

Women empowerment and political participation in Lagos State: A study of Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA (Local Council Development Area)

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Abstract

This study is on women's empowerment and political participation in the Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA) of Lagos State, Nigeria. Women have not measured in equal capacity with men in politics and have created a vacuum in some areas where they are supposed to contribute to their society. The study ascertained women's participation and factors affecting women's representation and participation in the Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA). The study adopted a qualitative method using primary and secondary data. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, magazines, conference proceedings, and the internet. In-depth interviews were conducted on purposively selected individuals with knowledge of the subject matter. The collated responses were analysed thematically to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context. The study made use of the feminist theory to back up the findings and the reason for the essence of the study. The findings revealed the factors that pose challenges for women in Ipaja-Ayobo in terms of empowerment and political participation. The research concluded that women have not participated well and recommended their empowerment and improved opportunities for political participation and representation in Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA, such as targeted capacity-building programs, awareness campaigns, and the promotion of inclusive policies.

Keywords: empowerment, exclusion, participation, political participation, women empowerment,



Introduction

“Women in this Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA) are well represented, especially now that the newly elected executive chairperson is a woman, so she has ensured that women’s voices are heard, thereby making other women come out and be part of the political process. Many women are members of staff in this council, and that is highly encouraging for our women. Another interesting fact is that Women here basically help others, they believe in teamwork since it is generally believed that it is man’s world. Remember that at the national level, women are underrepresented and are not well encouraged to participate in politics. What we have in this LCDA is very different, and others need to do the same because there is a need to have a good change for the good of the women”.

This is the response of one of the respondents when she was asked about women's political participation and representation in in Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA). The 40-year-old woman reflected the values of having a woman as a leader and the opportunity of other women in terms of employment, representation, courage, and political participation. The case of women in Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA has remained unique when compared with the position of women in Nigeria at the national level. It is worthy of note the comfort and level of satisfaction of women in Ipaja-Ayobo do not rule out more strategies that are put in place to ensure more participation and representation of women. Similarly, challenges that limit women's participation are also visible. The African Child Trust (ACT) made efforts to encourage women in difficult times, organized a seminar for women and widows with packed trainings on their participation and bypassing loneliness. The group outlined such strategies as; income generation, having savings, working as a team, and raising their standard of living.

The situation in Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA though has a facelift cannot be excluded from the global conditions or state. UN Women affirmed that the 2023 map which illustrates women in politics made available by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women showed women in executive positions and national parliament in 2023 with the indication that women are underrepresented globally at all levels of decision-making and achieving success in gender parity will not be easy.

It is only in 31 countries that women serve as Heads of State and/or Governments with 26. Percent of Members of Parliament. Women also made up only 22.8 percent of Cabinet Ministers worldwide. Information available shows that women are leading in vital human rights, gender equality, and social protection policy responsibilities while men dominate policy areas such as defence and economy.³

In countries of the world, women's participation and representation have been lauded because of their level of importance in the liberation of women in their

various societies. The empowerment and representation help them to understand their full fundamental human rights and keep them protected from abuse from either female or male folks. All these are the indices of democracy which is experienced by citizens in a democratic state. Building on Abraham Lincoln's common definition of democracy ('the government of the people, by the people and for the people') a government comes from the people; it is exercised by the people, and for the purpose of the people's own interests. This indicates that democracy involves every member of the society including both men and women. Either directly in the political process or through representation in the decision-making process, democracy encourages equality of involvement in politics.

Nearly half of the world's population suffers most from many setbacks like lack of literacy, and low earnings. Among the population are also women, who have influenced their countries' socioeconomic development in a variety of ways through trade, the arts, science, and domestic work. In recent years, it has been abundantly clear that there are very few women participating in politics globally. For instance, in 2011 more women were given political appointment, 12 women were appointed as Ministers out of 42 which represent 30 percent, and 4 women out of 20 as Special Advisers while in this present regime, only 6 women were appointed as Ministers out of 30 ministerial appointees.

Due to this imbalance, more academics, non-governmental organizations, and intergovernmental organizations are calling for programs to empower women. It is undeniable that genders differ biologically and physiologically. Women are "weaker" than males because they produce children, even though men are typically bigger, taller, and physically stronger. Women also tend to have lower levels of education, qualifications, and socioeconomic standing than men.

