

Revealing the Justification for Low Political Participation of Women in Elective Offices in Nigeria

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Abstract: In Nigeria particularly since the commencement of the fourth phase of democratic experiments in 1999 to date, several scholarly works has been done to unravel the causes of low participation of women in politics. The present study building on these previous researches instead of x-raying reasons for low women participation in broader politics descended low to study in-depth the reasons for low women participation in only elective positions/offices which represents just a leaf in the whole big tree of politics. To achieve this, two research questions were coined. These include “what are the reasons for low women presence in elective offices in Nigeria?” and “How could low women presence in elective positions offices in Nigeria be corrected?” Documentary sources of data collection and analysis was adopted in order to be able to break through the hardened shells of previous works to get the required data and relevant information needed to effectively achieve the required scientific result for the study. The data collected was processed accordingly based on the rules guiding data collection from documents and as a results, certain findings emerged chiefly among which includes one, that it has been scientifically proved that only few women voters cast their votes for fellow women during elections; two, that women do not have rich resources to invest in running for political positions; three, that the game of politics is surrounded by high risk of failure and women do not have the stamina to face such uncertainties amongst others. As a result of the findings, the work amongst others chiefly recommends that women voters should rally round their fellow women contestants at the poll by casting votes for them, government should be prepared to invest huge resources to empower women in politics especially for elections in order to be able to win elective posts, women should be ready to face-head-long the risks inherent in the politics in order to win election and many more.

Keywords: Low participation, women in elective Offices and Nigeria

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I. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in active politics and in policy making in Nigeria is not new neither is it strange because women has vibrantly participated in a historical highly recognized protest such as the Aba Women Riot dated 1929 where the women vehemently resisted the tax imposition on women by the British colonial administrators while heading Nigeria and also the prominent roles played by Professor Dora Akunyele (Late), Mrs Funmilayo Kuti (Late), Mrs Ngozi OkonjoIweala (Ihemeje, 2013), Late Queen Amina of zazzau (Zaria), Emotan of the famous Benin Kingdom and Ogiso Orhorho (Okibe, 2012) and a host of others. Again, women have under the umbrella of several unions such as the National Council of Women Society (NCWS), Nigerian Army Officers Wives Association (NAOWA) and other related association of Wives of Officers of the Navy, the Airforce, the Police and other paramilitary agencies have at various instances influenced several political and governmental policies over the years in Nigeria.

Indeed, at the international level backed up by several international organizations’ regulations such as articles, acts and treaties, women are given an affirmative thirty percent (Ihemeje, 2013) ratio of women to men in the areas of political participation, political representation, political leadership and political accountability (Reports of United Nations Division for the Rights of Women, DAW, 2005). In fact, the United Nations (UN) have a department called “UN Women” which is dedicated to gender equality and women empowerment which champions the curse of women and girls globally aimed at accelerating the progress of meeting women needs. Since its inception, DAW has in various capacities support UN member states including Nigeria in this direction tremendously by standing behind women’s equal participation in every aspect of life focusing on ensuring that there is increasing participation by women in leadership amongst other four areas (UN Women).

The United Nations in promoting gender equality has made impressive significant progress through agreement especially the Beijing Declaration and platform for Action as well as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW (UN Women). From this, the foundation of international women support which intends that women should be at par with their men folks kick started as the 4th Women International conference held in Beijing. The resolution arising from the conference empowered women to advocate for 30% affirmative action of political and administrative positions in their countries. In furtherance of this declaration at the Beijing Conference, in Nigeria, the National Gender Policy (NGP) made a recommendation of 35% affirmative recommendation and sought to vigorously pursue to achieving it for women in representation as well as in appointive and in public service positions of elective offices (Oloyede). In summary, the benchmark for global women representation stands at 22.5%, while in Africa region it hangs on 23.4% but in West Africa Sub Region the average is held at 15%.(Oloyede).

Oloyede, while commending the improvement of women participation in elective offices in Nigeria from 1999-2015, still regrets that the women representation in politics is still a far cry and grossly inadequate if measured by the global, Africa and West Africa Sub Regional requirements for women participation. She revealed that national average women participation in politics oscillates around 6.7% in elective position as depicts by the only 5.6 percent of women in the House of Representatives and 6.5 percent in the Senate. Oloyede further protested that between 1999-2015 no female candidate has win governorship candidate in any of the thirty six states of the federation of Nigeria and Abuja the Federal Capital Territory. Also, Gabriel (2015) in Okibe (2016); Awofeso and Odeyemi, (2014) adds that “*Over 60% of Nigeria population are women. The 2006 census puts Nigerian women at about half the population of the country. But despite this numerical advantage and the massive participation in voting, less than 20% of political offices are held by women*” Gabriel (2015) in Okibe (2016) also reminded us that female contestants in Nigeria elections over the years have consistently performed abysmally low. In his words “*In the 2003 elections, there were 4 (3.67%) female senators. Out of the 360 available seats in the Federal House of Representatives, women won only 19 (5.27%). In 2011 for instance, only 32 women were elected to the national assembly out of 469 members, which is barely 8% representation. Out of the 109 Senators who emerged winners at the 2011 polls, only 7 (6.4%) were women*”

