

Women's Political Participation and Representation in State Legislatures, Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study appraised the participation of women legislators in law-making process at the Houses of Assembly, Southwest Nigeria. It highlighted women legislators' challenges, experiences and contributions with a view to providing information on the representation and participation level of women in law-making in Nigeria. Structured interviews were conducted with key respondents consisting of purposively selected women legislators, women leaders of political parties and members of Houses of Assembly in Lagos, Ekiti and Oyo States. A total number of 24 respondents were interviewed in the three states. Data collected were analysed using content analysis. Results showed that women legislators have been highly involved in legislative debates by sponsoring diverse motions despite their low representation in the selected State Houses of Assemblies. Also, results affirmed that, factors such as shunning of ideas and motions, lack of equal knowledge of partisan politics, lack of adequate education, discrimination, marriage, late night meetings and sittings remain some of the challenges that women legislators in Southwest Nigeria face. To overcome these problems, the study recommended, the development of electoral reforms that promote equitable representation of women.

Keywords: Nigeria; Women; Legislature; Political participation; Political representation

Introduction

Globally, there has been a steady but slow progress in the role played by women in politics because of men's nature and domination, thereby systematically outnumbering the women folk, especially in developing nations in Africa [1]. This is particularly so because of patriarchal nature of most African societies where women are left to play the second-fiddle through certain cultural sentiments. As a result, there has been a persistent call by women, scholars, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various international organizations to take action and remove obstacles limiting women's entry into politics as women's participation in the political field is imperative for a lasting development in any human society [2].

There have been agitations from various international and national organizations for government of several countries to implement international instruments aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of women [3]. Nigeria has ratified one international instrument, the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, signed and ratified two regional instruments, the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration of Gender Equality in Africa [4]. More so, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the provision of the Convention and Elimination of Discriminatory practices Against Women (CEDAW), provide that 30% of all positions in government be given to women [5], but in spite of this, undertone of gender has hindered Nigerian women.

Women's involvement and participation in politics and electoral process throughout Africa has received so much academic attention [6]. This constitutes an integral part of contemporary discourse on

democracy and governance. Since the return to democratic path in 1999, the role of women in democratic affairs has assumed a center stage in public debates in Nigeria. However, opinions are still divided on whether the role of women is best suited in home fronts or they can equally engage in economic and political activities like their male counterparts [7].

In support of women active involvement in democratic and political processes in the society, it has been argued that a gender-blind politics cannot be said to be democratic neither can it be credible because equality is an essential part of a democratic government [8]. Hence, it has been noted that a state which embodies the culture of democracy is a state that embraces political participation, vibrant civil society, integration of women and minorities in all levels of government, protection and promotion of human rights [9]. Akiyode-Afolabi and Arogundade, confirmed this by asserting that equality, development and peace across all spheres of life cannot be achieved without active involvement and integration of the perception of women in decision-making process [10].

Regrettably, one area that has witnessed the glaring under-representation of women and the domination of men in the current democratic process is at the level of the legislature (both at the state and federal level). The representation of women legislators world-wide, between 1999 and 2006 rose steadily from 5.034 percent to 7.195 [11]. Historically, in Nigeria's first republic, only 4 female legislators were produced in the whole country and before 1999, the proportion of seats occupied by women in National Assembly never exceeded 3.1% and 5% for Federal Executive Council [7].

Since the return of civil rule in the country in 1999, obtainable statistics reveal that women's overall political representation in Nigeria's government is less than 7 percent [12]. There is a slow

increase in representation ratio of women to men political actors in Nigeria since 1999 and the potential role of women in shaping the direction of politics in the Nigerian society constitutes major worry for the future of Nigeria. More so, over the years, political space in the country as it is elsewhere has remained the domain of men especially at legislative arm of government.

It is no longer news that representation of women legislators is still low in comparison to the men legislators especially in Southwest, Nigeria as seen in the just concluded 2015 elections. Result of the 2015 elections showed that women legislators had just 12 seats out of 177 seats in Southwestern, Nigeria [13]. Given the critical nature of the legislature in the formulation of policies through legislations, the election and participation of women into our various parliaments can help address feminist and cross-gender issues, conflicts and other related social problems. It is in this connection that this study attempts an assessment of the performance and contribution of women in the law making process in state houses of assembly Southwest, Nigeria and the extent to which they have participated in laws initiation.

