POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND INCREASED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN OGUN STATE CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Women leadership in politics, as a part of gender mainstreaming and equality, has been an ongoing struggle in Nigeria for decades, leading to Nigeria's Fourth Republic witnessing an increase in the number of women who vie for elective positions. Hinged on the Theory of Structural Violence, this paper employs the conduct of interviews to obtain insight into the factors responsible for this increase. The paper builds up from the pre-colonial era, providing a historical perspective of the involvement of women in leadership and its metamorphosis over various eras. Genuine interest to serve; lack of development and basic amenities in areas; personal interest to ameliorate the plight of women; and prebendalism are some of the factors noted to have encouraged women's participation in politics. The paper concludes that encouraging more women involved in politics and funds provided for effective female candidates' campaigns will help more women attain elective positions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Elections, Leadership, Participation, Politics, Women

INTRODUCTION

Politics has always been associated mainly with men. In Nigeria, and indeed Africa, politics is regarded as the territory of men, and women who venture into such territory are sometimes harassed and labelled political prostitutes (Adeniyi-Ogunyankin, 2014). This has led

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to women often needing to struggle for recognition, respect, and space to operate within the male-dominated political territory. In turn, there has been the continued clamour for women's empowerment, emancipation, conscientization, and rights, all aimed at having women get involved not only in politics but in all spheres of life.

Before contemporary times, women had positions within the traditional leadership structure in the various cultures in Nigeria. Okome (2001) posited that the positions like the Iya Oba, Iyalode, Orun-Kumefun, and many more in Yoruba land were strictly for women. These positions had immense power attached to them. Also, secret societies within Yoruba land like the Osugbo in Ijebu and the Ogboni in Egba had important positions which women could hold. Okome (2001) also referred to Awe's reflection on the great activities of Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan and Madam Tinubu of Abeokuta as powerful women of their times as they were not averse to engaging in the power struggle and participating actively in the war, albeit through surrogates, as did many of her male counterparts. Alagoa (1992) articulated how Queen Kambasa of Bonny secured her claim to the emerging central power of Bonny by seizing the symbols of power, creating new military institutions and fostering cultural nationalism through the Owu Ogbo club and the Ikuba shrine. Ekejiuba (1992) revealed how Omu Okwei of Osomari used her marriages to gain social and economic ties and arranged the marriages of prominent male traders to her 'maids' to take advantage of banking facilities and direct trade in Britain, which on the long run had an immensely positive effect on the economy of her town.

The clamour for women empowerment, emancipation and gender equality has created a consciousness in the minds of women. Programmes on the feminine gender such as education for the girl child, war against wife battering, and protection of women rights (including widows) have awakened the women and increased their level of awareness, interaction, performance, and even participation in activities in every sphere of life. As Pogoson (2015:69) rightly stated, 'the questions of gender, power, and rights have increased significantly as issues concerning the legal, civil, religious, economic and reproductive

rights of women have come to the fore'. The success can be seen as Nigeria has the Ministry of Women Affairs in every state and at the Federal level. All these are in a bid to help alleviate the problems women face.

There has been a continuous increase in the involvement of women in politics globally. The world's first female 'acting' President, Sukhbaataryn Yanjmaa of Mongolia was in 1953 while the world's first female President, Isabel Peron of Argentina assumed office in 1974. Also, the world's first female Prime Minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka assumed office in 1960. Since then, there have been women who have led, and are still leading countries as Presidents and Prime Ministers under civilian and non-democratic regimes. Women who have led in time past include Prime Minister Milka Planinc of Yugoslavia's Communist regime from 1982-1986, President Mary Robinson of Ireland from 1990-1997, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom from 1979-1990, Prime Minister Golda Meir of Israel from 1969-1974, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia from 2006-2018, President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil from 2011-2016, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany from 2005-2021, Prime Minister Iveta Radicova of Slovakia from 2010-2012, Prime Minister Julia Gillard of Australia from 2010-2013, President Joyce Hilda Banda of Malawi from 2012-2014, and President Ameenah Gurib-Fakim of Mauritius from 2015-2018. Serving women Heads of Government including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh since 2009, President Bidya Devi Bhandari of Nepal since 2015, President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan since 2016, Prime Minister Ama Brnabic of Serbia since 2017, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand since 2017, President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia since 2018, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen of Denmark since 2019, Prime Minister Rose Raponda of Gabon since 2020, President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania since 2021, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne of France since May 2022, and the recent President Droupadi Mumu of India who got elected in July 2022.