Other hard facts while the low representation of women in politics and in elective positions in particular is worrisome is that women constitutes over fifty percent of the Nigeria population and they represents about fifty one percent of the total voters in Nigeria but still they are poorly represented numerically in elective positions and offices (Oloyede). Indeed, statistical proofs from previous studies have shown that the overall political representation of women in Nigeria is not up to seven (7) percent (Agbalajobi, 2010 in Oloyede).

Why is this Study necessary to be carried out?

Apart from numerous international regulations that guarantees right to women to active participate in governance, Nigeria’s Constitution in Section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria “states that: “*A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination. This further confirms that you can go to court to seek redress if as a woman your franchise is violated and that the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex*” (Ugwuegede, 2014)

Despite the constitutional backings of women to participate in electoral politics in general, it has been noted with utmost awesomeness that women are scarcely being represented in political offices in general and elective public positions in particular and as a result, several researches have been carried out to study women participation and related topics in the past in Nigeria in particular. These previous works were reviewed by the present study accordingly. The studies related to this work that were reviewed covering the period of the fourth Republic democratic era from 1999-date includes the works of Fatile, Adepoju; Ajoke & Ayeni (2017), Women participation in Local governance and Nigerian democratic system: A study of selected local Governments in Lagos state (1999-2016); Mmaduabuchi (2015), Women participation in politics in Nigeria: A Democratic Imperative; Egwu (2015), Women participation in the 2015 General Election in Nigeria, Mohammed & Abubakar (2014), Women and political participation: Toward Attainment of 35% Affirmative Action and obstacles to the women participation in Nigerian politics and decision making process; Erunke & Shuaibu (2014), The role of women in Nigeria politics: interrogating the Gender question for enhanced political representation in the Fourth republic; Ugwuegede (2014), challenges to Women Active participation in politics in Nigeria; Udodinma (2013) Female Representation in Nigeria: the case of the 2011 general Elections and the Fallacy of 35% Affirmative Action; Ihemeje (2013), The Need for participation of women in local governance: A Nigerian discourse: Aluko (2011), Gender and women’s political leadership in Nigeria;. Agbalajobi (2009), Women’s participation and the political process in Nigeria: problems and prospects; Oloyode, Monitoring

participation of women in politics in Nigeria and finally Okibe (2016), *Marginalization of Women by Women in the Contest for Elective Positions in Nigeria: A Reconstruction Paradigm*.

Though, Okibe's (2015)'work was somehow very close to this research note, his main focus is on marginalization of women in elective offices, his and these other studies created a vacuum in their respective research by failing to work on the reasons why there is low participation of women in only the elective positions in Nigeria as a wholesome topic therefore, their studies are too broad and heavy to produce a desired result to effectively answer the questions inherent in the issue under investigation hence, the present study is a radical departure from the previous related studies by studying in-depth the reasons why female are few in elective positions despite the proven facts that women population are more than men in Nigeria and that women represents about 51% of total voters in Nigeria elections. Also the study becomes paramount because "*Clark (2012) examines prejudice in a nation's political development. He opines that gender equality and women's empowerments are not only human rights; they are also imperative for achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development*"

Also, the study is necessary to be carried out in order to determine or ascertain the factors responsible for continuous low percentage of women representation in elective leadership positions in Nigeria. Take for instance, a report have it "*that statistics have shown that women accounted for nine out of 774 local government chairmen nationwide while of the 8,810 local government councilors nation-wide there were 143 women between 2003 and 2006*" (Akiyode-Afolabi and Arogundade, 2006). Therefore, this situation needs a further research

Finally, there is no study to date that used documentary sources of data collection that reviewed such a chunk of previous studies relating to causes of low women participation in elective offices hence, the need to carry out the study.

