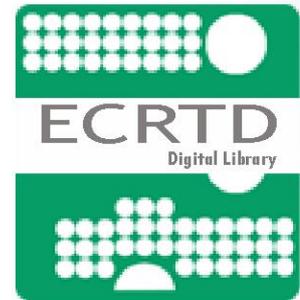




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APPRAISING NIGERIA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY OF 35% AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN, 1999-2016

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ABSTRACT

This paper appraised Nigeria's Implementation of the National Policy of 35% Affirmative Action for Women from 1999-2016. The objective of the study is to examine the extent to which the 35% Affirmative Action for Women has been realized in Nigeria taking due cognizance of how poverty and literacy rates affect women political participation in the country. In the light of the feminist theory and with the aid of content analysis techniques, it is observed that the 35% Affirmative Action for women has not be realized in Nigeria because of high poverty rate and low literacy rate among women as well as non-application of compulsory party-based implementation strategies. It is argued that even poverty reduction and improvement of literacy rate among women may not always guarantee the realization of the 35% affirmative action without compulsory part-based enforcement strategies. It is therefore recommended that realizing the 35% Affirmative Action for Women in Nigeria requires not just poverty reduction and enhancing literacy rate among women but also effective application of compulsory party-based implementation strategies.

KEYWORDS: Appraisal, Implementation, National Policy, Affirmative Action, Women

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Affirmative Action (AA) refers to policies that take care of race, ethnicity or gender into consideration in an attempt to promote equal opportunity in socio-economic and political life; It is a policy project aimed at countering discrimination against minorities and disadvantaged social group. The origin of Affirmative Action is traced to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America whereby President John F. Kennedy by Executive Order 10925 established the President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunities Order which provided that: Contractors doing business with the American government will take *affirmative action* to ensure that applicants are employed and employees are treated during their employment without regard to their race, colour or national origin. By 1964, affirmative action was solidified by the Civil Rights Act sponsored by Senators Joseph Clark and Clifford Case (Wikipedia, 2016).

Importantly, Affirmative Action for Women began with agitations and movements within the United Nations in which the charter (1945) included a provision for equality between men and women (chapter III, article 8). It is widely believed that socio-economic variables like literacy rate, patriarchal system, Culture, race, religion; violence, night meetings, blackmail, rigging; societal attitudes, social cohesion, and social capital; Poverty rate, Earnings/Income Opportunity, cash benefits, property ownership/rights of inheritance, house hold division of labour, party funding etc. largely affect women participation in politics (Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014; Akpan, 2015; Luka, 2011; Bethune and Hoof, 2014). In attempt to overcome the impacts of these variables on women political participation, various female officials within the United Nations and leaders of women's movements on the global stage attempted to turn these principles into action through several resolutions and conferences from 1945 to 1975 which eventually turned 1975 into International Women's Year; and 1976-1985 into the "Decade of Women". One of the Conferences was the third world conference on women held in Nairobi in 1985. The Nairobi conference set out areas by which progress in women's equality could be measured: constitutional and legal measures; equality in social participation; equality in political participation; and decision-making. Eventually, the fourth world conference on women was in 1995 was held in Beijing, China where a Declaration for women was made. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) outlined 12 critical issues, which constitute barriers for the advancement of women, and identified a range of actions that governments, the United Nations and civil society groups should take to make women's human rights a reality. One of the twelve critical concerns identified in the BPFA was inequalities in power and decision-making. In view of this, a visible Gender Based 'Affirmative Action' was introduced in Nigeria in the year 2000 and improved in 2006 National Gender Policy. Meanwhile, Nigeria's adoption of the National Policy of 35% Affirmative Action for women is one of the several efforts made to empower the women in politics in line with Beijing Declaration of 1995. But the fact that the extent to which this policy has been implemented in Nigeria is not quite clear forms the basis for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Several socio-economic variables have been blamed as being major determinants of the extent to which women participate in politics. Some of these socio-economic variables include literacy rate, patriarchal system, Culture, race, religion; violence, night meetings, blackmail, rigging; societal attitudes, social cohesion, and social capital; Poverty rate, Earnings/Income Opportunity, cash benefits, property ownership/rights of inheritance, house hold division of

labour, party funding etc. largely affect women participation in politics (Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014; Akpan, 2015; Luka, 2011; Bethune and Hoof, 2014). According to scholars like Okuchukwu (2015), Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014), Akpan (2015), and Luka (2011), literacy rate and poverty rate seems to have been the most domineering of these variables in affecting women participation in Nigerian politics. In lending credence to this claim, Abubakar and Ahmed (2014) acknowledged that prior to the April 2011 general elections in Nigeria, the country's first Lady and wife of the President, Dame Patience Jonathan initiated a project aimed at achieving 35% representation for women in all the states and the federal government in addition to several other efforts to enhance women political participation; but these efforts were to no avail as illiteracy and poverty impaired the degree of women political participation in the country. The project which was called the Women for Change Initiative with the main objective of seeking the consent and endorsement of all the state governors across the thirty six states of the country to ensure that they grant women the benchmark of 35% participation and reservation in the occupation of elected offices and in their state administrative cabinets. But available statistics tend to show high level of gender disparity against women in Nigeria's political system. This is considered to be a threat to women empowerment in Nigerian Politics. Hence, this study is poised to address the question: To what extent has the 35% Affirmative Action for women been achieved in Nigerian government and Politics taking cognizance of literacy rate and poverty rate in the country?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to appraise Nigeria's implementation of the national policy of 35% Affirmative Action for women; specifically, the study seeks:

- i. To ascertain the extent to which literacy rate affected the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy in Nigerian Politics.
- ii. To ascertain the extent to which poverty rate affected the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy in Nigerian Politics.
- iii. To suggest how the implementation of the national policy of 35% Affirmative Action for women can be enhanced to increase their participation in Nigerian politics.

Implications of the Study

The policy implications of this study are both theoretical and empirical. Theoretically, the study will contribute to the wealth of existing literature on women participation in politics; also, it will reveal whether the implementation of the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action for Women in Nigeria has achieved the desired results or not. Empirically, the study will expose some policy lapses on the part of women, political parties, and government in relation to the participation of women in politics as a strategy for boosting their political consciousness. Also, the study will expose the various challenges that impede women political participation in Nigeria.

Definition of Terms

Affirmative Action: This is a policy strategy designed to correct an existing imbalance and prevent possible discrimination against a disadvantaged group or minority based on sex, race or even religion.

National Policy: A framework of government Action-Plan with series of programmes designed to meet societal needs throughout the country.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

The concept of Affirmative Action have been interpreted and defined by different scholars in line with their socio-political background. There are two identifiable perceptions of Affirmative Action: the **Optimists** and the **Pessimists**. Whereas the **Optimists** define affirmative action as "...taking positive steps to end discrimination, to prevent its recurrence, and to create new opportunities that were previously denied to qualified women and people of color"; the **Pessimist** explained Affirmative Action as "...quotas and preferences for unqualified candidates to occupy certain positions of authority" (NPWF, 2015:3).

In this light, the National Partnership for Women and Families – NPWF (2015:6) identified two bases for the successful implementation of Affirmative Action in any society: first, "*there must be a strong reason for developing the affirmative action program*"; second, "*affirmative action programs must apply only to qualified candidates*". This implies that there must be justifiable rationality for deciding to implement affirmative action and that this affirmative action must only apply to qualified persons; hence, mere quotas and preferences without qualification do not qualify to be ascribed with affirmative action. A genuine affirmative action must therefore only apply to women and minorities who are qualified for specified opportunities (NPWF, 2015:7).

Similarly, the Civil Liberties Rights Union - ACLU (2000:1) asserted that "Affirmative Action is one of the most effective tools for redressing the injustices caused by our nation's historic discrimination against people of color and women, and for leveling what has long been an uneven playing field". The ACLU (2000) averred that we need Affirmative Action now more than ever to close the gaps created by the centuries-long legacy of racism and sexism. In view of this, ACLU (2000:2) asserted that:

....affirmative action programs must be flexible, using goals and timetables, but not quotas; protect seniority and not interfere with the legitimate seniority expectations of current employees; be temporary and last no longer than necessary to remedy discrimination.

By emphasizing "goals" and "protection of legitimate seniority", ACLU (2000) agrees with NPWF (2015) that effective and efficient implementation of any affirmative action must be based on justifiable "reason" and "qualifications" rather than mere "preferences and quota" implied by the pessimists. The additions made by the ACLU (2000) is that affirmative action must be flexible and timed as not to last longer than necessary in remedying the specific discrimination else, the policy could be abused.

Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen (2006) while writing on "Understanding Affirmative Action" contended that it means different thing to different people; and that an individual's perception of the concept informs the reactions to it. Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen (2006:587) averred that:

Affirmative action occurs whenever an organization devotes resources (including time and money) to making sure that people are not discriminated against on the basis of their gender or their ethnic group. Affirmative action has the same goal as equal opportunity, but differs from equal opportunity in being proactive....Equal opportunity is a passive policy that seeks to ensure that discrimination will not be

tolerated once it is detected. In contrast, with affirmative action, organizations use established practices not only to subvert, but also to avert, discrimination.

Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen (2006) went beyond defining Affirmation Action as a strategy to avoid gender related or ethnic related discrimination to distinguish the concept from “equal opportunity”. They noted that whereas Affirmative Action has the same goal with equal opportunity, they differ to the extent that “affirmative action is proactive policy” as it subverts and averts inequality, while “equal opportunity is passive policy” as it only subverts inequality once detected. Hence, while the implementation of affirmative action policy corrects existing inequality and prevents possible future occurrence, equal opportunity policy only corrects a detected existing imbalance.