Evidences have shown that studies of scholars on women participation in politics centered more on representation and frequency of women in policy making body of government. This study contributes to the gap, by evaluating the representation and participating role of this elected few women legislators in the Southwestern region of Nigeria, in a bid to encourage more women to participate in politics and also justify the clamor for gender equality in representation.

Role of the Legislature in a Democratic State

Legislature is generally referred to as an official body, usually chosen by election, with the power to make, change, and repeal laws; as well as powers to represent the constituent units and control government. The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Science defines legislatures as political institutions whose members are:

Formally equal to one another, whose authority derives from a claim that the members are representative of the political community, and whose decisions are collectively made according to complex procedures.

Izah conceptualise legislatures as “assemblies of elected representatives from geographically defined constituencies, with lawmaking functions in the governmental process” [14].

A democratically elected parliament can be described as the only true voice of the people and accountable to the people it serves. It is the basic plank of a democratic system and one of its core principles is the principle of political equality, meaning that political power should be distributed as widely and evenly as possible among the people. This principle is captured by the adage: government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Legislative bodies have become an integral part of democratic government. It is a representative governmental body in which the people will is transferred into the will of a state in the form of a law, which has superior (after Constitution) legal force [14]. The legislative bodies are representative bodies as they express will of people as subject of the sovereignty.

Barkan supported also by Bowers-Krishan asserts that the legislature performs four basic functions [15]. First, it serves as the

institutional mechanism through which societies realize representative governance on a day-to-day basis. The type of electoral system through which the members of the legislature gain their seats is not necessary as the main purpose of individual legislators and the body to which they belong is to represent. Second, the legislature obviously legislate-but at two levels. At a minimum, they pass laws, but such activity may merely rubber-stamp legislation handed down by the executive. Legislatures contribute to the making of public policy by crafting legislation in partnership with or independent of the executive and with input from civil society, and then pass such legislation into law [16].

Thirdly, legislature as an arm exercise oversight of the executive branch to ensure that policies agreed upon which are converted to laws are implemented by the state. Oversight is an essential function for any democratic legislature because it ensures both vertical accountability of the rulers to the ruled and horizontal accountability of all other agencies of government to the one branch whose primary function is representation [16].

Fourth, legislators acting individually, rather than as members of a corporate organization that engages in collective decision making, perform the function of constituency service.

Constituency service could involve one or two forms; regular visits by Member of Parliaments to their districts to meet their constituents, involvement in small-to medium-scale development projects that provide various forms of public goods to the residents of their district, including roads, water supply systems, schools, health clinics, and meeting halls [15].

Women's Political Participation in Nigeria: Historical Exploration

Historically, in pre-colonial Nigeria to some extent, equality prevailed and this enabled women to play leadership role in various capacities. In traditional societies, political power was diffused, not concentrated in one single individual or level of authority.

As Onwuzirike observed, women occupied important roles in the traditional political life and in their different regions; they were actively engaged in politics and held decision-making roles in the governmental institution in their respective regions [17].

The extent of women's participation in the public sphere in the pre-colonial Nigeria however, depended very much on how their particular society was organized, whether in the form of monarchy like the Yoruba kingdom or as republican like the Igbo tribes [18].

In Yoruba land, women held political offices like Iyalode, Iyaloja, Iyalaje. The change of government from the Hausa aristocracy to the Fulani/Muslim hegemony however, totally excluded women from the public sphere. After the reign of Amina in the pre-Islamic past of Zaria, there was no woman who sat in the court of any Hausa ruler [19].

The pre-colonial period in Nigeria, despite being a patriarchal society in some regions, has a rich history that is marked with the contributions of women to politics [7]. Table 1 below shows example of some of these women;

S/N	Name	Town	LGA	State	Type of Rule	Date
1.	LuwoGbadiaya	Ife	Ife Central	Osun	Ooni of Ife	Pre-Colonial
2.	Iyayun	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alafin	Pre-Colonial
3.	Orumpoto	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alafin	Pre-Colonial
4.	Jomojomi	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alafin	Pre-Colonial
5.	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alafin	Pre-Colonial
6.	Queen Amina	Zauzau	-	Zaria	Emir	Pre-Colonial
7.	Daura	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	1705- 1735
8.	Kofono	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	1850-51 AD
9.	Eye-moi	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent-Monarch	Pre-Colonial Days
10.	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent-Monarch	Pre-Colonial Days
11.	Gulfano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-Colonial
12.	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-Colonial
13.	Yakania	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-Colonial
14.	Walsam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-Colonial
15.	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-Colonial
16.	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-Colonial
17.	Queen Kanbasa	Bony	Bony L.G.	Rivers	Queen	Pre-Colonial

Source: Ngara and Ayabam [11].