II. Methodology

Adopted methodology for this study is documentary sources obtained from previous literature of other scholarly works that are related to this study. Some may question the justification for adopting the documentary sources to carry out this study. The answer is simply that documents is one vital sources of conducting qualitative-related researches that will not generate its data from primary informants or what we called respondents in quantitative research. There is no better way to describe documentary sources in research than as Jashim (2010) reveals when he said:

A broad definition of a document is a 'written text'. Document "must be studied as socially situated products" (Scott, 1990: 34). It is defined as "any written material other than a record that was not prepared specifically in response to some requests from the investigator" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981: 228). Silverman (1993) has provided a classification of documents as i) files, ii) statistical records, iii) records of official proceedings and iv) images. Guba and Lincoln (1981) distinguish between documents and records. They define a record as "any written statement prepared by an individual or an agency for the purpose of attesting to an event or providing an accounting" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981: 228).

Jashim (2010) further posits that:

Doing documentary research is much more than "recording facts". It is a reflexive process in which we confront what researcher calls the "moral underpinnings of social inquiry" (Coles, 1997: 6). "Documents do not stand alone" (Atkinson and Coffey 1997: 55), but need to be situated within a theoretical frame of reference in order that its content is understood.

Succinctly, Jashim (2010) holds that:

It is (document) an important source of information, and such sources of data might be used in various ways in social research. Many researchers (Bailey 1982; 1994; Polit and Hungler 1991, Treece and Treece 1982; Webb, Campbell, Schwarz and Sechrest 1984) stated that document researches include institutional memoranda and reports, census publications, government pronouncements and proceedings, diaries and innumerable other written, visual and pictorial sources in different forms and so on. In a similar view, Denscombe (1998: 163) advocates, "government publications and official statistics would seem to be an attractive proposition for the social researcher."

To sum it all why document is used to stand as underpinning methodology for this work Bailey, 1994; Payne and Payne,(2004) in Jashim (2010) says:

Documentary research method refers to the analysis of documents that contains information about the phenomenon we wish to study, The documentary research method is used in investigating and categorizing physical sources, most commonly written documents, whether in the private or public domain, This research method is just as good as and sometimes even more cost effective than the social surveys, in-depth interview or participant observation

Based on the above scholarly justification which clarifies the concept of documents and its follow-up authorization to use documents to serve as pillar that could hold a research as a methodology, we hereby adopts and used documentary sources as a methodology for conducting this research accordingly.

Conceptual/Theoretical clarification and linkage to the Study

The conceptual Compass and Map that provided the direction and redirection for this study is two-fold namely political participation and elective offices. Scholarly, these two concepts helped in actualizing this research study through understanding the revelation of what the concepts stands for.

Participation

Scholars argue that political participation do not only takes place in a democratic activity but could as well take place in a non democratic events or activities (Hirschman 1970, Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979, Ühlinger 1988 in Markus, 2012). Therefore, we have two types of political participation which include indirect and direct political participation respectively based on the political aims and interests of the participating citizens (Pausch 2011 in Markus, 2012). However, the concern of this work is the direct political participation.

Direct political participation is usually expressed in the form of the will, aim and interest of citizen to participate in political activities having the zeal to be motivated politically aimed at ensuring that his own favourite political party or contestant win elections or alternatively, aim at promoting his or her own political beliefs and conviction and or as well as interest within a defined field which could be scale down to conventional and non-conventional respectively (Barnes/Kaase et al, 1979 in Markus (2012). Indeed, the conventional participation include party memberships, voting during elections or in referendum, trade union activities or affinities in political organizations and also interest organizations and nongovernmental organizations (Barnes/Kaase et al. 1979 in Markus, 2012).

However, it has been argued that it is possible that non-conventional participation could slide into conventional participation when they become organized like the conventional interest groups. In fact, Kühberger & Windischbauer (2010) in Markus (2010) has stressed that there is no hard and fast rules relating to the conventional and non conventional participation because Michalus (2006) says the distinction is dependent on the respective political communities tradition and culture. Therefore, without much ado, it is our conviction that political participation deals with the interest and aims of individuals to fully engage and participate in political activities that deals with elections under a democratic rule and other aspects that are not completely democratic. It is in this vein that this study is examining the political participation of women (to achieve their political aims and objective based on their interests of “controlling” governmental and political power).

Elective Office

Though, conceptualizing “elective office” from scholarly point of view going by sources used from relevant documents seems like a mirage but; various works mentioned the concept in their titles and while discussing their work in the process. These includes Rodomonte (2013), Equal access to elective offices: A challenge for Italian Democracy; Sarah (2015), The Underrepresentation of Women in Electives Office; Kira, (2015), Why Women? The Impact of Women in Elective Office; Shaffer (1982), Voting in Four Elective Offices: A Comparative Analysis, Merolla, Schroedel, & Holman, (2008), The Paradox of Protestantism and Women in Elected Office in the United States, Thomas & Wilcox, (Ed.) Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future; Okibe, H. B. (2016), Marginalization of Women by Women in the Contest for Elective Positions in Nigeria: A Reconstruction Paradigm.

