HUMANUS DISCOURSE Vol. 4. NO 4. 2024
ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Women and politics in a patriarchal Nigerian society: The role of culture and religion

Omowonuola Okunnu
Faculty of Media and Communication,
Bournemouth University,
United kingdom

Abstract

Politics is seen to organize people and resources for the benefit of all and that is why the primary function of governance is the provision of welfare and security. This enclave called politics has been an exclusive reserve for men in most societies which are patriarchal. No doubt, culture and religion played a part in making politics exclusive to men. However, women in history have also reared their shiny heads to contribute their quota to the political development of society despite the unfavourable clime. This paper therefore examines the role culture and religion play in women's participation in politics. It analyses women in politics in the North and the South of Nigeria. The paper argues that culture and religion play a fundamental role in women's participation in politics resulting in low women's participation in a nation's political life. However, the rate of women's participation in Southern Nigeria is higher than in the North due to the seemingly conservative nature of the North and early exposure to the South. Using the historical tool of primary and secondary sources which were subjected to authentication and analysis, the paper further identifies societal variables such as security, stereotyping, infidelity, and gender role amongst other factors that inhibit the participation of women in national or local politics. The paper concludes that these prejudices and cultural limitations could be mitigated with awareness and national orientation. This will enable Nigeria to achieve the United Nations' 35% affirmative action for women's participation in politics.

Keywords: Women, Patriarchy, Culture, Religion

Introduction

Politics has existed as long as humans have faced scarcity, have had different beliefs and preferences, and have had to resolve these differences while allocating scarce resources. According to Mark and others, politics will continue to exist so long as these human conditions persist.[1] The Greek philosopher, Aristotle who is widely regarded as the father of political science argued that humans are "political animals" as it is only by engaging in politics that humans reach their highest potential.[2] Politics however has defied a common scholarly definition as several scholars have defined politics in their separate perspectives of the concept.

[1] Mark Carl Rom, Masaki Hidaka, Rachel Bzostek Walker, *Introduction to Political Science*, (Houston, Texas: Open Stax, 2022), 47.
[2] Helen Osieja, 'Education for Democracy in The 21st Century', from https://democracyandeducation.org, Retrieved September 11, 2023, 56.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

Nicolo Machiavelli, Alberto Alesina, Harold Lasswell: David Easton, Vladimir Lenin, and Alabi, amongst others have attempted to conceptualize politics as a concept which summarized it as a 'tool of public administration, that is, the management of the resources of the country'. Politics is also about power, or the capacity to influence others. Power can be economic, like in the case of enterprises which can influence politicians to pass laws favorable to their interests. Power can also be military, that is, the capacity of a country to use force to defend its interests. But power can also be based on knowledge, and that is why education is so important for the citizen. An educated citizen will be capable of defending her rights much better than an illiterate citizen, who is probably not even aware of what her leaders are doing. In democracies, the struggle for power is carried out in elections, in which political parties compete for the votes of the citizens.[3]

Despite the important role of politics in societal reengineering, the terms politics and politician can be used in disparaging ways to refer to individuals using trickery or manipulation to obtain or preserve their status or authority. It is seen as a dirty and exclusive playfield for men, especially in Africa.[4] However, several women have also joined the political space to better the lives of their people. The "Women in Politics: 2021" map, created by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, presents global rankings for women in executive, government, and parliamentary positions as of 1 January 2021. The data shows all-time highs for the number of countries with women Heads of State or Heads of Government, as well as for the global share of women ministers. Despite increases in the number of women at the highest levels of political power, widespread gender inequalities persist: progression in women holding ministerial portfolios has slowed, with just a small increase to from 21.3 per cent in 2020 to 21.9 percent in 2021; the number of countries with no women in government has increased; and only 25.5 percent of national parliamentarians are women, compared to 24.9 per cent the year before.[5]

Politics is not played in vacuum. It is operational in a society which has people as members. Thus, the way politics is practiced in different societies differs as most times, the culture and norms of the society always influences the kind of politics, form of government and political participation of the people. In this guise, the culture of a people invariably influences the political life of the people. Culture is slippery a concept to have a universal definition. Keesing refers to culture as a 'learned accumulated experiences and socially transmitted pattern for behavior characteristics of a particular social group.[6] Bailey sees culture as the socially