Table 1: Statistics of women traditional rulers in pre-colonial days.

These roles by women were made possible despite enormous cultural, social and academic constraints to participation.

Women's poor participation in politics, like many other problems in Nigeria, has a deep root in the system carved and imposed by colonialism [20,21]. It began with the colonial occupation, starting with the fusion of the three regions (Yoruba in the Southwest, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Hausa/Fulani in the North) to the Nigeria's independence and its governance, and then to the post-independent Nigeria. Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution of 1922 disenfranchised women and limited the participation of adult to the wealthy [22].

In the Southwestern Nigeria, a section of women voted for the first time in the nation's electoral history in the 1959 general elections, while their Northern counterparts could not vote until 1976, fifty-four years after the elective principle was introduced to Nigeria, that the Northern women first enjoyed franchise rights [23]. The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), and Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) gathered varying levels of support from women's groups. However, women did not feature prominently in the leadership of these and other parties during the nationalist era and after independence [24].

In the 1958 elections, only Wurola Esan got appointed to the Senate of 36 members, while no woman was elected to the 312-member House of Representatives and federal cabinet. Igbo women were members of the NCNC, and women such as Margaret Ekpo, Mrs. Mary Nzimiro, were elected members of the National Executive

Council (NEC) in 1957. They participated actively during parties' primaries and campaigns [18].

Since the emergence of indigenous political leadership in 1960, Nigerian women have remained invisible in the party system. Olojede further avers that it was only NEPU that had a woman in its National Executive but merely as a Women's Organizer [25]. The first republic (1960-1966) saw only an insignificant member of women in Southeast playing prominent roles. In the Eastern House of Assembly for instance, only two women were members: Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Janet Muokelu. From 1960 -1965, there were only two female legislators in the federal parliament and four female legislators in the whole of the country. The imposition of military, an era that followed this period from 1966 did not foster the participation of women in politics and very little was heard of women at the helm of affairs.

The Constituent Assembly of the Obasanjo regime in 1975 had no single female members out of its 50 members [26]. No woman was appointed to the fifty-member Constitutional Drafting Committee, very few women were elected into the local government councils during the 1976 elections, and only Mrs. Janet Akinrinade was elected to the Constituent Assembly. Four other women were appointed to the 250 member assembly. The second republic did not witness any significant difference with respects to women political participation despite renewed efforts to give women a chance to contribute to National development until it collapsed [27].

With the collapse of the second republic, women again fizzled out of relevance in the two-year regime of Gen Mohammed Buhari [28]. From the mid-1980s however, the military started appointing a few women, now and then to positions of authority. In the Political Bureau of 1986, only 2 were women out of the 19 members. The transition programme which witnessed the two-party political structure had 27 female members out of the 1, 172 (2.3%) members of the States House of Assembly across the country. The House of Representatives had 13 women out of the 593 (2.2%) seats and the Senate, 1 woman out of a population of 93 (1%) [29].

The Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1989 constitution had only 5 women members out of a total membership of 150 while in 1990, out of the 1,297 local government positions nationwide, women won only 206. The Abacha controversial transition programme also witnessed a dismal, though more women in the prime positions of governance. The Senate had 3 women, the House of Representatives had 12 women out of the 360 members, and the State Houses of Assembly across the nation had 12 women out of the 990 members. At the local government level, out of 8, 810 councilors across the nation, 143 were women while 9 out of 774 local government chairpersons were women [29].

Out of a total of 11,104 political offices contested for in 1998 - 1999, the male aspirants won 10,924 (98.4%) leaving their female contestants with a trivial 180 seats (1.6%). With respect to our area of interest (that is legislative representation), the male still overwhelmingly dominated. Out of total of 983 House of Assembly seats, the male won 971 (98.8%) and female 12 seats (1.2%) respectively. Similarly, at the National Assembly, out of total 355 seats declared by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), male contestants won 343 (96.6%) while their female counterparts won a paltry 12 seats (3.4%) [23].