Perceiving from these works based on the knowledge of the present scholars, elective office stands for all positions of authority in a country that the citizens could only gain membership entrance to on ground of having stand for election by vote and having deemed to have won based on the existing electoral regulations in that country. In other words, elective office represents the office in a country that the citizens could occupy solely on ground of having meet requirements by votes from the electorates in an election. Finally, elective office is all offices in a country that the citizens occupy as a result of election without which entrance as a member becomes impossible. Drawing example of elective offices under democracy as the case with Nigeria includes the position of the presidency, the governor, and local government chairmen. Others are the national legislators (The Senate and House of Representatives) and states house of assemblies as well as local government councilors.

Theoretical Underpinning for the Study

The theory in which this work is leaning on is the Markus Pausch (2012) theory of “What is political participation good for? Theoretical debate and empirical data from Austria”

The theory holds that there is a distinction between participation in a direct political context particularly in elections and political institutions, political parties or interest especially in social contexts which

could further be split into either system supportive in other words called system maintaining or critical of the system which is also known as system critical (Trinkle, 1977). Both of these forms are allowed to co-exist under a democracy (Zittel & Fuchs, 2007; Brettschneider, 2007 in markus, 2012). Furthermore, democracy allows for voluntary participation in most cases therefore, autonomously democracy ascribes freedom to individuals to either participate in politics or not.

Using Richardson (1983:8 in Markus, 2012), “*Certainly, the term ‘participation’ refers to taking part in some activity with other people; the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as a ‘taking part (with others) in some action or matter’ “and that seems clear”* (Markus, 2012).

Without going further to define the types of participation because that has been taken care of during the conceptual clarification, direct participation “*referring to voting in elections or referenda, where the will of the majority is directly translated into law, and the latter referring to engagement in various interest groups such as NGOs etc. having indirect influence on political decisions (e.g. Kaase/Beyme 1979 in Markus, 2012:4)*. It therefore, mean that “*it is the decision-making procedure which is the decisive indicator. Contrary to that, the difference between direct and indirect political participation as it is understood in this article, bases on the political interests and aims of citizens as the chief indicators (e. g. Pausch 2011, 5 in Markus, 2012:4)*.”

The theory holds that the relation of the act of participation to the particular political system is very important in the discussion of participation of individuals in the polity (Trinkle 1997) and that all political system does allows for and are highly interested in system maintenance. In democracy state therefore, the various interest groups in collaboration with political aggregate to represent the people’s interest (Easton, 1957 in Markus, 2012). In general, the theory further stressed that while it is agreed that system maintaining differs from country to country, voting in a democratic elections is classified as system maintaining provided if there is no move to change the political system (Rosenberger & Seeber 2011).

It is hereby clearly being stated that Markus (2012) theory covers several areas but we are only concerned with this portion because it will help us to drive home our point for this work. Therefore, it could be sum up from the abridge version of Markus (2012) theory that the main concern of agitation for political participation by women for equal participation with men in elective offices is simply to be involve in the “*the decision-making procedure*” (Pausch 2011, 5 in Markus, 2012:4. However, to be in the elective offices, women according to Markus (2012) theory, are expected to win elections at the poll but despite the efforts being made over the years in Nigeria by the women through several campaigns, conferences, seminars, rallies, workshops to press home for parity of women to men in the elective offices across the elective offices, there is still low percentage of women in the elective offices in the country. Therefore, this research investigates into the issue to unravel the causes of low women presence in elective offices/positions in the Nigeria national affairs. To achieve this, the research is to answer the following questions one; **what are the reasons for low women presence in elective offices in Nigeria? How could low women presence in elective positions in Nigeria be corrected?**

In view of the above therefore, the general objective of this research work is to examine “**The justification for low political participation of women in elective offices in Nigeria**” while the specific objectives will include one, **to establish the reasons for low women presence in elective offices in Nigeria** and two, **to find out ways of correcting low women presence in elective positions in Nigeria**.

