass media in facilitating political

mobilisation among citizens over the years. This perhaps explains why Idris (2015) contends that the mass media are the most reliable means of disseminating political messages to non-literate societies during electioneering campaigns.

This result is consistent with other findings, as well as, the history of women political mobilisation in Nigeria examined in the literature of this study. For example, Okafor (2013) submits that the Nigerian women has ceaselessly played a remarkable role in the struggle for independence. They formed women's wing of the then three main political parties and acquired the right to vote and be voted for. This off course was possible in collaboration with the mass media setting the agenda for women inclusion in mainstream politics. Thus, the agenda setting function of the mass media is supported by these findings that through the agenda function of the mass media, women issues were brought to the front burner and thus gained national recognition.

The second research question was designed to ascertain the channels through which the women were mobilised to participate in the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Lafia, Nasarawa State. The data in Table 2 provide the answer to the question. The findings showed that 145 (37.7%) of the respondents affirmed that they were mobilised via radio, 65 (16.9%) respondents said they were mobilised through television messages, 30 (7.8%) of the respondents indicated that they were mobilised through opinion leaders, 55 respondents accounting to (14.3%) were mobilised via social media messages, newspapers mobilised 20 (5.2%) of the respondents while 15 (3.9%), respondents said they were mobilised through the magazines. On the other hand, 20 respondents accounting to (5.2%) were of the view that they were mobilised via billboards advertising and 35 (9.0%) respondents got mobilised by posters.

From the data in the Table, radio had the highest number of engagement with the respondents; this amounted to 37.7%. This was closely followed by television (16.9%) and the social media which accounted for (14.3%) respectively. The findings of this study support earlier studies conducted by Asemah (2011) and Udende (2013) that extolled the place of radio and television in mobilising citizens to take active part in the political process. Corroborating further, Konkwo (2013) avers that the mass media have been associated with tremendous capabilities or potentialities to mobilise whole audience and even influence attitudes especially during elections periods.

The third research question was designed to find out the extent of women's political participation in the 2019 gubernatorial elections as a result of mass media mobilisation campaign in the State. Findings from the data indicated that 125 (32.5%) of the respondents said that they participated to a very great extent, 200 (51.9%) of the respondents said they participated to a great extent, 35 (9.1%) of respondents affirmed that they participated to a low extent while 25 (6.5%) were of the opinion that they participated to a very low extent.

The analysis shows that to a great extent the respondents participated in the election. This clearly shows that the mass media were able to mobilised the women to participate during the election. The result indicated that women participated to a great

extent in the elections. This shows that the mass media were up to their responsibility of educating the women to participate in the election. It is in this light that Ineji (2012), cited in Ottah (2018) captures the role of the media in the following lines: “the mass media in Nigeria have the tedious task of helping the government and the populace understand the intricacies of the on-going political and socio-economic transformation agenda of the Federal Government.” It is, therefore, expected that as part of the responsibility of the mass media, they are required to mobilise the Nigerian women to take active part in politics. This will enable the women to contribute their quota to national transformation.

The last research question was designed to find out the extent to which the mass media projected women who contested for elective positions during the election in the State. Findings indicated that 45 (11.7%) of the respondents said to a very great extent the mass media projected the interest of women who contested for varied positions during the elections while 35 (9.1%) of respondents said to a great extent the mass media projected women in the state, 80 (6.8%) of the respondents indicated that to a very low extent women were projected by the mass media. Meanwhile, 225 (58.4%) of the respondents affirmed that women who contested for elective positions were to a low extent projected by the mass media during the 2019 elections in the state.

It is evidently clear that the mass media did not adequately project women candidates who contested for elective positions in the State. The findings of this study, therefore, support previous studies (Oyesomi & Oyero, 2012; Ugbede, 2013; Ottah, 2018) which upheld that women who contested for elections in previous elections in the country were given minimal coverage by the mass media.

Supporting these findings Nsude & Onu (2016) equally confirmed in their studies that women contesting for elective positions in Nigeria has not been given adequate media coverage by the mass media compared to their male counterparts. Based on this evidence, it is expected that the Nigerian government will draw the attention of the mass media through their agenda function to bring the issue of according equal media space to women who are seeking elective positions during elections.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study was able to reveal that the mass media was able to mobilise women in Lafia, Nasarawa State to participate in the 2019 elections in the state. Through the mobilisation role of the mass media, the women in the state were able to be politically conscious of the need to vote and be voted for. Hence, their participation level in the election was high. However, it was discovered that the mass media did not give sufficient and adequate coverage to women who contested for elective positions in the state. And as a result of this poor visibility level, the electorate rejected most of the female candidates. In view of these findings, the study provides the following recommendations:



First, the mass media should continue to set women agenda during and after political campaigns. They should continue to educate women on the need to be politically conscious in the society.

Second, women groups and associations should explore other means of communication like the social media to engage women in political campaigns as well as educate them on political issues. They should not only rely on the traditional media of communication alone.

Third, since women are politically conscious to participate in the political process they should be encouraged by all stakeholders in the society to continue in this direction. With stakeholders encouraging them, they will break the barriers of religion and traditional belief systems that have kept women bound not to express themselves freely when it comes to politics.

Fifth, the government and civil society organisations should propose a law to ensure that women who are contesting for elective positions should not be discriminated against by the mass media. They should be given equal access to the media of communication just like their male counterparts. By so doing, a level playing ground will be given to all contestants during elections and no one will feel cheated in the process.

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