Nigeria's leadership in different aspects over the years has shown that women are rising to the challenge and taking up leadership positions in the country. Notable women include the Late Professor

Dora Akunyili who was the Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control from April 2001 till December 2008 and Minister of Information from December 2008 to December 2010, after which she resigned to pick up the Senatorial ticket of her senatorial district in her state on the platform of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) political party for the 2011 elections, Professor Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, (Minister of Finance from July 2003 to June 2006 and 2011-2015, Minister of Foreign Affairs from June 2006 to August 2006, and one time Managing Director of World Bank) who helped improve Nigeria's financial stability and also secured debt relief for the country, Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili (Minister of Solid Minerals from June 2005 to June 2006, Minister of Education from June 2006 to April 2007 and one-time Vice President for Africa region at World Bank), amongst others.

It has now been established that there are women in political positions of leadership but the percentage between the numbers of women in comparison with the number of men, all concerning the number of positions available leaves a lot to question. Studies of the various political parties available in Nigeria show that there are many women at the lowest rung of these parties but they thin out up the ladder, leaving a few to aim for leadership positions and much fewer of them attaining such positions. However, overall, it has been observed that more women have been involved in politics in the fourth republic, increasing in number as more democratic dispensations come by. The 2019 general elections, which marked yet another milestone in the consolidation and stability of democracy in Nigeria also witnessed an increase in the number of women who participated and contested for various seats, albeit a much fewer number clinching the coveted positions. It is on this basis that this paper seeks to identify factors that have encouraged women and influenced them positively into taking up elective leadership positions in the Fourth Republic. The paper hopes to bring these factors to the fore with the aim of building on these efforts as a unique strategy of involving more women in politics.

METHODOLOGY

This paper was written based on the data collected from primary and secondary sources using interviews, internet materials, books and journals. The time scope of this paper is from 1999-2019, being Nigeria's Fourth republic. While interviews were particularly conducted in Ogun Central Senatorial District, Ogun State, data was collected using secondary sources for the 36 states of the country and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Focusing on the elective aspect of politics, the target audience were women in major political parties in the target area, especially those who contested for positions. To have a balanced view, top male politicians and leaders were also interviewed.

STRUCTURAL CONFLICT THEORY

Structural Conflict theory, propounded by Karl Marx, focuses on the disparities and inequalities inherent in the infrastructures of most social groupings, and how the ensuing power distribution gives rise to class (and gender) conflicts. The main argument of the structural conflict theory is that conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organized. The theory looks at social problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation, inequity as sources of conflict. Structuralists maintain that conflicts occur because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, and the domination of one class by another (Loadenthal, 2019). In the context of male-female relationship in African societies, the denial of access to land and other resources, tight control of organizational hierarchy, unfavourable economic and social contracts, income disparities or wage gaps, access to education, and a stifling domestic regime for women all result in the emergence of a conflict situation and continual struggle for equality. According to Eyinade (2010), this form of discrimination is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one. The only difference is that it has lasted for so long in this part of the world as other developed nations of the world are moving towards gender equality and equity.

The Structural Conflict theory explains why more women have become involved in politics. The inequalities and loop-sided power

distribution inherent on society gave rise to gender conflicts. These are in form of the clamour for gender equality and women inclusiveness, education, empowerment and conscientization, all aimed at having women be more involved in all aspects of life and leadership. Thus, women are increasingly getting actively involved in politics in Nigeria. Some Nigerian documents give power to women to be actively involved in politics. These include the Nigerian Constitution and the National Gender Policy. They are discussed subsequently.

THE 1999 NIGERIAN CONSTITUTION AND THE 2006 NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

The rights of women participation in active politics were guaranteed by the 1979 Nigerian constitution. However, while these rights were not restrictive, the cultural and patriarchal nature of the country limited the political activities of women to backseat activities within the political parties and voting. Few women took the bold step to contest for elective positions and much fewer won. The advent of the fourth republic saw the adoption of the 1999 Nigerian constitution which further reinforced the rights for women to actively participate in politics. For example, section 40 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution states that

> Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular, he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this Constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission concerning political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition.

Also, in section 42(1) 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. From the foregoing, it is evident that

there is nothing in the constitution which excludes the participation of women in politics in Nigeria.