The 1999 general elections saw only three (2.8%) women out of 109 senators elected into the Senate, while 13 (3.6%) women were elected into the House of Representatives of 360 seats, that is, 6.4% women representation in the national parliament [30]. Nigeria had only one

female deputy Governor – Chief Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, deputy governor of Lagos State (1999-2003), and of the 978 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country only 12 (1.21%) women were elected. At the local level, out of the 774 local government chairpersons across the nation, only 9 were women and only 143 out of the 8,700 councillors were women [26,27].

Since the return of civil rule in the country in 1999, statistics of women's political representation in Nigeria's government as gradually increased though still less than 7 percent. In the 2003 elections, only 21 (6.1%) women out of the 360 member won seats in the House of Representatives. Similarly, of 109 senatorial seats, only 4 (3.7%) women were elected in to the Senate, which is just 9.8% women representation in the national parliament. Of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country, 39 (4%) women were elected [10].

At the April 2007 elections, there were 1200 women aspirants in total to 1532 offices. 660 of these aspirants won their primaries. Out of these 660 candidates, only 93 finally emerged as winners and these include 6 Deputy Governors. In 2007, only 25 (7%) women out of the 358 seats were elected into the House of Representatives and 9 (8.3%) women out of the 109 seats were elected in to the Senate, that is 15.3% women representation in the national parliament while, out of the 36 gubernatorial seats available, no woman was elected and of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country, 54 (5.5%) women were elected [31].

The 2011 elections, witnessed a significant drop in the number of successful candidates into the House of Representatives. Out of 360 available seats, women won only 19 (5.3%) seats. At the senate, there were 7 (6.4%) women out of 109 senators while at the state houses of assembly; there were 68 (6.9%) women out of 990 persons (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008:10).

Table 2 below reflects data representation for the (4th) fourth republic in general;

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seats	Women	Seats	Women	Seats	Women	Seats	Women	Seats	Women
Senate	109	3	109	4	109	9	109	7	109	8
House of Reps	360	13	339	21	358	25	360	19	360	20
State Houses of Assembly	978	12	951	39	990	54	990	68	990	-

Source: Eyeh [35]; Irabor, and Okoronkwo-Chukwu [32]; US Department of State (2016).

Table 2: Women Representation in the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 Nigerian elections.

A summary of gender representation in the National Assembly during the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections, put together, shows that women were ridiculously under-represented by 5% in each of the two Houses of Assembly. Besides, no woman had ever ascended the office of the Senate President, while the only female, Patricia Etteh, who was elected as Speaker of the House of Representatives in 2007, was impeached by a male dominated House before the end of her tenure. In this regard, Okoronkwo-Chukwu in a study on the 2011 general elections in Nigeria refers to women “as active participants in the success of their male counterparts during elections” [26,30,32,33].

With this scenario of under-representation of women in public management, women could not significantly influence the course of public policies. In spite of this, they are bound by the outcomes of the policy process of which they were and are an insignificant part. In a similar way, their peculiar needs and interests could not be adequately projected as they had few advocates in policy institutions. Consequently, several policies and programmes adopted by Federal and State governments to enhance sustainable human development were and are sometimes gender insensitive [34-36].

Research Method

This study employed primary and secondary data. The primary data was sourced through structured interview of key respondents consisting of purposively selected women legislators, women leaders of political parties and members of House of Assembly in Lagos, Ekiti and Oyo States based on the presence of fairly large number of women in their State House of Assembly. The criterion for their selection was based on their expert knowledge of politics. A total number of 24 respondents were interviewed in the three states. This number is due to the fact that there is less women in politics in proportion to men hence the sample size. In each state, eight respondents: 2 women legislators, 3 women leaders of political parties and 3 members of the Houses of Assembly were interviewed using purposive sampling method. Secondary data was also sourced from books, articles, journals, newspapers and other published and unpublished materials. Data was analysed using content analysis.

Women Legislators and Law Making Process in Southwest, Nigeria

The Fourth Republic witnessed some level of activism on the part of Southwestern women especially as regards their advancement in all spheres of life, particularly in the political arena. Women in Western Nigeria played the role of agents of peace in the family and in their community. Table 3 below shows, women legislators' representation in the 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections in their various State Houses of Assembly, Southwest, Nigeria.