[3] Osieja, 'Education for Democracy in The 21st Century', Retrieved September 11, 2023, 56.
[4] Osieja, 'Education for Democracy in The 21st Century', Retrieved September 11, 2023, 57.
[5] Eugenia N. Abiodun-Eniayekan and Emmanuel Uba, 'Women in Politics: The Nigerian Factor' *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Reviews Vol.6 No.4*, (December, 2016): 145.
[6] R.M. Keesing, Cultural Anthropology: A contemporary perspective, 9Holt: Rine-hart and Wiston, 1981), 56.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

transmitted knowledge and behavior shared by some group of people.[7] Harris defined culture as the total socially acquired lifeway or lifestyle of a group of people. It consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of a society.[8] Edward Taylor's definition seems to resonate with scholars of culture as his definition is said to be all-encompassing. Taylor defined culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.[9]This definition encapsulates in total form what culture is, especially given the new dimension that culture is learnt or acquired as a member of the society. So, it becomes an abnormality even if it is right when members of such societies do things strange to their already patterned way of life. Politics is an integral variable of culture and this paper looked at how this very important variable affects the political life of the Nigerian woman.

Closely related to culture is religion. Several scholars such as Taylor, Bradford, Adamu, Agbo amongst others have termed religion as an aspect of culture. If religion is a way of life acquired and practised mostly as a member of society starting from the family unit, then, religion is nothing but culture.[10]Woodhead in her classical piece titled 'Five Concepts of religion, she buttressed the cultural nature of religion. She sees religion as beliefs, values, tradition and ideology; religion as identity; religion as relationship, religion as practice and religion as power.[11]Karl Max sees religion as the opium of the masses because of the way people are intoxicated and emotional about religion and religious discourse.[12] That said, religion is a very dicey subject all over the world and it goes a long way to shape our behavioral pattern. Little wonder, the first amendment to the constitution of the United States of America guarantees that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof".[13]

Culture and religion have greatly affected the Nigerian women's participation in politics. Despite the hopes Nigerian women had in the 2006 National Gender Policy, this policy unfortunately has not been realized and it remains a statement of intent with no legal framework, thus, unenforceable. The Executive arm of government, for example, has so far, failed to comply with this National Gender Policy which amongst several other targets, seeks 35% Affirmative Action "in favour of women to bridge gender gaps in political representation in both elective and appointive posts at all levels by 2015.[14] In the current Federal

---

[7] G. Bailey, *Introduction to cultural Anthropology*, (New York: Wadsworth Publishing, 1998)
[8] M. Harris, *Culture, People, Nature: An introduction to General Anthropology,* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975), 34.
[9] E.B. Taylor, *Primitive Culture,* (London: J.Murray, 1871, 1997), 32.
[10] P.H. Enesi, 'Nigerian Peoples and Culture', *Open Educational Resources*, www.fulokoja.edu.ng
[11] Linda Woodhead, 'Five concepts of Religion', *International Review of Sociology, 21, 1*, (2011):127.
[12] Enesi, *Nigerian Peoples and Culture*, (Lokoja: FUL Press, 2022), 24.
[13] Eduardo Penalver, 'The Concept of Religion', *Cornwell Law Faculty Publication, paper 727*, (1997): 89.
[14]Tayo Agunbiade, 'Women, Gender and Politics' *THECABLE.NG*, Retrieved in September 2023, 111.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Executive Council (FEC), only eight out of forty-four Ministers, are women, forming just 16.3 per cent. Similarly, female representation in legislative institutions continues to ramble on sub-regional and regional gender gap indexes. For the twenty-four-year period of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, female representation in the National Assembly is 5.45 per cent, while that of the State Houses of Assembly is 4.6 per cent.