Sanda and George (2020) noted that in furtherance to the aim of achieving gender parity, Nigeria's National Gender Policy was adopted in 2006. Drawing from international documents on gender parity, for example the CEDAW of 1979 and the Beijing Declaration document of 2000, the Policy elaborated on the expected gender parity goals and the activities proposed as means to achieving the goals. Objectives 5 and 6 of the Policy are of main interest to this study since they are directed towards political opportunities. They are:

Objective 5: Achieve a minimum threshold of representation for women in order to promote equal opportunity in all areas of the political, social, and economic life of the country for women, as well as for men.

Objective 6: Undertake women and men-specific projects as a means of developing the capabilities of both men and women, to enable them take advantage of political and economic opportunities towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The targets for Objective 5 as set out in the 2006 National Gender Policy (p 20) include adopting 'special measures, quotas and mechanisms for achieving the minimum critical threshold of women in political offices, party organs and public life by pursuing 35% affirmative action in favour of women in order to bridge the gender gaps in political representation in both elective and appointive posts at all levels by 2015'. Furthermore, the targets for Objective 6, include entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes; gender mainstreaming into HIV/AIDS policies, plans, programmes, and activities; and building the gender analysis capacity of coordinating agencies.

Both the 1999 Constitution and the 2006 National Gender Policy show that Nigeria is working towards gender parity. This has yielded fruit overtime, especially in the last decade as the country has witnessed a relative increase in women's participation in politics. This increase is measured by certain criteria, for example, the number of women who vote in elections; the number of women who vie for positions in elections, the number of public offices held by women, and the number of women-related policies implemented by the government, amongst

others. However, there is a wide gap and a high level of women under-representation in politics and elective positions when compared to the men. Women's aspiration to participate in Nigeria's governance is premised on the grounds that women in Nigeria represent more than half of the population, thus should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. In addition, all human beings are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life.

Having gotten a good understanding of Nigerian documents supporting women's participation in politics, a historical exposé on women involvement in politics and leadership before, during, and after the colonial rule is important. This will provide a background to the political struggle women are in today.

WOMEN IN NIGERIA'S PRE-COLONIAL, COLONIAL AND PRE-FOURTH REPUBLIC POLITICS

Pre-colonial Nigeria was administered based on established traditional systems of different societies. These traditional systems had positions, roles, and duties for women within their leadership structure. For example, the Yoruba society had, and still has women positions like the *Iyalode,* the head of all the women. She is subordinate to the King only and plays a significant role in the appointment and installation of the King (Okion, 1973). Other positions include the *Iya Oba* who is the feudal head; *Iya Kere* who is in charge of the royal insignia, all paraphernalia used at state functions and the royal treasury; *Iyaolosha* who is the priest of the goddess; the female *Ilari* who is in charge of the female guards and servants in the palace; and *Erelu* who is a very powerful member of the secret society known as the Ogboni fraternity which checks the excesses of the King (Okion, 1973). Also, in some parts of Ijesha and Ondo, after the King's demise, a woman ascends the throne in an acting capacity, known as *Adele* till another King is chosen.

The Igbo pre-colonial system also had women in control of their affairs with no particular individual having an authoritative command over them. The fluid nature of the society allowed Igbo women to hold leadership positions. Traditionally, the structures of political

participation allowed for men and women to have equivalent or parallel authority (Adereti, 2007). Also, the positions of the women complimented that of the men. Women were part of the village meetings which were mostly conducted by men, and they were not excluded from contributing. The criteria for leadership were based on wisdom and wealth (Allen, 1972).

There were two main women societies- the association of the wives of the village and the women's titles societies (Mba, 1982). The wives association is of particular interest here because they addressed women concerns especially as it had to do with an erring husband. To deal with such erring man, the women employed the tactic of 'sitting on a man', which involved going to the house of the offender, ridiculing him and calling his manhood to question by dancing and "singing scurrilous songs which detailed the women's grievances against him" (Allen, 1972). Appeasement meant the man appealing and promising to change his ways. Usually, such men also earned a measure of punishment from the village council.