State	Number Seats	of	Number of Women			
			2003	2007	2011	2015
Lagos	41		2	5	7	4
Oyo	32		0	1	1	2
Osun	26		0	1	0	0
Ogun	26		2	2	2	2
Ekiti	26		1	0	4	2
Ondo	26		1	1	1	2
Total	177		6	10	15	12

Source: Researcher's Compilation (2016).

Table 3: Women Legislators' Representation in the 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 Elections in State Houses of Assembly, Southwest, Nigeria.

Women legislator	Year	Bill sponsored	Motions made
Hon. Tejuoso Funmilayo (Lagos)	2003-2015	Domestic Violence Bill led to the construction of Happy Home and Child's Right Law	Several Motion on Education, Health, Security, Youth, etc.
	In view	Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill	
Hon Omowunmi (Lagos)	2007-2015	Residents' registration bill and Special People's Bill	Immortalization of former governor, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Tighten up security against incessant child kidnapping and Call on Law Enforcement Agents and Destitute on Pedestrian Bridge and Railways in the popular Oshodi bus stop.

It is in the context of the under representation of women in the legislative process in Southwestern State of Nigeria that this study seeks to assess the participation of the elected few women legislators in law-making process at their Houses of Assembly [37]. To what extent were the elected female representatives able to factor into the policy and law making process in the Fourth Republic? To what extent did their active role lead to policies formulation of the state?

In describing women's participation in politics generally in Nigeria, 45.8% (11) of respondents were of the opinion that women in politics were once seen as an aberration due to the patriarchy of most African society. According to them, women's roles are more appreciated in the home front than active involvement in politics which is believed, would be better handled by men. In the view of Honorable Agunbiade, a representative of Ikorodu I in Lagos State House of Assembly, 'the mentality of domestic life is transferred to the public life of politics'. While 37.5% (9) of respondents believe not all women have the capacity to play the game of politics but only few women politicians. Adding that it is this few women politicians that would be very effective and active in partisan politics thereby laying a foundation and standard for other women. 16.6% (4) of respondents concluded that women are gradually becoming more active [38].

On the active role of women legislators in their state house of assemblies, 91.6% of the respondents assert that women legislators have been very active. In the words of Honorable Femi Ojo, women legislators have been very passionate about representation, raised several motions and sponsored bills. From the opinion of Honorable Ajibola, former honourable member Ekiti East local government and Honorable Adejo Alexander, former member of Ekiti State House of Assembly representing Ekiti Southwest, women presence in the legislative arm of government at the state level have helped enhanced motions, debates and bills that are gender and children oriented even though they are few.

From the responses of Oyo State House of Assembly interviewed members, the only female lawmaker amongst them who happens to be the Speaker of the House have been dynamic in managing the affairs of the assembly. Under her leadership, the house passed over 60 bills and made over 300 Resolutions- by far the most productive in Oyo State House of Assembly History. Her leadership is extraordinary as the peace sustained in the House chambers transcends to the entire State.

Drawn from the opinion of several respondents of the House of Assembly members, women are more passionate about bills that are societal based and these character quality certified a lot of bills like this been passed into law. This view was made evident with proves of diverse motions and bills these few women have sponsored in their various chambers, such as in Table 4.

Hon. Sunmonu Monsurat (Oyo)	2011-2015	Protection of women against incessant abuse and child mortality bill The first member's bill on Oyo Security Trust fund	-
Unnamed (Ekiti)	-	Gender Based Violence Bill	-
Source: Researcher's Findings (2016)			

Table 4: Reflection of Bills Passed & Sponsored by Women Legislators, Southwest Nigeria.

More so, most of these bills and motions reflects the nature and mind set of the women legislators as their notions, motions and bills are usually women and children oriented. While 8.3% of the respondent believes that performance is not gender sensitive that some women are as good and as bad as men, neutral to the view confirmed by other respondents that women legislators have been very involved in lawmaking process [39].

Despite the few women in the State Houses of Assembly and rigorous process in passing of private member bill in Southwest Nigeria, women legislators have been active in this area. A look at the opinions of the respondents reveals a general consensus that the zeal and passion of women legislator for the development of their state cannot be overemphasised. Women have been able to pass bills, raise motions and debate without intimidation of their few numbers. This study corroborates findings from the respondents and agrees that women legislators participate effectively in the law-making process in Houses of Assembly in Southwest Nigeria.