It is against this backdrop of political masculinity in Nigeria's political circle that this paper attempts to investigate the role culture and religion play in inhibiting women's participation in national politics. However, this paper is not oblivious to several women trailblazers in politics despite the hazardous terrain it poses for Nigerian women. These trailblazers both in pre-colonial and colonial periods include Queen Amina of Zaria, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Emotan of Benin, Chief Olufunmilayo Ransom Kuti, Janet Mokelu, Chief Margaret Ekpo, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba and a host of others.[15]Nigeria, is sharply divided along the North and South concerning culture, religion, education and exposure amongst others. As a result, this paper tends to analyse the participation of women in political participation in Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria using the variables of culture and religion. While there are avalanche of literature on the aforementioned women and women in Nigerian politics generally, scanty literature is available on the assessment of how culture and religion inhibit women's participation in politics, especially the rate of northern and southern women comparatively. The paper usesthe historical method of data collection and relies primarily on oral source and secondary source is arranged in themes which include introduction, women in Nigerian politics, women in politics in the North and South, religious and cultural factors and conclusion.

Women in Nigerian Politics

Although several women from southern and northern Nigeria have attained high-level positions in their various fields of endeavors. Achievements recorded by women politicians from the North do not measure up to the efforts of women politicians in the South. While the North has Gambo Sawaba as a household name, the South has politicians such as Mrs. Margret Ekpo, Mrs. Janet Mokelu (both defunct Eastern House of Assembly), and Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti a foremost woman leader from the defunct western region and among the few highly educated women in Africa of her generation. It is the belief of this paper as you will see later that girls and women from the north have had to contend with certain socio-cultural and religious inhibitions in their efforts to make any meaningful impact on their immediate environment and the Nigerian society at large politically. Education and political participation for the girl-child in northern Nigeria was an exclusive privilege for the few. However, around the 15th century, Queen Amina of Zazzau (Zaria) was known as a great military strategist, the cavalry-trained Queen Amina fought many wars that expanded the Zauzau kingdom. According to the Sankore Institute of Islamic–African Studies International, "Amina of Zaria commonly known as the warrior Queen

[15] Eugenia N. Abiodun-Eniayekan and Emmanuel Uba, 'Women in Politics: The Nigerian Factor' *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Reviews Vol.6 No.4*, (December, 2016): 145.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

expanded the territory of the Hausa people of north Africa to the largest borders in history."[16] It is debatable if any female from northern Nigeria of today may have the opportunity to attain such a feat in an environment that tends to restrict the activities of the girl-child who is often married off at a tender age.

Women's Participation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Nevertheless, women in Northern and Southern Nigeria have stepped out in politics since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. The Northern states have seen some notable female politicians who have contested and occupied political positions as Deputy Governors, Senators, House of Representatives, and state legislators amongst others. These notable female politicians from the North include Senator Aisha Binani, Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe, Ramatu Tijani Aliyu, Hadiza Bala Usman, Senator BintaMasi Garba, Senator Aisha Alhassan amongst others. In Southern Nigeria, there is evidence of higher political awareness and participation in national politics. Several women from Southern Nigeria have shown their prints in the current Fourth Republic. They include Noimot Salako-Oyedele, Princess Sarah Adebisi Susan, Dame Virginia Ngozi Etiaba, Kofoworola Bucknor, Valerie Ebe, Ngozi Odu, Stella Oduah, Abike Dabiri, among others.

Since the start of the Fourth Republic until now, women's representation in politics has never exceeded 6%. Nigeria currently ranks 139th out of 156 countries in the list of countries with the largest gender gap. 1999 had the lowest representation of women holding political seats with only 2.5% representation, the highest percentage of women in political offices was achieved in 2011 and again in 2019 with 26% representation each year. On March 1, the first day of the Women's Month celebrations, the National Assembly rejected bills that would have, among other things, increased women's representation in politics. Although the assembly finally bowed to pressure and rescinded their decision on three of the bills after sustained protests by groups advocating for the bills, these three did not include those that would increase women's representation in the political space. The national assembly is not reviewing its decision on the extra seats for women in legislative Houses and the 20 per cent quota for women for appointment into federal and state cabinets. Below is a table showing the number of women who have won elections in Executive and legislative positions both at the state and national levels since the beginning of the fourth republic in Nigeria.