Scholarly Explanation for the Low presence of Women in Nigeria Elective Offices

Scholars as a result of the emergence of and the globally acceptability of democracy as a system of government has been moved to describe it in Okibe (2016) as:

...a social mechanism for the resolution of the problem of societal decision making among conflicting interest groups (involving female and male) that permits the largest possible part of the population to influence these decisions through their ability to choose among alternative contenders for political office...’ (Adhiambo-Oduol, 2002). As a system of government, it has gained more popularity now in contemporary societies than in the years past. The reasons for this development may not be unconnected with the fact that democratic system abhors segregation in the area of gender when it comes to participation in election (Gberevbie, and Oviasogie 2013).

Based on these assertions that women are the “*...largest possible part of the population...*” and also that “*...democratic system abhors segregation in the area of gender when it come participation in election*” coupled with Gberevbie, and Oviasogie 2013) who protested that “*One of the features of democracy that makes it unique is equality of participation in decision making on issues affecting all segments of the society. The exclusion of any body from the political process based on gender is seen by scholars as a negation of the true values of a democratic society*”.

Table 1: comparing Women Representation in Elections between 1999-2011

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011	
	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8%)	109	4 (3.7%)	109	9 (8.3%)	109	7 (6.4%)
House of Reps.	360	12 (3.3%)	360	21 (5.8%)	360	25 (6.9%)	360	26 (7.2%)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
State House of Assembly	990	24 (2.4%)	990	40 (3.9%)	990	57 (5.8%)	990	68 (6.9%)
State House of Assembly Committee	829	18 (2.2%)	881	32 (3.6%)	887	52 (5.9%)	887	-
Local Government Area Chairperson	710	13 (1.8%)	774	15 (1.9%)	740	27 (3.6%)	740	-
Councilors	6368	69 (1.1%)	6368	267 (4.2%)	6368	235 (3.7%)	6368	-

Source: Eyeh (2010); Irabor (2011) and Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013) in Ugwuegede, 2014 :285

Table 2: Women Deputy Governors in Nigeria from between 1999-2011

Election Year	No. of Women Deputy Governors
1999	1
2003	2
2007	6
2011	1

Source: Adapted from Ogunyankin (2012) in Ugwuegede (2014)

Table 1 which depicts statistics based on the summary made by Ugwuegede, 2014, Luka, 2012: Kolawole, Abubakar, Owonibi, & Adebayo, 2012)reveals that:

From 1999-2011 general elections in Nigeria, no woman was elected into the office of the governor in any of the 36 states and that of the president of the federation. Moreover, out of 109 Senators, there were only 3women (2.8%) in 1999; which increased to 4 (3.7%) in 2003; a further increase to 9 (8.3%) in 2007; and a slight decline to 7 (6.4%) in 2011. Also, out of 360 House of Representative members, there were only 12 women (3.3%) in 1999; which increased to 21 (5.8%) in 2003; a further increase to 25 (6.9%) in 2007; and a slight increase to 26 (7.2%) in 2011. In addition, out of 990 State House of Assembly members, there were only 24 women (2.4%) in 1999; which increased to 40 (3.9%) in 2003; a further increase to 57 (5.8%), 68 (6.9%) in 2007 and 2011 respectively. Furthermore, out of 829, 881,887, State House of Assembly Committee members, there were only 18 women (2.2%), 32 (3.6%), 52 (5.9), in 1999, 2003, and 2007 respectively with slight increases. But in 2011, there was no woman out the 887 State House of Assembly Committee members. Considering the office of the Local Government Area Chairperson, there were only 13 (1.8%), 15 (1.9%) and 27 (3.6%) women in 1999, 2003 and 2007 respectively with slight increases. While in 2011, no woman was elected in to the office of Local Government Area chairperson. Finally, out of 6368 Councilors, they were only 69 (1.1%) women which increased to 267 (4.2%) in 2003 and reduced to 235 (3.7%) in 2007. While in 2011, no

woman was elected into the office of Councilors. Also, table 2 revealed that the number of women elected as deputy governors for 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011 were 1, 2, 6, and 1 respectively. The total number of Deputy Governors was 36 for 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. In 1999, according to Luka (2012), there was an improvement on women political participation with the appointment of 4 out of the 29 senior ministers representing 13.7% and 3 out of the 18 junior ministers representing 16.6%; 2 women advisors and 2 senior special assistants and 6 special assistants and 1 special assistant to the vice president as well as 8 permanent secretaries. Women were also appointed as commissioners and therefore members of the executive councils in all the states (Kolawole, Abubakar, Owonibi, and Adebayo, 2012). Considering the 2011 political appointments, out of 7 principal officers of the Senate, there was no woman; there was only 1 woman (10%) out of 9 officers of the House of Representatives; and for the ministerial appointments as at 7th August, 2011, there 13 women (32%) out of 41. Tables 1 & 2 showed women representation in two arms of government only: Legislative arm (Senate, House of Representatives, State House of Assembly and Councilors); Executive arm (President, Governor, Deputy Governor, Local Government Chairperson); including political appointees.

