Political Participation and Socialization of Women in Nigeria: A Case of the Fourth Republic

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Abstract
In the contemporary world today, democracy has become the template upon which nation states achieve sustainable development and politics remain a core part of democracy whose etymology and tradition conceptualizes it as male dominated, specific to the public sphere and consequently, not women friendly. This study examined the political participation and socialization of women in Nigeria. It focuses on women in politics especially during the Fourth Republic. The study employed the theory of mirror representation to recognize the significance of women's involvement in politics and promoting women in politics. The research methodology is termed qualitative and with the use of secondary data gathered from university libraries, news print and journals, articles, published and unpublished materials, the use of internet sources relevant to the study. It examined the theoretical status of women in the area of socialization and identified the problems women face in political participation in Nigeria. It was established that even though there was an increase in women participation in politics in the Fourth Republic, it is still below what is expected. It asserted that, there is a link between the nature of socialization the female gender acquires and the lack luster attitude towards political participation; it was also established that the low level of participation of women in politics was as a function of the environment. As a way of increasing the number of women in active politics, the study recommended that women should be enlightened about their political rights as this will put them at par with their male counterparts in active politics. The electoral system and procedures as well as the political system should be put in such a way that women will not feel restricted from getting involved or participating in the politics and governance of the country.
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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world today, democracy has become the template upon which nation states achieve sustainable development and politics remain a core part of democracy whose etymology and tradition conceptualizes it as male dominated, specific to the public sphere and consequently, not women friendly.

Nevertheless, women's political rights remain an integral part of human rights and by extension women's rights is an important aspect of any democratic setting or frame work.

Defining democracy allows for diverse opinions; the women folk is one of the groups that makes up any society, hence, democratic sustainability cannot be achieved when women are being excluded, especially knowing that this particular group effectively constitute half of the world's population.

Political socialization and participation are two important concepts that are vital and fundamental to democratic sustainability. Both are intrinsically related, in that, the extent and nature of political socialization a person acquires determines to a large extent that person's level of participation in politics and ultimately, has implications for democratic sustainability.

This paper gives conceptual definitions of political socialization and participation and goes further to examine the extent and nature of women's participation in the general elections conducted in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It asserts that, there is a link between the nature of socialization the female gender acquires and the lack luster attitude towards political participation; it also, identifies the low level of participation of women in politics as a function of the environment." Lastly, it attempts to give context specific remedies towards ameliorating the situation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

What is Political Socialization?

Scholars have conceptualized political socialization differently, invariably; there is no single, all-encompassing or simulative tight definition of the concept. Differences in the perception of scholars account for the dynamism in the plethora of definitions available. For Eric (1969) political socialization is the process whereby values, beliefs, and emotions relating to political system and issues are transferred from one generation to another generation.

Political socialization is the process by which individuals acquire knowledge about politics and how politics shape political culture. Suberu (2004) observes that, the concept of political culture is pertinent to any definition of political socialization and goes on to define political culture as "a shared understanding of political values, norms, symbols, emotions and other politically relevant knowledge in a society". In essence, the transmission of political culture to successive generation of a society is what political socialization is all about.

Alan (1977:68) and Eric (1969:20) identifies the role of political socialization to include; transmission of a society's political system, regulating the behavior of members in the community and training individuals for positions of leadership. Scholars like Glass (1986), Becker (1975) and Campbell (1960) enumerate the agents of political socialization and see it as factors affecting or influencing in one degree or another an individual's political opinions. These agents include: family, school, mass media, religion, political parties and work place. Suberu (2004) in the same vein sees agents of political socialization as institutions through which people are educated in the political norms, values, and ethics of the society they live in. He conveniently makes a conceptual distinction between these agencies, namely: primary agency; which refers mainly to the family and secondary agencies which refers to those relatively formal institutions which a child is involved with from childhood to adulthood. These secondary agencies include: schools, the mass media, political parties, associational and occupational groups and also governmental agencies. Political and behavioural sociologist such as Dowse and Hughes (1972) and Bender (1967) have advanced the analytical categories of distinguishing between the patterns of political socialization. For them socialization may be latently (subconscious) or manifestly (conscious or intentional) transmitted, may take place in the formative (childhood) or mature (adulthood) stages of an individual's development and the result of political socialization can produce systemic (radical change) or non- systemic (incremental change) in the polity.

These conceptual categories can be represented figuratively below.

Analytical or conceptual categories	Patterns of socialization
Agency	Primary (i.e. the family) Secondary (schools, mass media, political parties)
Process	Latent or manifest
Time span	Formative years or mature years
Change	Systemic change or non-systemic change

Source: Suberu(2004) *POS(363) Political Behaviour,* Ibadan, Distance Learning Center

WHAT IS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION?