The position of women in political participation in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023[17]

S/N	Position	NO. of seat	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019	2023	Total

[16] Abdoulaye Wade, 'Women in African Politics', *Annual Compilation of Sankore Institute of Islamic–African Studies International*, 2011, 97

[17] Osimen Goddy Uwa, Anegbode E. John, Basil Osayin Daudu and Oyewole Oyindamola, 'Political Participation and Gender Inequality In Nigerian Fourth Republic' *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration Vol.6, No.5,* (October 2018): 29.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

		s								
1	Presidency	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	Vice President	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Senate	109	3	4	6	8	7	8	4	40
4.	House of Reps.	360	12	23	26	26	14	18	23	132
5.	Governors hip	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.	Deputy Governors hip	36	1	2	6	3	4	4	7	27
7.	36 State Houses of Ass	990	12	38	54	62	146	97	112	525

Source: Lists of Elected National Assembly Members

A careful look at the table above, you will realize that the table provided for seven elective positions which include the Presidency (2), Senate (109), House of Representatives (360), governorship (72) and State Houses of Assembly (990), only a fraction of the seats are won by women. In the Presidency, that is presidency and vice presidency, there has not been any woman elected to those exalted offices. Although few women had aspired and very dew others appeared in the electoral ballots as candidates. For governorship, few women have taken a shot at the office but have not been successful. The closest to being successful was Aisha Jumai Alhassan of Taraba State and Aisha Dahiru of Adamawa State. But for deputy governorship, the position has seen considerable numbers of women probably due to the patriarchal belief of women playing the 'helping' role as Deputy Governors are only helpers to their governors. Out of the 27 female deputy governors that have been elected in Nigeria since 1999, only 9 were from the North. .

In the National Assembly of 109 senators and 360 House of Representatives members, 40 female senators have been elected to the hallowed chamber of the Senate and 132 female members of the House of Representatives all through the 24 years of the Fourth Republic which has had 8 legislative periods. Further analysis revealed that out of these 40 female senators, only 12 were /are from the North while the number of female members of the House of Representatives so far elected from Northern Nigeria was 55 out of 132 female members. For female legislators in the 36 state Houses of Assembly, only 525 women have been elected to the about 990 assembly seats across the 36 states over the 24 years of the Fourth Republic. Exact statistics of the gender division in the various states Houses of Assembly was not readily available but there have been more women in the Houses of Assembly of the southern states than in the Northern states.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Northern Women participation in politics: The role of religion and culture

Women's participation in politics all over the world has been low but in recent decades has improved tremendously in developed societies. However, the participation of Northern women in conventional politics in Nigeria is lower compared to their counterparts from the South as seen in the analysis above. This invariably has been influenced by the society where religion and culture play a tremendous role. By way of conceptualization, the North or Northern women as used in this paper is the geographical entity in the Nigerian state that comprises the North-west, North East and North-Central geo-political zones. The North is predominantly Muslim and Hausa-speaking. However, there are several other ethnic groups, languages and adherents of other religions in the North.

Most of the people in the North proclaimed the Islamic faith as earlier mentioned and this in no small measure shaped their lifestyle. According to Mallam Yero, Islam is a complete way of life and has all the stipulations required for daily living. While women are allowed to do some jobs, they are not allowed to lead. He said politics is about leadership and what should a woman be doing in political offices? As such, women should be submissive, stay at home and take care of the home.[18]In what seem like an already defined gender role, Northern women especially Northern Muslim women who are in the majority sees politics as an enclave for men and their gender role do not extend there. Because religion as Marx puts it is "the opium of the masses" Muslim women do not want to flout this religious rule. More so, the religious purdah system practised by Muslims does not give liberty to Muslim women to engage in outdoor and loud activities such as politics. This is because Muslim women are to be fully covered, non-mingling with the opposite sex (non-mahram) and maintain meekness if they find themselves outside. In fact, a Muslim woman's voice is considered naked (aurah) and as such is not expected to speak in a mixed congregation of men and women except necessary.[19]

Closely related to religion is the culture of the people of Northern Nigeria. In fact, religion is an element of culture, and they are intertwined. It is no gain saying that Nigeria irrespective of region is a patriarchal society where men dominate. In this vein, the cultural imposition places women below men in all spheres. For example, Aisha said that they were trained to be subservient to men from childhood. As such, they grew up with the awareness that men are the head and providers of the family. So, if culturally, men are the head, decision-makers and providers of the family, what is she looking for in leadership?[20] This mindset shapes their political participation.