As it is well known and acknowledged throughout the world, and using Nigeria as an example, women have played a significant role in pre-colonial times, from Princess Moremi, the brave queen who made sacrifices for her society, to Queen Amina of Zaria, who led Zaria to defeat those invading Zaria, to Margret Ekpo, a civil rights activist who organized the 1929 Aba women's riot. These few historical examples demonstrate the important roles that African women have played in the nation's political affairs.

For women to know their rights, be politically conscious of their surroundings, and be capable of participating in political matters, it is crucial that they feel

empowered. Programs for empowering women have been developed for millennia, and they differ in different parts of the world. Social, economic, educational, political, and psychological empowerment of women is possible. Empowerment is a multifaceted social process, an active process that helps women to fully realize who they are and be able to take control of their lives. It involves power distribution, and authority among the oppressed, disadvantaged, and helpless people who have not been able to take part in the formulation and execution of governmental organizations' policies and programs or in society issues.

The United Nations gave light to the issue of women not being empowered by creating an organization that would help women achieve their goals. This organization is called CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women). It was an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in the year 1979 to eliminate any form of injustice against women and girls. This reality has prompted the demand for research on Nigeria, specifically Lagos women, to look at the obstacles to female participation in politics and governance as well as their involvement in politics.

Understanding the problem

This study looks at Women's Empowerment and Political participation in Lagos State: A case study of the Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA). Ipaja-Ayobo is a suburb of Alimosho which has a population of 2 million making it the most populated local government in Nigeria and the most challenged due to its high poverty rate. The description given by ACT is a good indication of the numerous challenges faced by the people of Ipaj-Ayobo in social and economic well-being. The difficulties facing women participating in politics came to light in 1999 as the military rule gave way to a democratic democracy. Women empowerment in Nigeria's development has advanced, and research demonstrates that when given the opportunity to participate, obtain an education, and create a society that is safe for developing female children, women are more likely than men to be more productive. Since women make up more than half of the population in Nigeria, it would be extremely unfair if they were either underrepresented or denied the same participation rights as males.

The questions that demand answers in this work are, (1). What factors are responsible for the low level of women's participation and representation in the Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA? And (2). What are the ways of increasing the level of women's empowerment and women's political participation in Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA? The objectives are also centered on the questions asked; to examine factors responsible for the low level of political participation and representation of women in Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA and find ways of encouraging women's political participation and empowerment in Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA to create more opportunities for women in Lagos State.

Current Discourse

Literature is reviewed in this section on women's political participation and representation. This has attracted global and regional interest. The work of USAID has always included efforts to promote gender equality and women's

empowerment. We concentrate on global programs and strive to create and institutionalise laws that support the advancement of women and girls. The global interest in gender equality has earned it a position in the 2030 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number five (5) with emphasis on equality, empowerment, and right protection which forms a background for a stable, prosperous, and sustainable world. Empowerment is multidimensional and all the dimensions are needed for a total repositioning of women in the society.

Many International Organisations have prioritised the progress of gender equality and women's participation and World Bank is such an organization. The World Bank Group is working with its customers to develop creative solutions to assist women and girls in developing their human capital and becoming leaders, business owners, and changemakers for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive development. Women's participation is essential for development, especially climate action. The transition to low-carbon economies can be facilitated by women's economic empowerment, which can also help improve resource use, lower environmental damage, and land fragmentation, and increase resilience. These factors include girls' education, family planning, reproductive and sexual health, and fewer child marriages and they are set to achieve these through the 2023 transitioning into 2024-30 World Bank Group (WBG) Gender Strategy Update, to be launched in early 2024.

There is great lack of progress in women's participation and representation after a hundred years that women were elected to parliament in some EU countries. The EU Parliament has advised improved efforts towards gender representation and equality by such groups as the European Women's Lobby (EWL), and Council of European Parliamentary Assembly (CEPA).

Globally, findings have been made to situate the position of progress in women's participation, especially in the parliament.