Pre-colonial Northern societies have the legacy of Queen Amina of Zazzau, attesting to women's exercise of political authority. Queen Amina reigned in A.D. 1576 and was very powerful and influential. Being a queen's daughter, she developed her military skills at age 16, conquered many cities and built walls around them (Ajayi, 2007). According to the *African Feminist Forum* (2016), Queen Amina conquered cities far into Nupe, Kano, Katsina and Bauchi up to the south and west seas. Accordingly,

> The expansion of Amina's kingdom made it the trading center for all of southern Hausaland, spanning the traditional east-to-west trans-Saharan axis and guaranteeing Zaria's prosperity. Amina brought unheard-of wealth to the land; one description cites a tribute payment of 40 eunuchs and 10,000 kola nuts. She boosted her kingdom's wealth and power with gold, slaves, and new crops. (*African Feminist Forum*, 2016).

The advent of colonialism eroded the traditional systems, brought in western forms of administration, banned women gatherings and completely marginalized women from the decision-making process. The European officials governed through the men and ignored the women. According to Adereti (2007), many female institutions were destroyed and women stopped functioning in the political atmosphere. For example, the three regions in pre-colonial times witnessed women who had to fight for their rights. In the eastern region, the Aba Women riot of 1929, led by Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, was in defiance to the introduction of a tax policy. In addition, women were being maltreated by appointed officers and their properties confiscated while some officers were obtaining wives without paying the full bride price (Mba, 1982).

As was in the East, the Egba women of the West were also fed up with taxation and the withdrawal of women's rights. This culminated in the Abeokuta Women's Union revolt in 1946, led by Mrs Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti. However, unlike the eastern women, Mrs Kuti, through activism, formed an all-women political party and obtained franchise rights for women. Political parties formed under the 1946 Richards Constitution had women's wings but did not allow for women to participate in party elections. Being faced with religious limitations, the Northern women were not vocal. However, Hajia Gambo Sawaba challenged the status quo and became known as an advocate for the cause for the oppressed women in the north. Though a school drop-out, she joined the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and was the leader of the party's women wing. Despite being attacked, beaten and jailed severally, she never gave up on her aspirations and died a heroine (Kwewum, 2004).

The women's struggles were not in vain as they led to the appointment of Mrs. Kuti into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs in the 1950s, Mrs. Remi Aiyedun in 1953 and Mrs. Oyinkan Abayomi in 1955 (Nwankwo, 2011). Mrs. Margaret Ekpo was appointed to the Eastern House of Assembly in 1953, and later Mrs. Janet Mokelu. Nigeria's political clime was very unstable from independence in October 1960 till 1999 when the fourth republic began. George (2015)

noted that the era consisted mostly of military regimes, thus minimising prospects for women in political leadership. However, few women still made it.

> The post-independence Senate had only one woman, Mrs. Wuraola Esan, who was nominated by the Western region. She was joined by Mrs. Benice Kerry who was nominated from the newly created Mid-Western region in 1964. During the Shagari regime of 1979-1983, most states in the region had at least one female Commissioner, which was mainly an appointive post. The military regime of July 1966-July 1975 had two women appointed as Commissioners in Oyo state and one female Commissioner in Lagos. General Muhammad Buhari's regime of 1983-1985 enacted that at least one woman should be appointed to the Executive Council of every state. Also, the Interim government put in place by Gen. Babangida in 1993 had a woman, Otunba Bola Kuforiji-Olubi as a member. The Gen. Abacha regime of 1993-1998 saw to the creation of the Ministry of Women Affairs and the appointment of Mrs. Mobolaji Osomo as a Minister (George, 2015).

The death of Gen Abacha saw the coming into power of Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar in 1998. Gen Abubakar set the motion for elections and handed it over to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a democratically elected president, on May 29, 1999. This signalled the start of the fourth republic and a new hope of women involvement in politics and leadership.

WOMEN IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC POLITICS

Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 provided the platform for women to contest elective positions in the country. Though the initial stage of Nigeria's fourth republic witnessed women taking the back seat in politics, as the democratic transition proved real over time, more women began showing interest in politics and contesting for positions

in the polity. Given this situation, women have contested several elective positions of political leadership in Nigeria since 1999. According to Sanda and George (2020), Mrs. Sarah Jubril contested as a Presidential candidate in the 2003 and 2007 elections, Major Mojisola Obasanjo (rtd) contested in 2007 and Chief Ebiti Ndok contested in 2011. Although unsuccessful in these bids for the number one position in the country, these women have set important precedence in the quest for greater women representation in political leadership.