A typical popular euphemism to explain the cultural value of women is the statement credited to the former president, Muhammad Buhari where he humorously said he doesn't know if his wife Aisha Muhammad Buhari has an office or belongs to a political party but what he knows was that his wife

[18] Mallam Yero, 54, Civil servant, Dala, Kano, 12th April 2022
[19]Mallam Yero, 54, Civil servant, Dala, Kano, 12th April 2022
[20] Aisha Bello, 40, housewife, Kawo, Kaduna, 2ndMay, 2022

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

belongs to "the kitchen and the other room". This statement went viral and was criticized in several quarters, but it exposes the common trend, beliefs and notions of men about women in the North. So, if a Muslim northern man, well exposed who has risen to lead this nation twice could muster this statement on international television, you will just imagine the concept and mindset of the average northern Muslim. Sarah Jubril, Aisha Binani, Aisha Jumai Alhassan, Nenadi Usman and Natasha Akpoti in their separate accounts recalled the humiliation they suffered in their rise to political stardom. They were jeered and called names at the start of their political careers just because of their gender. They all claimed that they were able to succeed in their political journey because of the staunch support they got from their husbands. In fact, it has always been said in political discourse that these women rode on their husbands back to political limelight[21]

Invariably, culture and religion has tremendously limited the participation of Northern Women in politics especially at the onset of the Fourth Republic. However, with continued awareness, education, exposure, orientation and deliberate policy, there seems to be an increase in women participation in politics. Women like Sarah Jubril, Aisha Jumai Alhassan, Aisha Dahiru Binani, Zainab Kure, amongst others had become a beacon of light for young northern girls. With these torches, the northern society is getting more awareness that politics is not all about leadership but a call for service to the people and humanity. To buttress this deliberate policy, the Kogi state government made it a state/party policy that all vice chairpersons and council leaders of the 21 local government councils in Kogi state should be women and he actualized and implemented this policy in the 2020 Local Government Elections in Kogi state.

Southern Women participation in Politics: The role of religion and culture

The participation of Southern Women in politics is far higher than that of the Northern women even though both regions are patriarchal in nature. This paper takes southern Nigeria as a geographical concept that encompasses the South-East, South-South and South-West geo-political zones of Nigeria. The people of the South-East and South-South are predominantly Christians while the south-west is a mix of people who profess both Christianity and Islam. Several ethnic groups make up Southern Nigeria. While Igbos are predominant in the South-East, Yorubas populate the South-West and the Ijaws are more in the South-South. Women's participation in politics has been more impressive in the South than in the North since the time of Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, MargretEkpo and Janet Mokelu who were actively involved in the politics of Nigeria in the colonial era and the first republic. Is it that culture and religion did not affect Southernwomen's participation in politics? It does but not to the extent of its influence on the participation of northern women in politics.

The people of Southern Nigeria especially in the South-East and South-South as earlier mentioned and a part of the South-West are Christians. The Christians may not have been too strict about the codes of teachings of their faith as explained by John. He said there are portions of the bible where women are not

[21] P. H. Enesi, 'The Amazons', *Political Cronicle 1,3,* (April 2023):13

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

expected to lead and submit to their husbands who are their heads just as Jesus is the head of the church. He however opined that most clergies and adherents of the faith most times overlook that verse so as not to be seen to have oppressed women or denied them rights.[22]Adaobi corroborated the view of John by remarking that Christianity came to Nigeria through Europe sees gender equality as a fundamental right and as such religion should not infringe on this inalienable right.[23]In this sense, religion did not play a major role in inhibiting women's participation in politics, however, culture does.[24]

The average Nigerian society be it the North or the South is a male-dominated society where men are seen as 'kings'. The culture places such prestige on men and so many responsibilities on them. They are the head, the decision makers and indeed the providers. Thus, it is a misnomer for women to front issues in the culturally dominated southern societies. They have so many norms, taboos and traditions that seem to relegate women to the backdrop and not to have a voice. Thus, the low participation of Southern Women in local and national politics is mainly due to cultural inhibition and the patriarchal society of the South. What assisted Southern Women and gave them an edge over their Northern counterparts is due to their early exposure to Europeans and Western education coupled with the liberality of the Christian faith concerning leadership roles for women.