In 2013, only 18.7% of parliament members globally were women among the 76 countries with consistent data. By 2022, this number had risen steadily to 22.9%, reflecting progress over the years. Europe leads the way with the highest share of women in parliament, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Southern Asia, Eurasia and Central Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific have maintained stability in women's representation during recent years. Conversely, the Middle East and North Africa was the only region to experience a significant decline in women's representation in parliament from 2020 to 2021 partly driven by the drastic drop in Algeria, from 26% to 8%.

The global information has shown the variability in different regions on women's participation. Undoubtedly, this also gives way to their empowerment. The leadership of a country greatly determines how the country is organised. In the case of Sri Lanka there has been good documentation of legal framework

with binding and non-binding charters on issues relating to women's participation and representation.

Sri Lanka uses quota systems to encourage women to run for office, legislative quotas that require a certain percentage of women candidates, and voluntary party quotas where political parties voluntarily agree to nominate a specific number or percentage of women candidates. Such reserve quotas for women in legislative and political parties are not enforceable. In other words, the women require that interest and commitment to be able to enjoy the provisions that are made available to them. The key fact of empowerment in women is hereby summarised:

Empowering women is the process of equipping them with the tools, resources, and opportunities necessary to enhance their capabilities and enable them to make informed decisions, take charge of their lives, and fully participate in society. This notion of empowerment transcends merely providing women with fundamental rights and opportunities; it centers on empowering them to cultivate their skills, knowledge, and self-assurance to attain their aspirations and enrich their communities.

The efforts toward women empowerment are embedded in the Kenyan constitution. The Constitution of Kenya encourages the engagement of women in politics and in leadership, targeting the end to the historical exclusion of women in politics and contributing to the efforts that commenced in the 1980s on gender mainstreaming. In East Africa, Kenya still lags in the representation of women at both houses with only 22% compared to Rwanda which has the highest percentage score of 61%. Other East African countries include Burundi with a percentage score of 38, Tanzania with 37, and Uganda with 35.

In South Africa, the present leadership of President Cyril Ramaphosa has shown concern towards women inclusion in the leadership and policy decision-making positions, as most of the executive and policy decision-making members are men. over the years in Ghana, women have increasingly shown interest in the local government system that is intended to bring government to the doorstep of people but has failed to attain the 30% UN recommended minimum threshold. In representation in the assembly. In assessment, Nigeria is also in progress as it relates to women participation and empowerment. Existing scholarship on Nigerian politics has consistently underscored the marginalization of women while identifying major obstacles against their political engagement. Many countries around the world, especially the African countries are yet to embrace fully the pro-gender equity in participation, though there are differences of progress, lack of it, and decline.

Methodology Approach

The data for this research was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained from interviews using in-depth interviews to gain knowledge about the relationship between empowerment and political participation of women in the Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council

Development Area. A population of six (6) individuals (five women and one man) were purposively selected because they had the needed information for the subject of study. Three women and one man interviewed are employees of the Lagos State government while the other two women (Businesswoman and a civil servant) were selected from outside the local government council. The secondary source of data was obtained from the internet, books, online books, and previous related project work.

The research instrument used for this research study is a semi-structured questionnaire which was a guide for the interview. Some questions were prepared as a guide for the interview to answer the research questions and research objectives of the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis occurs in two ways namely- inductively and deductively. This research made use of thematic analysis because the analysis provides authentic and comprehensive findings, and it helps the research to structure the qualitative data that would be gathered to effectively achieve the research objectives.

This study is organized in stages; abstract, introduction, methodology, theoretical framework, data analysis, discussion of findings, conclusion, and recommendations. The study is significant because the findings and recommendations will surely inform policy decisions and interventions aimed at promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and inclusive governance in this local council and other similar settings.

Theoretical Considerations

The Feminism Theory

The beginning of feminist theories started with Mary Wollstonecraft as early as 1794 in her publication "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" where she fought for women's equality and questioned her colleagues why women should be treated as less. Liberal feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) challenged her colleagues who exempted women from the right of residency. She further stated that she does not see any reason as to why women cannot enjoy the same rights and benefits of being a citizen as men do.

The current focus of feminist theory is to examine inequalities and injustices along the intersections of ability, class, gender, racism, sex, and sexuality. Feminists also work to change the situations where these intersections result in power imbalances. Politicians who identify as feminists advocate for problems like sexual harassment and discrimination at work, equal pay, family medical leave, domestic abuse, and reproductive rights. It is a feminist concern whenever there is intersectional oppression, objectification, stereotyping, or violation of human rights.