In the light of the above therefore,, we can now proceed to accordingly tackle headlong the research question 1 which says:

III. RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What are the reasons for low women presence in elective offices in Nigeria? in order to find out reasons for low women participation in elective offices when largest number of the population are supposed to be guaranteed by democracy to freely participate in governance through election and when indeed, going by the postulation democracy supposed to abhors segregation in the area of gender but reverse has been the case as seen from the table below

At various elections since the fourth phase of democratic rule was instituted on the 29th of May, 1999 by General Abdulsalami Abubakar after a successful short-lived transition programme in Nigeria, several number of women has vied for various democratic elective seat at various levels (Omolara, 2015) as seen from the table 1 though, it seems from the table that the numerical representation of women appreciate but it is not when compared to the number of seats and the duration of the period covered by the table. In fact, Okibe, 2016; Eme, Onyishi & Nwaoha (2014) regrets that women are their plight of still being few in elective position in the country calls for a further investigation because the women compose of well over 50% of the Nigeria registered voters and they are the highest majority of the populace that politicians effectively mobilizes as credible voters. However, Okibe quickly submits that the dwindling number of women in elective offices is not distanced from the skewed prejudice against women's zeal for elective offices in virtually almost all countries of the world. Okonkwo (2009) in line with Okibe (2012) said he couldn't understand why there is social resistance and lukewarm attitude towards accepting women to fully be allowed to participate in leadership relating to political office in spite of their good performance as heads in various administrative endeavours in ministries, agencies etc. To answer Okonkwo (2009), it has been argued that several factors are responsible for why women are not fully accepted because women do not have the needed financial resources to effectively run campaign during electioneering time, women are not well exposed to certain political information and more over they lack the oratory capacity as well as vibrant political socialization to win voters to themselves, in the selection of top ranking officials of political party, women are usually schemed out by men.

Another group of authors attributed the present low participation of women in Nigeria elective positions to the hitherto belief by women before this millennium that politics is purely the business of the men because of the role of men in the ancient Nigerian societies where women are completely eliminated from any affairs relating to the selection and enthronement of leaders especially members of the traditional councils (Nwammu, 2012 in Wanuola, 2015; World Bank, 2005). This time immemorial inferiority complex among women is still hunting women from taking decision to vie for electoral positions in Nigeria even as at today in many societies.

In a related development, virtually all the scholars reviewed such as Mmaduabuchi, 2015; Eqwu, 2015; Aluko, 2011; Mohammed & Zaid, 2014; Erunke & Shuaibu, 2013; Fatile, Adepoju; Ajoke & Ayeni, 2017; Udodinma, 2013; Ugwuegede, 2014; Ihemeje (2013) have not only said that women are their own enemies in relation to the circumstances surrounding the low participation of women in elective positions in Nigeria but claimed that the issue transcends the national boundary of Nigeria to other countries of the world regardless of the status of that country in terms development, developing or underdeveloped. Scholars in the forefront of argument includes McCam & Wilson (2014) who drawing a sample case study from Australia submits that women are underrepresented in Australia parliament and in the executive cradle because their representation in these agencies of governance is short of one-third and that there is steady decline in women representation in Australia ranking along with other countries internationally. Indeed, McCam & Wilson (2014) further proves that going by the United Nations' minimum level benchmark required for women to shape decision-making in parliament which is hanged at 30 percent, Australia hovers around it. The scholars in furtherance of their

favourable argument for reasons behind persistent dwindling numerical strength of women in elective offices in the democratic parliamentary system of government in Australia says, no unanimous agreement among previous researchers on the issue but enumerated several possible causes. These include “the type of electoral system, the culture of political parties, and the nature of politics and the parliamentary environment in Australia”. Another sets of scholars in their own contribution says that women underrepresentation in elective offices is not limited and tied to Australia alone but that it is a global phenomenon and that out of the 180 world heads, women represents a fractional figure of 20 while women on the average may be only 1 out of every 5 members of national parliaments in the world (Andersen et al., 2008; Gneezy, Leonard and List, 2009; The Economist, 2012 & Norris and Krook, (2011)) in Funk and Gathmann (2014) in Okibe (2016). In Canada, low women representation in elective offices is also said to be a worrisome situation with women occupying only 23 percent in Federal, Territorial and provincial legislatures respectively