Combining the works of Akiyode-Afolabi and Arogundade (2003); George (2012); Eme and Onyishi (2014); Tsan (2015); Amata (2022), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) website and other desk studies, between 1999 and 2003, there were only 3 female senators, 12 women in the House of Representatives, 9 female ministers and special advisers, 1 female deputy governor, 1 state House of Assembly Speaker, 24 women in the total 36 states Houses of Assembly, 9 local government chairpersons and 142 women councilors. From 2003 to 2007, there were only 4 female senators, 21 women in the House of Representatives, 16 women ministers and special advisers, 2 female deputy governors and 40 women in the total 36 states' Houses of Assembly out of which 2 were Speakers.

One of the deputy governors, Mrs. Virginia Etiaba of Anambra state, became governor for 3 months from October 2006- February 2007 when the governor was impeached for gross misconduct, after which he was reinstated. In the 2007 elections, there were only 7 female senators, 25 women in the House of Representatives, 6 female deputy-governors and 57 women in the total 36 states' Houses of Assembly. In the 2011 elections, there were 7 female senators and 26 women in the House of Representatives, 1 female deputy-governor and 68 women in the total 36 states' Houses of Assembly. Some of the women were impeached or forced to resign and succeeded by men. They include Hon. Margaret Icheen (Speaker, Benue State House of Assembly for 1999 dispensation), Hon. Eucharia Azodo (Speaker, Anambra State House of Assembly for 2003 dispensation), Hon. Olubunmi Etteh (Speaker, House of Representatives for 2007 dispensation), and Hon. Titi Oseni (Speaker, Ogun State House of Assembly who was

impeached in May 2008). There have also been women Commissioners, Honourables in the various state Houses of Assembly, Local government Chairpersons, and Councilors, though very minimal. During Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's administration of 2011-2015, there were an appreciable number of women Ministers, Special Advisers and Directors in key ministries and positions. They include Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala who was the Minister of Finance and overall Supervising Minister, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke who was the Minister of Petroleum, Mrs. Stella Oduah who was the Minister of Aviation, and Erelu Olusola Obada who was the Minister of State and later Acting Minster of Defence.

-For the 2015 elections, Prof Oluremi Sonaiya of KOWA party was the only female Presidential candidate while 3 women were presidential running mates. 122 women contested for senatorial seats¸ 267 women contested for House of Representatives seats, 87 women contested for both governor and deputy governor seats. A popular female gubernatorial candidate, Senator Aisha Al-Hassan of Taraba state, known as 'Mama Taraba', lost to her male opponent in a rerun election. About 757 women contested for seats in the various state Houses of Assembly. In total, there were 8 female senators out of 109 seats, 22 female Honourables out of 360 seats, 4 female deputy governors from Lagos, Ogun, Rivers and Enugu states, and 51 women in the total 36 states' Houses of Assembly. The 2019 elections saw 7 female senators, 22 female Honourables, 4 deputy governors and 45 women in the total 36 states' Houses of Assembly (George, 2015; Tsan, 2015; and Amata, 2022). Table 1 is a tabular presentation of the statistics of elected women from 1999 till date.

Table 1: Statistics of elected women from 1999 till 2015

	No. of seats available	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Senate	109	3	4	7	7	8	7
Representatives	360	12	21	25	26	22	22
Deputy Governor	36	1	2	6	1	4	4
State House of Assembly	990	24	40	57	68	51	45

Source: Compiled by the Author

It is worthy of note the some of the figures in Table 1 vary in various articles and publications, due to bye-elections, court judgements and impeachments, among others.

FACTORS PROPELLING WOMEN'S INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVE POLITICS

It is now obvious that women have gotten more interested in politics over time and have become more actively involved, thus creating a shift from the argument about factors hindering their participation in politics. Reasons for such include:

- Interest in women (their issues and plights), the urge to alleviate their sufferings and empower them, and bridge the economic and political gap between men and women have been established to be a strong propelling factor for women's active involvement in politics. This is because women are deemed to lack in the society in terms of economic and educational power and such gaps can be bridged via alleviation and empowerment programmes. Thus, women with such interests who are actively involved in politics believe that it is through the acquisition of political power that they can be equipped financially, socially and politically to help other women. However, Pogoson (2015:77) argued that more women in national legislatures does not necessarily mean that women interests will be better represented. Thus, quantity does not mean substance.