Feminism is a collection of sociopolitical movements and beliefs. The goal of feminism is to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. Feminism has historically progressed from being a critical study of gender inequity to a more nuanced analysis of the social and performative constructions of gender and sexuality.

Application of Theory

This theory is applicable to this study because the study focuses on paying more attention to women's rights. This study focuses on getting women more audience in the political environment of Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA (Local Council Development Area). Feminism helps to make sure that there is no unfair treatment and inequality towards women, and that everyone should be given the same equal rights and opportunities because both the male and female gender have their own potential to express therefore equal opportunities should be given to move the society, community, state, or country forward. It also pushes for the ideas of women to be heard and not be sidelined; women should have the same level of attention as men when speaking and bringing ideas. The women of Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA may face some discriminatory challenges of finance, education, and exclusion but feminist theory has stood strong to support and defend them in many forms.

"Feminism theory" is not only about women engaged through intersectional perspectives". He maintained that feminism theory goes through critical political engagements through imaginative interdisciplinary work and the theory was suspicious of dualistic thinking since the theory sought to divide the complex into two opposing variables (reason and mind, or male and female). Dualistic thinking gives way to hierarchy therefore causing one party to dominate the other party. The theory acknowledged the hierarchy placed in society and tried to make it extinct cause we are all humans therefore we

should be treated in the same manner and not dominate one another. Feminism came in a way as a sort of hope for voiceless women who wanted to be seen and recognized by society and not to be seen as inferior to men and the women of Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA are part of this resolution. The essence of feminism was to create a world of equality where there were no dominations between one party and another. It began because of the injustice women faced and that led to a revolt causing the establishment of feminism. Ferguson concluded that troubling the power relations would be efficient and effective to make a change and a feminist spirit who is open and committed to solving the issues would be the best companion to the feminism theory. The feminism theory "makes use of gender as a lens through which the social world can be examined and criticized". He mentioned that feminism theory shows how women and men live segregated lives and how women are always in the shadow of men and have no voice of their own and they are not allowed to make money or get their own personal income.

Criticisms of the Theory

The theory focuses too much on the negative experiences of women failing to recognize that some women can have happy marriages and not have any bad experiences in the marriage. The theory tends to portray women as universally acceptable and good while men as universally bad and the root of all insolence in society. It does not portray the good side of men even though the society is patriarchal in nature, some men do not treat any women less and are respectable to them. It has accused men of not being trustworthy therefore leaving men looking like inconsiderate people. The theory focuses more on analyzing gender inequality; themes often used in feminism theory are discrimination, oppression, objectification, and stereotypes. The theory also overstates the social class structure present in the society. Despite all the criticism, This theory advocates for women and their right to equal treatment and equal opportunity for political participation. This theory is needed for the backing of the study to make it more comprehensive and authentic because this theory already helped previous studies on similar research project topics.

History of the Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA (Local Council Development Area)

Southwestern Nigeria's Lagos State has the neighborhood of Ayobo in the Alimosho local government region. The area is home to Anchor University, Lagos. Aiyetiro, in Ogun State, is bordered by Ayobo, the final town in Lagos. About ten smaller towns are nested beneath the main town of Ayobo. Megida, Isefun, Olorunisola, Bada, Sabo, Kande-Ijon, Orisumbare-Ijon, Jagundeyi, and other cities are examples.

The most notable towns in Ayobo are Megida and Isefun. Ayobo, where Anchor University is located, has Megida as its capital. One of the newer waterways in Lagos is in Isefun/Kande-Ijon and is currently being built. Ipaja/Ayobo Local Council Development Area is the name given to the area where Ayobo and Ipaja share a local council. The current chairman of the Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council

Development Area is Hon. Chief (Mrs) Bola Shobowale JP. Executive Chairperson Ipaja-Ayobo LCDA was newly appointed on April 13th, 2022.