Just like political socialization, political participation as a concept and generally, concept in the social science, does not have one single acceptable definition rather there are different definitions of the concept. Norman and Verba (1975) defines political socialization as involving activities of citizens aimed at influencing the selection of those in government and the actions they take. For Closky (1968) it includes "those voluntary activities by which member of society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy". In essence, political participation may descried any voluntary acts aimed at influencing elections or public policy. It may be as simple as casting a ballot or it may mean running for political office. Political participation is the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. This participation usually extends beyond parties, however. Individuals can also become involved in certain aspects of the electoral process through independent action, particularly at the local level and by joining civil society organizations.

Professional networks, trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and the media can all provide avenues for political participation.

Suberu (2004:38) gives a clearer picture of what political participation is. He describes it as:

Attempts by private citizens to influence…decisions of government…involve more than just voting at elections. It is, however often defined to include only those legal and non-violent and deviant forms of political behavior as riots and assassinations.

It is important to note, that, not all citizens within any political environment participate in politics at the same degree or level because of the material and time cost involved and the amount of resources individuals may be willing to devote to participate in the politics of their polity. This accounts for the differential attitudes towards political participation in general.

Malbraith (1965) gives a conceptual classification of levels of participation, based on the participatory activities involved. These include:

Spectator level of participation: These include voting, initiating public discussion. Most citizens are usually involved at this level since it entails relatively low or no cost.

Transitional level of participation: According to Malbraith, it involves attending a political meeting or rally, and contributing to political campaign. It requires more costs than those at the spectator level and the tendency for participants to move to gladiatorial activities or level is usually high.

Gladiatorial level of participation: it involves holding public or party offices, being a candidate or flag bearer for political office, appealing for funds, and attending caucus meetings. It is the most expensive level of participation and as well the most effective. Invariably, few numbers of persons and only about 1 to 3 percent of the population are usually involved in gladiatorial activities and several factors influence participation in politics. Almond and Verba (1965) observed that participation and apathy in politics is accounted for by political culture.

They advocated that states that have participant culture exhibit citizens display of great concern for politics while states that have non-participatory cultures exhibit attitudes of passivity, isolation and apathy towards political issues.

Other factors that affect political participation as identified by Almond and Bingham (1984) are institutional and electoral arrangements. They pointed out, that, proportional representation principle, two party system, mandatory voting laws and a unicameral legislature encourages citizens to vote. While on the other hand, the first part of the post electoral system, multi-party system, difficult voting system and bicameral legislature discourage voters' turnout.

Suberu (2004) identifies the type of party system, the character of the political leadership and the citizen's socio-economic status as contributory factors affecting political participation.

In conclusion, political socialization and political participation are intrinsically related to each other. The manner and extent of a political socialization the citizens go through determines their level of participation in political processes and politics.

MIRROR REPRESENTATION

Women's participation in contemporary formal politics is low throughout the world. The argument put forth by scholars Jacquetta Newman and Linda White is that women's participation in the realm of high politics is crucial if the goal is to affect the quality of public policy. As such, the concept of *Mirror representation* aims to achieve gender parity in public office. In other words, representation of women is linked to their proportion in the population.

Mirror representation is premised on the assumption that elected officials of a particular gender would likely support policies that seek to benefit constituents of the same gender. A key critique is that mirror representation assumes that all members of a particular sex operate under the rubric of a shared identity, without taking into consideration other factors such as age, education, culture, or socio-economic status. However, proponents of mirror representation argue that women have a different relationship with government institutions and public policy than that of men, and therefore merit equal representation on this facet alone. This feature is based on the historical reality that women, regardless of background, have largely been excluded from influential legislative and leadership positions.

As Sylvia Bashevkin notes, "representative democracy seems impaired, partial, and unjust when women, as a majority of citizens, fail to see themselves reflected in the leadership of their polity." In fact, the issue of participation of women in politics is of such importance that the United Nations has identified gender equality in representation (i.e. mirror representation) as a goal in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. Besides seeking equality, the goal of mirror representation is also to recognize the significance of women's involvement in politics, which subsequently legitimizes such involvement. Unlike their male counterparts, female candidates are exposed to several barriers such as social and cultural barriers that may impact their desire to run for elected office. These barriers, which hinder mirror representation, include: sex stereotyping, political socialization, lack of preparation for political activity, and balancing work with domestic responsibilities.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIALIZATION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA: A CHRONOLOGY