Other inhibiting factors to women's participation in politics

The poor participation of women in politics and governance has been a major concern at the global level. In Nigeria, the number of women participating in politics is not proportionate to the 50% of the nation's population that they represent and has not translated into equal representation in political leadership positions. Rising global focus on issues of gender equality, aided by calls such as that of goal three of the Millennium Development Goals, is bridging the gap created by long-term discrimination against women, and helping to make women more visible in politics. In this context, Nigeria has recognized women in the political sphere and included them in both appointive and elective positions. Several other inhibiting factors reduced the level at which women participate in Nigerian Politics.Even though culture and religion take the leading roles of variables limiting the participation of women in politics, other social variables inhibit their participation. These factors include:

1. **Patriarchy:** It refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, which in turn has given rise to women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-partisans in the decision-making process in households not to talk of coming out to vie for political positions. This has invariably subjected women to being domesticated and not being involved in outdoor activities.

2. **Stigmatization of politics as dirty:** following the way politics in Nigeria is played, it is being perceived and stigmatized as dirty and people do everything

[22] John Usifo, 57, Civil Servant, Asaba, Dekta, 15th October 2022
[23] Nneka Adaobi, 47, Abuja, Civil Servant, Abuja, 10th September 2022
[24]Nneka Adaobi, 47, Abuja, Civil Servant, Abuja, 10th September 2022

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

to get to power including violence and fetishes. Politicians also use deceit, cunning and betrayal approaches to achieve their aims. Thus, women who are seen as soft and meek by their physiological makeup may not play the 'dirtiness'' of politics; hence, women withdraw from politics which is meant for the 'survival of the fittest'.

3. **Low level of education/ Political literacy level:** The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2010 published by the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that adult literacy amongst women between the ages of 30 and 50 years is about 35 per cent compared to their male counterparts in the same age bracket. The data also shows that Southern women in that age bracket have a higher educated population than Northern women. This invariably affects the level of political participation of women as political participation stems from political awareness which also stems from education. This factor also explains why there are more Southern women in the political circle than their Northern counterparts.

4. **Financing:** Competing for political positions in Nigeria requires huge financial backup. Most Nigerian women who seek these positions cannot afford to meet the financial obligations therein, despite the waiversgiven to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts. Apart from the cost of the form, electoral campaigns require huge funds.

5. **Political Violence:** Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of violence or another since the return of democracy. Female aspirants of various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women's participation in politics is drastically reduced.

6. **Travelling, Late-Night meetings and Gender roles:** Women are traditionally mothers, wives and homemakers and are expected to perform these gender roles. However, politics involve travelling and most times late-night meetings. This places a huge burden on female politicians who need to balance their home front and their political aspirations. Will a man, or husband allow his wife to leave the burden of home front for political journeys and late meetings? An average Nigerian male may not be too disposed to that, and this has an impact on women's participation in politics.

7. **Alleged promiscuity:** There is a popularly held notion that people are quick to compromise their virtue for indecent gains. Therefore, women aspirants who venture into politics are looked upon as shameless and promiscuous. In this vein, men usually do not allow their women to engage in political participation except voting in general elections due to this singular factor. Women also may want to protect their chastity and good name by not venturing into activities such as politics that can dent their images.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Conclusion

All over the world, women's participation has been considerably low. However, Africa and indeed Nigeria have recorded lower participation of women in its political history. This paper has attempted to look at the participation of women in Nigeria's political development with emphasis on the Fourth Republic. The paper argued that religion and culture played dominant roles in limiting the participation of women in local and national politics. The paper further surveyed how culture and religion influenced women's participation in politics in the Northern and southern geo-political zones of Nigeria and observed that both culture and religion tremendously impacted northern women's participation while culture majorly and not religion per se influenced the low participation of women of southern Nigeria in politics. The paper also identified several other factors such as security, stereo-typing, and low level of political literacy amongst others as contributory factors that led to low participation of women in national and local politics. The paper thereafter recommended awareness and sensitization to meet the UN's 35% affirmative action for women's participation in politics.