Empowerment in Ipaja Ayobo Local Council Development Area

The executive chairman being a woman and the local council development area being headed by a woman brings light to the issue and enhances the reasons why women should be empowered to participate in political activities. Due to empowerment Chief (Mrs) Shobowale was aware of her rights and got involved in political activities to create a path for other women as well and since she is the executive chairman, it would be easier to conduct more empowerment events and make policies that are beneficial to women. On the 23rd of September 2021, the executive chairman Mrs. Shobowale conducted a 2-day empowerment program at the council secretariat office drew participants from different constituencies. It was noted that the council would empower 20 of the best participants of the program. The local council development area of Ipaja Ayobo has hosted several empowerment programs to achieve its vision of repositioning Ipaja Ayobo LCDA for sustainable growth and development. They have organized youth and women empowerment programs and try to make everyone politically involved by empowering them to know their rights, be rightfully independent, and be aware of the happenings of the local area, Lagos, and even Nigeria at large.

Overview of Women Political Participation in Lagos State

The Local Settlement in the Lagos Colony has made it difficult for women since Nigeria's independence and the establishment of Lagos state by forbidding their participation in politics. In Lagos, women have been termed as not below 30 percent of women in influence and basic management in the nation. In the year 1999, there was a political development not only in Lagos but Nigeria as a whole. The government recorded the first female Deputy-Governor General – Senator Buckner Akerele. There was no female head out of the 20 Local governments in Lagos and at the local council level only one woman was selected. Even to date, there has not been much increase in the political participation of women in Lagos, but it has gotten better than it was before the Beijing conference in 1995. Women are heading several political offices now but not most women are represented and women who want to be involved are restrained by several factors such as financial factors, educational factors, and socio-cultural factors, all these play a huge role in the determining factor of women's participation in politics. In Lagos, we have a lot of women who are willing to be involved but do not have the financial or educational capabilities to do it. They are often looked down upon, that is where the movement of empowerment comes into place. With empowerment, one can give women who are not capable of the resources needed to be involved in politics and allow women to be largely represented in the political affairs of the state. Lagos like many other states in Nigeria is still dominated by men and would take many women to be able to create a just and equal society where women's voices would be heard as well. Lagos being the former capital of Nigeria has put itself in the spotlight making it the most populous state despite it being the smallest state in Nigeria.

The outcome of the Interviews conducted.

Responses of Interviewees, Theme 1

Women Political Participation and Representation in Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA)

Respondent 1: Women are very much represented in this Local Council area, in such that most of the employees in this place are mostly women. Women are more than the men in this Local Council area and because of that the women who live in the area are well taken care of and the voices of the women are heard. It also helps us that the current head of the Local Council Area is a woman, and she was just newly elected and therefore increased the awareness of women and the level at which they are represented. Just as I said earlier women are very much represented here because I can say at least up to 20 women work here and each of them is treated as equally as the men who work here.

Respondent 2: Well, in this Local Council, Women are represented well here even though there are several women who do not partake in politics, they are still aware of their rights and are helping women in other ways they can even if it is not through politics. I am sure when you came in, you saw that many of the employees here are women. So that should speak for itself already. The Heads of Departments here are mostly women and they are doing well at their jobs even though the members of staff also consist of women. In total I can say we have up to seven (7) women who are Heads of Departments here and for the women working here we have at least 20 women working here.

Respondent 3: Women are not adequately represented. Nationally, it is widely believed that a woman cannot do what a man can do and therefore women are not given responsibilities and are left underrepresented. In this Local Government Council, I have observed as a man that women are represented because the newly elected executive chairperson is a woman, so their voices and opinions are heard, and they help the other women to speak up in all areas that matters to women and society.

Respondent 4: The women are well represented in this local government. I am a businesswoman in this place. Our fellow women in our market are well represented and they always want to take part in all political activities as informed by the council. I am happy about the level of our recognition in this council.

Respondent 6: Women participating in political affairs are helping to raise awareness for the equality of women. That is my belief of what women political participation and representation are. Women are very much represented in this Local Council area where we even have instances in which we have talked about women getting more involved in politics to increase the level of women participating in politics. In this area, women are represented and allowed to have access to the decision-making board of their departments.