Socialization as defined is the process by which members of society acquire the generally accepted norms, values and precepts of their society. In Nigeria, the women have generally not had the same opportunities, which men have had overtime in participating in their country's politics (Karunmi, 2003). This is a consequence of the nature of socialization, the women acquire of their expected role pattern in the society. Culturally, women are expected to be seen but not heard. As Karunmi (2003) opines that:

> *... Nigerian society measures the success in life of a woman on how well she*
> *performs the tasks or roles of a wife, mother and home manager ...*

She further asserts, that "societal expectation from women frown at their active participation in politics". This nature of socialization which the society fosters obviously is a social construct encouraged by cultural practices and other societal factors. The 1999 constitution clearly prohibits all forms of discrimination in contesting for elective post, including discrimination based on sex. Hence, the social conditions are responsible for the perceived discrimination and lack of active involvement of women in politics.

Nevertheless, Nigerian women, even before independence in 1960, have been involved in politics. Movements led by great women like Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, Janet Nwokedi, Queen Amina, to mention few questioned the Colonial

Masters' policies towards the natives especially as it relates to women. The 'Egba Women's Riot' in the West and the 'Aba Women's Riot' of 1949 in the East are cases in point. This culture of resistance by the women culminated in the emergence of the National Women Union (NWU) in 1947 that became a part of the independence National Movement (Hassan, 1992; Mba, 1982).

In the First Republic, a few number of women played significant political roles and this was in the parliament with only four female parliamentarians namely Mrs. Wuraola Esan and Mrs. Bernice Kerry in the National parliament, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Janet Muokelu in the Eastern House of Assembly (Anya, 2003). The Action Congress (AG), National Council of the Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) and the Northern Progressive Congress (NPC) had a male dominated structure. Women got nominated as candidates for political position but none of them made it through to be elected.

The Second Republican political parties all had women'swings, which was represented in the parties national executives but were not involved in decision making processes of the parties. The highest positions that women held in their parties were of vice chairpersons. The highlight of women participation in politics was the presentation of a female vice presidential candidate as a running mate to the late Chief Obafemi. Awolowo by the Unity Party of Nigeria (UEN) in the person of Mrs. Oyibo Odinamadu. Although, many women contested the elections, there was only one female senator out of a 95 member House and 11 female House of Representatives members out of 450 members (Karunwi, 2003). As it is with military rule, democracy was thrown into the gutters with the emergent of the Buhari and Idiagbon administration. Hence the issue of political participation in the process was seen as an aberration under military rule. The Babangida regime brought in a new dimension in women participation in politics. It brought in the term "First Ladyisrn" into the Nigerian polity while giving the power and control of state resources to the office of the first lady, Mrs. Mariam Babangida. The era marked a turning point in the history of women struggle in Nigeria as former president's wife institutionalized the office of the first lady in 1987. She became the first working First Lady and launched the "Better Life for Rural Women" program. However, this brought about no tangible improvement in the position of women in governance. As Karunwi (2003: 196) observes that. "First Ladyism"

> *Further disempowered women and brought about the*
> *personalization of power through Mrs. Babangida's*
> *pet project "Better Life for Rural Women"...*
> *It was a case of being seen and not heard, that is*
> *Tokenism.*

Although we had women who have made impact in the country's political scene that include, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala former Minister of Finance, who saved the nation records of billions of Naira as a result of her hard working nature as a public officer. Mrs. Obi Ezekwesili also laid a land mark in the history of Nigeria politics. Prof. Dora Akunyili, the NAFDAC boss also performed credibly; leading the fight against adulterated pharmaceutical drugs, her name can never be forgotten in the annals of history.

In the 1990 elections into local government councils, very few women emerged as councilors and one woman, Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku, emerged as Chairperson of a local government council in the west. In the gubernatorial elections, no female emerged as governor in any of the states and only two female as Deputy Governors emerged, namely: Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs. Cecillia Ekpeyong of Cross River State. In the senatorial election held in 1992, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor-Akerele was the only woman who won a seat in the 91-member senate while 14 women won elections into the 589-member House of Representatives. Also, amongst the members of the transitional council appointed by former President Babangida in January, 1993, only two were women, namely: Mrs. Emily Aig-Imokhuede and Mrs. Laraba Dagash.

In all, there were many abnormalities as associated with military regimes which excluded women in governance. The military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar tried to include women in governance by appointing two women into the Federal Executive Council namely Chief (Mrs.) Onikepo Akande (Minister for Commerce) and Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi (Minister of Women Affairs).

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

The 1999 elections ushered in the Fourth Republic, a democratic elected Nigerian government after 16 years of military interregnum. Despite the provisions in the 1999 Constitution which was the bedrock of governance in this republic, Nigerian women were limited in their participation in politics due to largely the cultural values of the socialization process and as well, political barriers in the country.