- Lack of development in the communities was pinpointed as a driving force for active participation in politics. A female interviewee, Chief G.F. Adekunle, stated that *"...there is no development in my area. The school is in deplorable state, there is no health centre and no facilities and amenities whatsoever"*. Women in this category believe that the men have failed the people as leaders. Thus, women have to hold positions, make changes in the society and bring about the much-required development.
- Following this closely is the belief that 'what a man can do, a woman can do better'. Women have seen the 'performance' of men in political leadership and believe that they can do better. In the words of an interviewee, Chief (Mrs.) Taiwo Adeife, *"I believe that women are better administrators. I looked around me, saw the quality of people that were coming out to contest and saw that they were not better than me"*. This belief was also supported by some of the interviewed men who opined that women would be able to handle political positions for the betterment of the people.
- The politics of exclusion and under-estimation is also discovered to be a driving force for women's interest in political leadership. Some of the interviewed women stated that men in politics believe that women cannot perform well in leadership positions. It has been established that women constitute a larger percentage of members of political parties but when it comes to positions, the men are accused of filling them, believing that the women can do nothing.
- The 1999 Nigerian constitution puts the Senior School certificate as the minimum educational qualification required to hold political positions in the country. Thus, education was established to be an encouraging factor. All the respondents concurred that without education, they would not have been able to vie for political positions. With the increase in educational opportunities for girls and women, there is a larger pool of capable women who can vie for political positions.
- The clamour for 35% affirmative action and quota system for women has been identified as a headway for women's involvement in political leadership. Being one of the recommendations of the 1995

Beijing Conference, it has been incorporated into the National Gender Policy, thus boosting women's confidence.

- Prebendalism (godfatherism) plays a big role in the confidence of female politicians. However, from the interviews, the concept was observed to vary in meaning. It ranged from an individual within the political party seconding and supplying his/her own candidate with all it requires to ensure the candidate's victory (most times for the godfather/godmother's selfish interests), to a community jointly selecting and supporting a candidate to represent them with the trust that the chosen one will not fail them. While all except one of the female respondents denied having godfathers, it was deduced that some indirectly had their husbands as their godfathers while some had strong members within their party circles that supported their ambition in various ways. According to Chief Adepegba Otemolu *"everybody has a godfather"*. The bottom line of the concept of godfatherism/godmotherism (whether with good or bad intentions) is the continued loyalty and submission of the candidate. It is worthy of note that while none of the interviewed women categorically mentioned financial gain as a motivating factor, it was accepted that the monetary gain cannot be neglected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the increase in the active involvement of women in politics, the margin between the number of men and that of women is very wide. However, continued increase in women's active participation in politics and decision making across all levels in Nigeria will lead to increase in the quality of women and invariably, better national development.

Though it is safe to say that the family unit has not been of much challenge to women involved in politics in the south-western part of Nigeria, it has been observed that many husbands do not approve of their wives getting involved in politics, not to mention contesting for public positions. Thus, the men need to be educated on the positive aspects of women being in politics so that they can allow and encourage their wives to take part in active politics. This can be done by the

Ministry of Women Affairs and gender-related non-governmental organizations.

Women who want to be actively engaged in politics have to be strong willed, bold, courageous and persistent in the pursuit of their political aim irrespective of whatever threats or challenges that come their way. They need to be able to stand up to the men, be self confident and do away with inferiority complex which they have been accused of having. Women must also be ready to take risks as nothing ventured is nothing gained. Women must also be of good character especially within their constituencies as the constituency is of great importance in a woman's political quest. This is because it is her constituency's support and vote that would be required for her political success.

Women are more of lower economic status. Thus, it is recommended that financial assistance, through a fund system provided by the government and controlled by the Ministry of Women Affairs, be made available to women interested in contesting for positions. This would make it possible for them to have the needed funding of their campaigns. Also, policies should be made towards reducing the political expenses of female candidates, for example, free acquisition of electoral forms and the like.

It has been established that women do not support their fellow women who have political interests. Thus, it is advised that women rally round one another and provide all the needed support in ensuring the political achievement of female contestants as unity of purpose is a key to success. Women in positions of political leadership should be role models to entice more women into politics and be a source of inspiration by their performances for women to develop interest in political leadership. This is by the way they comport themselves in public, their spectacular actions and performances in office, and most importantly, their non-involvement in malpractices, misdeeds and financial misappropriation.

Most important is the passing into law of affirmative action which excludes a certain percentage of political offices for women only. 35% was proposed at the 1995 Beijing Conference but is yet to be adopted in Nigeria. Currently, women occupy less than 10% of political

positions in the country. The passage into law of the affirmative action and its enforcement would draw more women into politics and provide grounds for more women to contest.

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