Responses of Interviewees on Theme 2:

Factors Affecting Women Representation and Participation in Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA)

Respondent 1: The major factor responsible for the low level of women participating in politics is none less than education. Everyone must have at least a foundation of education because through education we are more enlightened and aware of our rights and know when we are been abused of our rights. Some women believe that politics is a dirty game and therefore it is not a woman's affair, again. They are not wrong, but they are wrong in the aspect of saying women are not meant for politics because there are some women who are blessed intellectually but because of the mindset they have, they rather not make use of the intellect God blessed them with. Due to these factors, women in this Local Council have been denied the opportunity to show their intellectual capacity.

Respondent 2: There are several factors that can be the reason for the low level of women participating in politics and leading to the low level of women being represented but I feel that the main factor is religion. I am sure you can tell by my dress that I am a Muslim and in Islam, there are several laws that hinder women from participating in politics. There is a law in Islam that states that women are not meant to be involved in the affairs of women and a case study has been seen in Afghanistan where the Taliban who took over are restricting women from a lot of things in the name of religion and these women will have no choice but to follow because they fear that they might be killed if they do not follow the rules. Such women in that kind of situation would not want to be involved in politics. Being a Muslim myself, I have hindrances in the way, but I always make sure that whatever it is I need to achieve I do it because it is necessary and because it is my goal. Religion is used as a political tool in Nigeria to get a desired response and it is sad that it is mostly women who succumb to the tactics of religion.

Respondent 3: As a man, I would say that being a woman already is a factor of low level of participation because they are faced with so many family responsibilities, but we also have the problems that come with being a woman. For instance, if a woman were to head to a particular meeting and then on her way to the meeting, she gets her monthly flow with heavy and painful cramps, she will have no choice but to miss that meeting and put someone else in charge or adjourn the meeting, either way. She was stopped from fulfilling her duties because of the issues that come with being a woman. Women are also very emotional and considerate. If you ask some of our members of staff here, they will tell you that they prefer to work with men than women because men are more focused and considerate, they make decisions without emotions. So, I will say biological factors are also responsible for the low level of women participation and representation in this Local council. Another factor is the financial aspect, not every woman is financially able to get into politics and because of that, they are discouraged from the onset.

Respondent 4: I would say religion and societal factors. Let us be honest with ourselves, anyone who truly has the fear of God would not partake in politics because of the behind-the-scenes that happen without the public's knowledge. For women who are considered religious models for their children, such factors

would not allow women to partake in politics because they believe that politics is a man's work therefore, they should not get involved. Now those fights long ago, have paved the way for so many women, and now in modern times women are given equal rights as men and in most cases are even treated better than men are. So, this religion being an obstacle for women in this Local Council and other places as well, shows that women are capable of partaking in politics but are restricted because of these factors. Another factor to consider is that of the segregation created by society.

Respondent 5: I would say that the reason is because women are very hard to work with, women take things personally. I am someone who has worked for both a man and a woman I can surely say working with a man is far better. Women do not partake in politics because they know that once they get involved in politics they will be moved to the cabinet of their fellow women and that would discourage them because they do not like working with women due to how much women are emotional. Women are strict and they react easily, I would not lie to you when I say that working with women comes with a lot of stress and if I had my way, I would not work with women even though I am a woman as well, but we all have our individual differences and upbringings and views of several matters. So majorly the unfriendly manner is what causes the low level of women political participation and representation. They are not interested in politics because of how much they believe that stress is what will make them have an untimely death (sorry to say) but that is the truth.

Respondent 6: In this case, we have so many factors contributing to the low level of women participating in politics but the one that I feel stands out the most is that of illiteracy. The problem of illiteracy is at a high rate, and it is very much common among women. Women now have the right to go to school and even at that, some do not have the resources to go to school. Just like you interviewed me right now. I noticed that most women that work in this council have low level of education. So, I will say that if most women were educated there would not be the need for empowerment because women would already know what to do to get resources and to further their interest in politics.

Discussion of Findings

This study was carried out in the Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area, and it was done with the use of interviews. The level of political participation and representation has not reached the proposal of what Feminist theory desires in the society but there is progress. There is a need to understand that empowerment goes a long way in giving women the opportunity and the insight to participate in politics. Every woman out there must be empowered and only through empowerment can there be an increase in the level of political participation among women. Women should come out of their comfort zone and be available so that they can be seen and recognized by both men and the law. Achieving gender equality and promoting inclusive communities depend on the political engagement of women. Women's empowerment is the process of improving women's capabilities, rights, and access to opportunities and resources so they can make their own decisions and fully engage in all facets of

life. The advancement of women's political engagement and empowerment has seen substantial improvement over time.