Challenges Militating against Women's Legislators in Nigerian Politics

Recent literature on women and politics have identified various factors that affect women's participation in politics across the globe but following the data gathered in this study from respondents, the challenges identified varied. On the challenges militating against women legislators, Honorable Omisore mentioned factors such as shunning of ideas and motions made by women, lack of equal knowledge of partisan politics, lack of adequate education, lack of trust accompanied by gossips and political competition as some of the challenges while of the women.

Honorable Fibisola Akande asserted that discrimination and marriage are dominant challenges that affect women legislators due to late night meetings and sitting which is an unavoidable phenomenon in legislative business.

Honorable Ayoka Fatunbi explained in relation to her own experience in the political field, stated that she do not see the challenges as such anymore and that very every business has a challenging time. According to Honorable Tejuoso, the reason for non-frequency of private member bills as a result of the kind of political environment in Nigeria. To her, "Nigeria is not used to the system of private member bills and is not open to it". So, from this standpoint, legislators rarely come up with Private Member Bills because of the rigorous process and lack of support from Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO).

In terms of experience in the political field in general, majority are of the opinion that been straight and full of integrity is difficult in Nigerian politics. Honorable Olaniyan Babatunde, representative of Ibadan North I constituency in Oyo State narrated his experience and

described it as being competitive and intimidating. He generalized by saying that his experience could have been a women's experience too. 50% of the respondents narrated their several experiences but in summary of all, their experiences were all the same in terms of politics not being an easy endeavor and that the political arena is too male dominated and this serve as a treat to most women and maybe referred to as a form of discrimination.

30% of the respondents agree that one of the major factors militating against women is cultural factor. The society is primordially oriented and as such the 'African mentality' that a woman functional role is in the kitchen is what majorly restrict the women from politics as most of them do not get the support of their husbands, families and friends. So rather than lose their loved ones, most women would rather let go their political quest.

Honorable Olayinke Modupe states that one of the challenges against women legislators in politics is fund. Politics is expensive in Nigeria and women by their nature do not have such money to flaunt around, thereby hinder them from participating in politics. More so, the competitive nature of politics in Nigeria makes it difficult for a participant not to spend and most male counterparts are usually willing to spend any amount of money just to be victorious at elections. To Mrs Hajia Mariam Bimbola Ogunlade, the women leader of Labour Party, Ekiti State, she's of the opinion that until when "money is been separated from politics in Nigeria, money will still deprive a lot of people especially women from politics".

10% of the respondent agreed that discrimination from has been one of the major causes of low participation of women in politics. One of the respondent in explaining said, "even though physically the men are not disturbing, they are doing it indirectly. They tell us we can be politicians but we must not go on campaigns. We may pick forms for electoral post but do not support us financially". It is important to note that all the respondents are in agreement that women have challenges they face in Nigerian politics. One can deduce from the above contributions that the challenges of women legislators in politics are enormous and differ.

Conclusion

All that we have attempted to show in this study is that women have been under represented in the State legislature, Southwest, Nigeria since 1999. The study has also shown that although women formed less than 9% in the State legislature, Southwest, Nigeria from 1999 to 2015, however, the few women elected created a significant impact especially with respect to the sponsorship bills. In qualitative terms, the female representatives sponsored more bills than their male counterparts and these bills showed their mindset as regards the lives of the people. It is therefore our conclusion in this study that the legislature can only be made more vibrant, responsive and result oriented if more women are elected into the legislature in subsequent elections.

To overcome the challenges of women participation in politics, the study recommended, the development of electoral reforms that promote equitable representation of women. Political parties should also reserve 30% of all elective positions for women. This to an extent will uphold the Affirmative Action in the country as not mere voluntary action, but explicit specifications and clear guidelines for modalities and implementations that enhance women empowerment.

Government should partner with women advocacy groups, NGOs that are feminist in nature, women organizations, as well as the media for easy access of passing a bill into law. One of the respondents in this study mentioned how NGOs helped in facilitating the speed of a Private Member Bill in the Lagos State Assembly. By so doing, more women will be involved in the policy and decision making process, particularly as it concerns their welfare. This will also strengthen and sustains Nigeria's democracy.

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