Nevertheless, women contested for positions in local, state and national levels, their performance was less impressive probably due to lack of political will on the part of the women themselves, lack of awareness of their political rights and more importantly, gender discrimination conditioned by the socialization process; which see women involvement as confined to the home rather than public life. This factor, more decidedly than any other factors contributed to a hostile political arena for the women in politics in the Fourth Republic.

Karunwi (2003: 198) describes the situation of women discrimination in politics thus:

> *...Nigerian women do have ...numerical strength*
> *to overturn the male dominated political system, the*
> *numerical strength will remain just that, a numerical fact.*

He went further to make a detailed numerical position of women in comparison with international

standards. He states that:

> *Nigeria's 360-member of House of Representatives had 12*
> *female members; whilst the 109-member of Senate had 3,*
> *also, out of a total of 11,881 electable positions in 199, only*
> *631contested. Those that won were only 1.62% (181*
> *of the total positions). This was a huge cry from the 30%*
> *recommended positions for women at decision-making levels*
> *endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council*

The second term of the Fourth Republic started on May 29, 2003; the Nigerian polity witnessed an increase in the number of women political appointees even though women did not perform well at the elections. The emergent of new political parties also marked a turnaround for women participation in politics with two new parties being headed by women. These parties are the Progressive Action Congress (PAC) led by Mrs Sarah Jubril and the Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN) led by Major (Mrs) Mojisola Adekunle Obasanjo (rtd). When the results were released, Mrs. Jubril had 157,560 votes while Major (Mrs.) Obasanjo (rtd) had 3,757 votes out of total valid votes of 39,480,489 giving a percentage of 0.40 and 0.01 for Mrs. Jubril and Major Obasanjo (rtd) respectively. Three vice presidential aspirants, Hajia Asman Aliyu Mohammed of the ARP, Mrs. Habib Mairo Baturiya of the JP and Hajia Maimunatu Lata Tombai (MON) of the NAP were females. For the gubernatorial elections, there were no female aspirants but only two female deputy governors, whose parties won elections. These were Alhaja Falinat Badru of Ogun State and Erelu Olusola Obada of Osun State (TMG: 2003).

In the National Assembly, of the 109-member senate, only 3 women, namely; Mrs. Daisy Danjuma, Chief (Mrs.) Anisulowo and Mrs. Gbemi Saraki-Fowora were elected giving a percentage total of 2.75. In the House of Representatives the story was not quite different, 20 females got elected into the 360-member house with a percentage of 5.55.

The Forth Republic which began in 1999 saw women taking a similar low participation in the Nigeria's political process. The 1999 general elections saw only 181 positions worn by women out of the 11, 881 available positions throughout the country (Akiyode-Afolabi, 2003:63). The elections saw only five (4.6%) women out of 109 senators elected into the Senate, while 13 (3.6%) women were elected into the House of Representatives of 360 seats i.e. 6.3 percent women representation in the national parliament (Ajayi, 2007:139). While there were 36 gubernatorial seats, no female featured. Nigeria had only one female deputy Governor –Chief Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, deputy governor of Lagos State (1999-2003), and of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country only 12 (1.21%) women were elected (Adu, 2008:27). 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 councilors were women (Babatunde, 2003; Anifowose, 2004:210).

The poor performance of women in this election was the basis for the national summit for all women politicians organised by the International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Gender and Development Action (GADA) held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja. The objective of the summit was to enhance women's active participation in Nigerian politics (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003:64). Despite all efforts geared at improving women's participation in politics in Nigeria, the 2003 elections did not witness any significant improvement. In the elections that was held that year (2003) only 21 (6.1%) women out of the 339 member worn seats in the House of Representatives. Similarly, of 109 senatorial seats, only 3 (2.7 %) women were elected in to the Senate, which is just 8.8 percent women representation in the national parliament (UNDP Report, 2003:47; Ojo, 2003:16). 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, 38 (3.84%) women were elected (Adu, 2008:27).

In 2007 only 25 (6.9%) 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 7.3 percent 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 (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008:10).