Bibliography

Abiodun-Eniayekan N. Eugenia and Emmanuel Uba, 'Women in Politics: The Nigerian Factor' *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Reviews Vol.6 No.4*, (December, 2016).

Agunbiade, Tayo. 'Women, Gender and Politics' *THECABLE.NG*, Retrieved in September 2023

Aisha Bello, 40, Housewife, Kawo, Kaduna, 2nd May, 2022

Bailey G, *Introduction to cultural Anthropology*, New York: Wadsworth Publishing, 1998

Enesi, P.H, 'Nigerian Peoples and Culture', *Open Educational Resources*, www.fulokoja.edu.ng

Enesi, P. H. 'The Amazons'. *Political Cronicle 1,3,* April 2023.

Harris M, Culture, *People, Nature: An introduction to General Anthropology,* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975.

Ihonbere, J.O. *Towards a New Constitution in Africa*. London: Oxford University press, 2000.

JohnUsifo, 57, Civil Servant, Asaba, Dekta, 15th October 2022.

Keesing, R.M, *Cultural Anthropology: A contemporary perspective*, Holt: Rine-hart and Wiston, 1981.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

Mallam Yero, 54, Civil Servant, Dala, Kano, 12th April 2022

Martin, A. "Nigeria: A Boost for Women‟s Participation in Politics" *Democratic Governance and Gender. United Nations Development Program Training Institute*. Accessed 10-05-2015.

Mba, N.*Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900 – 1965*. Berkley: Institutes of International Studies. 1982.

Miki, C. "Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Political Parties." Irvine: Center for the Study of Democracy. 1997. Retrieved on 30www.democ.uci.edu/publications/caul.htm) 5th April, 2022.

Modupe, A. "Women Political Participation in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects." In Akinboye (ed) *Paradox of Gender Equality in Nigerian Politics*. Lagos: Concept Publications. 2001.

Momodu, R. "Intricacies of Women Participation in Party Politics" in AkiyodeAfolabi, A. and Arogundade, L. (eds) *Gender Audit - 2003 Elections: And Issues in Women's Political Participation in Nigeria*. Lagos. Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC). 2003.

Muhammed S. "Enhancing Women Participation in Politics and Governance", Nigeria's 2007 General Elections; The Critical Challenges Ahead, INEC, Abuja. 2007.

Nneka Adaobi, 47, Abuja, Civil Servant, Abuja, 10th September 2022.

Ogidefa,I. Women and Politics in Nigeria. Accessed from http. //beyondJane.com/women, 27th May 2022.

Oladoye, D. 'In retrospect: 2011 polls and gender ranking in Nigeria'. CPAFRICA. Accessed from wwww.cp-africa.com, 27th May 2022.

Oni, S. O. 'Women and political participation in Nigeria'. (M.Sc. Thesis, Department of Political Science, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria, 2009).

Penalver, Eduardo. 'The Concept of Religion', *Cornwell Law Faculty Publication, paper 727.* 1997.

Rom, Mark Carl, Masaki Hidaka, Rachel Bzostek Walker, *Introduction to Political Science*, Houston, Texas: Open Stax, 2022.

Taylor, E.B. *Primitive Culture.* London: J.Murray, 1871, 1997.

Uwa, Osimen Goddy, Anegbode E. John, Basil Osayin Daudu and Oyewole Oyindamola, 'Political Participation and Gender Inequality In Nigerian Fourth

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Republic' *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration Vol.6, No.5,* October 2018.

Wade Abdoulaye, 'Women in African Politics', *Annual Compilation of Sankore Institute of Islamic–African Studies International*, 2011.

Woodhead Linda, 'Five Concepts of Religion', *International Review of Sociology*, *21, 1*, 2011.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me