In his line of argument, Jacobson has contended that it is demographic, political and social typologies that could be used to explain the consistent failure of women in elective positions that have perpetually keeps their numerical strength very against their men folk as against the UNDP Report (2015) which tied low percentage of women in elective offices to lack of support and mentoring women needed to compete out the male folks in electoral politics and also that voters prefer men to women in election because the idea of having men and women in elective offices do not appeal to them. Akor (2015) on the other hand has itemized religion, violence against women, culture and tradition, money politics and religion as well nature of Nigeria patriarchal society of Nigeria as the bane to women in elective offices. He based his argument on the low presence and performance of women in the 2015 general elections which he described women performance as falling from “bad to worse”. Akor further opines that the added reasons for poor representation of women in elective offices in Nigeria is attributable to the violent nature of Nigeria political terrain especially during elections, high level of fierce competition and prejudices against female politicians amongst other factors such as threats from the power that be against female politicians forcing them to withdraw their candidacy from the race in several instances, harassment and physical attacks. This claim is corroborated by Human rights Watch (2011) in Omoye (2012) that Nigeria is inherent with all shades and sizes of political violence ranging from destruction of properties rioting and bombing.

Bucknor & Akerele, in Adesuwa (2015) presented a striking and shocking stories that could be describe as a political culpable homicide against the women in elective positions in Nigeria. He said that in the present Senate (the Upper House of the Nigeria national Legislative House) all the principal officers are made up of men, two, out of the 109 senators, only 8 are women. When moved to the House of Representatives (The Lower legislative House at the national level) he reported that while the members are 360, women are only 7% representing 24 in number. This development contrasted with the situations in other African countries such as Senegal 43 percent of women in parliament and Rwanda with 58 percent.

A collection of set of scholars including Ngara & Ayabam, (2013); Uzoanya and Awodipe, 2015; Okafor, 2016; Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014; Akinpelu, 2015; Amusan, 2015; Jimoh (2015) revealed and linked poor number of women in elective offices to hatred, jealousy, envy among women. They hardly vote for themselves during elections. They will not support a woman that is contesting instead they campaign against their fellow women in favour of men. They do not have confidence in their fellow female contest in becoming a leader to champion their course. Indeed:

Greater percentage does not love each other; they cajole, blackmail, and lampoon one another. Their clamours for 35% affirmative action which litmus test is in elective position end up in lip service and near failure. Sarah Jubrin got only one vote when she contested the PDP presidential primary election in 2011 despite the fact that many women were delegates in the election. In the same vein, out of the 14 candidates that contested for the seat of the president, the only woman amongst the contenders (Prof Oluremi Sonaiya of KOWA party) came out in the 12th position (Uzoanya and Awodipe, 2015 in Okibe, 2016).

This scenario is not only peculiar to Nigeria as a nation. It extends and infected even the acclaimed world’s most consolidated democratic country-America. In the 2016 Presidential election it was proved by Odoh & Salisu (2017) that only a negligible percentage of voters cast their votes for Hillary Clinton, the only female presidential candidate in that contest. Also, Rodomonte (2013:2) admits that in Italy women representation in elective offices were low proving that:

“In fact, in the past parliamentary term, women in the Chamber of Deputies were about 136 and 61 in the Senate, and, respectively, 21.6% and 19% of the total number of representatives.... Previous parliamentary terms experienced a female incidence significantly lower: in the XII legislature women were about 12% of the total, in the XIII and XIV parliamentary term the women representation goes further, at about 10% for then registering a small increase in the XV legislature with 109 women in the Chamber of Deputies and 45 in the Senate, respectively 17.3% and 14% of the delegates

Schalkwyk & Woronick (1998) in Ihemeje (2013) identified the challenges of women in elective offices to political structures, processes and parties as the agents that shapes potential benefits, political networks, reconciliation and family responsibilities as well as women mobilization by the media.

Another Scholar, Ugwuegede (2014) in his own study adduced several reasons for the justification of low number of women in the Nigeria elective positions. These includes social, cultural and religious practices that discriminate against women in virtually all societies and this hinders them from active involvement in elective politics (Muoghalu and Abrifor, 2012), inadequate financial resource to prosecute elective positions because it has been proved that only 10 percent of women live above poverty line in Nigeria while 90 percent live below poverty line (Ngara et al. 2013) therefore, only a small percentage of women could afford to run for political office. Others include underrepresentation of women in governance, unhealthy political environment, discrimination by political parties, and wrong notion of people about women in politics, lack of sponsors of women into politics, constitutional impediment against women in politics in the area of determination of constituency of married women.