The records from the database of the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) showed that in the 2007 elections a total 7160 candidates (both men and women) contested in the April elections. Of this number, only 628 women representing 8.8% of the total candidates participated. A total 3141 candidates contested for seats in the National Assembly (799 candidates for the senate and 2342 candidates for the House of Representatives). Of this number, only 209 or 6.7% were women (59 or 7.4% women for Senate and 150 or 6.4% women for House of Representative) (Okocha, 2007). The analysis above indicates a 2%, 4% and 6% women representation in 1999, 2003 and 2007 respectively. However, the trend shows an improvement in women representation. This was due to the conscious 77 affirmative efforts of the Obasanjo administration to involve more women in his political administration. As a result, political parties took a decision to waive for the

women the payment of pre-registration levies for political aspirants in the country. In addition the national summit for all women politicians organised by the International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Gender and Development Action (GADA) held on June 28,2002 in Abuja with the objective of enhancing women's active participation in Nigerian politics and the awareness campaigns by these and other gender-related organizations and NGOs spurred women in the federation to vie for political candidature in the 2003 and 2007 general elections (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003:64).

In the history of Nigeria, there has been no woman ever elected as state governor, while only 6 women have ever been elected as deputy Governors (from Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Imo, Plateau and Anambra States). Thus the perception that democracy would automatically boost women political participation has not been validated after nine years of return to civilian rule. Nigeria still falls short of the desired result of giving females the opportunities and access to opportunities to advance socially, economically and politically ((Ojo, 2003: Babatunde, 2003; The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008:3, Adu, 2008:27)

CONCLUSION AND WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD

In Nigeria, women represent about 50.7% of the population; discrimination of women varies from one ethnic group, geographical setting and social class. However, culturally, the male gender has been accorded more value and respect. Women are socialized to take care of the home front while politics is seen as the exclusive preserve of the men. These prejudices inhibit politically conscious women from involving themselves in politics and consequently resulting in an under estimation of women's political prowess. There are a number of factors which also constrain women's participation in public life and decision-making and this includes: economic dependency and a lack of adequate financial resources, illiteracy and limited access to education and the same work opportunities as men, discriminatory cultural and social attitudes and negative stereotypes perpetuated in the family and in public life, burden of responsibilities in the home, intimidation, harassment and violence, lack of access to information. The minority status of women in the political sphere affects them when it comes to selecting candidates for elections in political parties. In any case, the men dominate party hierarchy, giving them a better chance to be involved actively in party politics.

Karunwi (2003: 202) gives credence to this fact about male domination of political activities and process in Nigeria. He states that: *Prevalence of the "masculine model" of political life and of*
elected government bodies. The lack of party support for
women candidates ... Have all been hindrances to women's
participation in elections.

Traditions play a paramount role and often dictate women's primary role as leaders of the home front. Women are socialized along strong, patriarchal value system that fosters the belief that women are not made for public life or service. The position of the mass media as a socializing agent cannot be divorced from the issue due to the influence it has on public opinion and consciousness. The media portray women as the weaker sex thereby encouraging the age long patriarchal stereotype. Shvedova, have argued that the mass media need to recognize equal value and dignity of men and women and more importantly promote women's sense of self-worth and respect by encouraging them to participate in political activities and consequently, take up positions of public responsibility (Shvedova, 2000).

What is the way forward?

There is no doubt that women have some potentials and rights to contribute meaningfully to the development of their country. Therefore, the Nigerian government should work towards achieving gender equality in democratic governance, increase women participation and access to politics. It must be realized that the role of women as home makers cannot be down played in that it equally has an extended impact on their responsibility in service, the women touch anywhere cannot be matched. Women's less involvement in politics hinders the development of democratic principles in public life hence the need to remedy the situation for the better is paramount. Firstly, the Independent National Electoral Committee (INEC) and various electoral commissions should ensure the implementation of the affirmative action of 30 percent of women representation at all levels by adopting gender-sensitive election code of conduct and also adopting the system of proportional representation to increase women's chances of getting elected and as well ensuring gender balance in appointments.

Women's civil and political participation is women's ability to participate equally with men, at all levels, and in all aspects of public and political life and decision-making. It extends to other arenas, such as family life, cultural and social affairs and the economy.

The right of women is enshrined in a number of human rights instruments, as well as in national constitutions and laws.

For Nigerian women to participate fully in public life and decision-making there is need for them to depend on some factors and these include

1. an awareness of their rights and how to claim them
2. access to information about laws, policies and the institutions and structures which govern their lives
3. confidence, self-esteem and the skills to challenge and confront existing power structures
4. support networks and positive role models
5. having an enabling environment, meaning a political, legal, economic and cultural climate that allows women to engage in decision-making processes in an effective way.

Political parties should ensure provision of financial and other support for women contesting elections and gender parity in selecting candidates for internal party politics and external positions.

In conclusion, democracy thrives better on participation and inclusion, hence, the electoral system and procedures as well as the political system should be put in such a way that women will not feel restricted from getting involved or participating in the politics and governance of the country. The numerical strength of women at the grassroots and their participation as voters does not justify the present low level of participation by women.

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