The harsh treatment to them, such as, falling victims of domestic abuse and abuse of their human rights. The theory stands for justice and equality for women. When women participate in decision-making, their perspectives and experiences offer a special and valuable contribution. Additionally, studies show that women tend to emphasize problems like healthcare, education, social welfare, and gender equality, which results in more inclusive and responsive governance. Governments, civil society organizations, and international organizations have all adopted different tactics to encourage women to participate in politics. The introduction of gender quotas or affirmative action programs to boost the participation of women in elected bodies is one of these. Another is the development of welcoming conditions that promote women's involvement in politics. In many nations, efforts to increase women's political clout have had fruitful results.

Women are now occupying more political positions than ever before, including those of head of state and government, minister, and Member of Parliament. Women now have more opportunities to express their opinions and have an impact on policy agendas thanks to the expansion of female membership in political parties, civil society groups, and grassroots movements. However, problems still exist. In political settings, violence, stereotyping, and discrimination against women still exist.

They frequently experience restricted access to financial resources, marginalization from networks of influence, and cultural norms that prevent them from actively participating in politics. Comprehensive efforts, including as gender-responsive legislation, awareness-raising campaigns, focused capacity-building initiatives, and the encouragement of women's leadership and representation, must be taken to overcome these obstacles. In conclusion, establishing gender equality and creating inclusive societies depend on women's political engagement and empowerment.

The findings of this study support both the proposition and interviews conducted for the research which states that there is a relationship between Women Empowerment and Political Participation in Lagos State: A Case Study of Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area (LCDA).

Recommendations

Women must come out of their shells and be confident enough to stand for what they believe in and that helps in the fulfillment of the objectives of the feminism theory. The feminism theory paved a pathway for women and that served as a guideline on how to treat women's rights cause women already go through a lot and the theory explains why it is needed for women to be equally treated. Empowerment programs should be a very important priority of any society and should be fixed into the school curriculum so that girls at young ages before becoming full-grown women would already have the idea of what it is to be a woman and the ways to overcome obstacles in the way of achieving their dreams and goals.

Empowerment programs go a long way in helping women to feel braver and more confident and with those programs, women would be able to announce their presence in the political system and environment. Women should be given basic education because when one is educated one becomes more equipped with how to navigate the basis of life, especially for women who grow up in a male-dominated society. For empowerment programs to help women more and cause more effective changes, women of societies can team up and work with non-governmental organizations to encourage and conduct more empowerment programs so as to encourage more women to get involved because the more women empowered the more women with the education and knowledge of how to participate in politics and the majority of the human rights abuse cases that involve women would drastically reduce.

The government should also assist women by helping them raise funds and women who are already in politics should serve as good mentors and role models to other women who are aspiring to join politics. The government has more roles to play here in helping women. They can create laws beneficial to women, and they should encourage girl education to stop early child marriage, and encourage more women to be politically, physically, mentally, financially, and socially empowered for a better society of equality.

Conclusion

This study has shown the relationship between women empowerment and political participation in Lagos State and in the Ipaja-Ayobo Local Council Development Area. The factors preventing women from participating have shown that more work needs to be done to achieve the position of the feminism theory. The feminism theory stands on the position of supporting women and fighting for equal ground with men and it can be seen in this study that women still need to fight for more awareness to achieve the essence that makes up the feminism theory. This study also explained the factors that militate against women political participation and made solutions to overcoming the obstacles.

In conclusion, there are still trends of men dominating the political system and generally in society as well. Women should pay more attention to getting more females to participate in politics. Society should also be helpful by raising awareness and standing up for women to reduce the cases of rampant domination by men in society. Women have already come a long way since the fight for their rights and for the level of equality in society. Society helps women by breaking the norms they create and instead, they start treating women with more respect or better still equal respect as men for women to be encouraged leading to an increase in the level of women empowerment and participation in politics.