As a result of the explanations given by various scholars therefore, research question 1 “which says, **what are the reasons for low women presence in elective offices in Nigeria?** is favourably answered accordingly.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How could low women presence in elective positions in Nigeria be corrected?”

The answer to research question 2 is provided from the various documents that were reviewed. Hence, the answer is seen below.

Mmaduabuchi (2015) has recommends that women in the quest for political office through elective position should not only change the perception they have about one another but they should fully support one another and that this could only be achieve when they build a common front in order to get through. Other recommendations from Mmaduabuchi (2015) include change in the professional status of women, women should press hard for top most elective leadership not deputies, emphasis should be on women generally not only on the elite women alone, women who has mark tremendous mark in elective positions of authority should carry the incoming women along politically, political leaders should propagate policies capable of promoting women advancement and empowerment economically, socially and politically.

Another scholar under the review list of this study (Egwu, 2015:402) has recommends that the campaign of women against underrepresentation in elective positions should be based on the move for government to enforce “*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*” *The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the UN in 1979 (Agishi, 2014:97).*

Tamale, 1999: 77, in Goetz, 2002: 559 as upheld by Aluko (2011) in the recommendation contribution. He said that while he agree with the so-called “affirmative action” that the political and social value held by the “action” is not the all in all but instead, tactics of elective political offices through legitimate competitive political contest by the women should change, otherwise the affirmative action will remains useless in scoring women to elective positions.

Mohammed & Zaid (2014) is of the view that all women leadership organizations in collaboration with relevant stakeholders in election as well as government should revise existing legislations that are against women and encourage women abuse. Second empowerment of women politically, socially and economically through the 35 percent affirmative principle should be strengthen the more and be implemented in full. Third, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and political parties and civil society organizations should “conduct a focused drive on female voter registration and run specific voter education campaigns for women during elections, promote women’s participation more effectively, and should develop accountability mechanisms and seek technical assistance from civil society to meet this objective, and should lead and promote gender training and orientation for political parties.

Erunke & Shuaibu (2014) are not left out of the recommendation towards the improvement in women participation in elective offices in Nigeria. They offered the following accordingly to include that, one elective political offices be shared on equal basis between women and men who are to be in the race and that through this proposed arrangement women will be guaranteed of equal chances of elective offices in Nigeria. Two, money politics should be discouraged at all cost in Nigeria to pave way for active participation by women, CEDAW and Affirmative Action doctrine be fully entrenched, sustained and be upheld to and finally, legal fund if instituted will enhance the chances of women to draw from such fund to challenge men against fraudulent election in court of law.

In continuation of women parity in Nigeria elective offices, Fatile, Adepoju; Ajoke & Ayeni (2017) provides a three-fold recommendations. One, 30 percent of elective seats be reserved for the women in Nigeria politics and it should be the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be the implementer of

the policy and ensure that erring political parties against the rule be disqualified from the race and it is only on this note that the implementation of the affirmative action could become enforceable and implementable. Government should have a good data base for storing and retrieving data relating to composition of men and women in elective office as this will help in the drive for women equal representation with men in elective offices, and finally, aggressive reorientation of Nigerians on political enlightenment is a necessity to scale women through.

In view of the forgoing discussion under research question 2 which say **How could low women presence in elective positions in Nigeria be corrected?**, the summary from the documents have established that there are effective ways of correcting low women representation of women in electives offices in Nigeria if the proffered are wholesomely implemented.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While several factors have been presented by researchers across the globe in general and in Nigeria under study for the explanation of low women participation in elective offices with its numerous attendant solutions proffered, it is clear that those solutions are more theoretical postulations than practical reality. The solution to parity of men and women in elective office representation globally and in Nigeria rests squarely with the women folk as several scholars have argued going by the available data across the world. The data proved beyond reasonable doubt that women are more populous than men in virtually all countries, and at the same time constitutes the highest majority of registered voters in most countries of the world if not all. However, women are unable to secure landslide victory in elections for their fellow women candidates therefore; women need to go to their election drawing board for further work. The fight is for the women and only women could know the best weapon to be applied to overcome the problem.

In view of this, a research gap has been created by this study for future researchers to further undertake a research on how women could overcome the barriers to elective offices using any of the available primary sources of data collection in qualitative and or in quantitative because the reasons that emerged from the review of the previous studies were purely secondary data in nature and the present study too used secondary documents which have certain limitations in terms of reliability, transferability and dependability, and creditability even though, academically researchers are allowed to use them.

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