In the light of the foregoing definitions, it is glaring that “Affirmative Action” is a policy strategy designed to correct an existing imbalance and prevent possible discrimination against a disadvantaged group or minority based on sex, race or even religion. Notable from the explanations is the fact that affirmative action is goal-oriented, time-bound, and requires qualifications; as well as proactive.

Importantly, Nigeria’s adoption of the National Policy of 35% Affirmative Action for Women is primarily to enhance women participation in politics. Visible Gender Based ‘AA’ was introduced in Nigeria only in the year 2000 following the transfer of political power from the military to civilian democratic regime. Hence, the Federal Government of Nigeria under General Olusegun Obasanjo formulated a National Policy on women sequel to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 1995. The 2006 National Gender Policy was an improvement of the 2000 National Policy on Women by the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo democratic regime. Noteworthy is the fact that the national gender policy is premised on some principles aimed at entrenching affirmative action by promoting gender equality as a globally accepted development factor with particular tilt to political empowerment for sustainable development. The concern of the Beijing Declaration of 1995 from which Nigeria derived the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action was to build on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits on women in Nairobi in 1985 with the objective of achieving equality, development and peace. This was based on the conviction that Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, especially participation in politics (decision-making process and access to power) are fundamental for achieving balanced national development. It is against this backdrop that this attempt is made to assess the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action and ascertain how women have participated in politics.

Contextual Review

The contextual or empirical literature reviewed were the writings of Ajibade, Ocheni, and Adefemi (2012:225-231), Castillejo (2009:1-23), Bethune and Hoof (2014:1-10). These scholars wrote on different issues ranging from women political participation and affirmative action in Nigeria, marginalization of women in party-politics in Nigeria, factors militating against women active participation in politics in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Women’s political participation and influence in Sierra Leone, to gender issues in Belgian party politics and elections.

Ajibade, Ocheni, and Adefemi (2012) examined the “Factor Militating Against Women Active Participation in Politics in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State Nigeria”. The Objective of the study was to identify the factors that militate against women active participation in

politics and how they impacted on Ofu Local Government Area. Using survey design, Ajibade et al (2012) noted that the marginalization of women has been the practice in Nigerian political system; and that, though there has been gradual improvement, they are not yet adequately represented in view of the fact that they constitute greater than 50% of the nation's population. They argued that since the creation of Ofu Local Government in 1989, men have always dominated the politics of the area. Among the factors identified as being responsible for the low participation of the women in the Politics of Ofu Local Government Area are: lack of financial resources to prosecute their political ambition, insufficient education and enlightenment on the politics of the area, lack of political parties' clear policy for women political ambition. Ajibade, Ocheni, and Adefemi (2012) therefore recommended that political parties should have clear policies for women, political education and enlightenment should also be enhanced, and women should be financially assisted.

Castillejo (2009) analyzed "Women's Political Participation and Influence in Sierra Leone". The essence of the study was to assess how women participate in, and influence politics in Sierra Leone; to identify the factors affecting their political participation, and suggest ways forward. Using survey design, Castillejo (2009) observed that women participation and influence in Sierra Leonean politics is still very low partly due to low political awareness and intimidations by the men politicians. Castillejo (2009:7) substantiated this claim by citing the testimonies of some women who contested in previous elections thus:

- *A female district councillor in Kambiah was prevented from campaigning in public by the male secret society, which would gather in places where she was holding events, meaning that all the women could not be out in public. Her female supporters were beaten in public as a lesson not to support her.*
- *A female MP in Moyamba district was threatened with forceful initiation into the male secret society if she ran for office. When she went out in public to campaign, the male secret society would gather to prevent her campaigning or her supporters attending.*
- *A female minister when initially running for parliament was threatened by men from the opposition party who told her that as a woman she would be easy to harm. She was forced to go house to house at night to conduct her campaigning, as it was too dangerous for her to hold public events.*

These citations imply that the male politicians in Sierra Leone threaten the women politicians and actually execute their threats in different ways by prevent them from campaigning, beating the women and their supporters in public places, forcing them to be initiated into their secret society etc.

In the same vein, Bethune and Hoof (2014) studied "The Gender Issues in Belgian Party Politics and Elections". The objective of the study was to examine how female politicians in Belgium, driven by a strong women's movement, have sought to achieve gender parity in politics. With the aid of content analysis and descriptive statistics, Bethune and Hoof (2014:3) asserted that:

Several countries have acknowledged that equal participation will not come about naturally and have adopted policies to increase women's involvement in politics. Of the IPU list's top 10 countries, 6 have some

sort of quota system in place. Four countries have opted for voluntary political party quotas (Sweden, South Africa, Nicaragua and Iceland), one has legislated candidate quotas (Senegal) and one a reserved-seats system (Rwanda). Belgium ranks seventeenth with women representing 38% of the members in its House of Representatives and 41% women in the Senate, considerably better than the world average of 20%....

In the citation above, Bethune and Hoof (2014:7) observed that equal participation in politics will not be realistic unless some policies are adopted and implemented in favour of women. In substantiating this, they acknowledged that out of the IPU's top ten countries have some sorts of quota system in place: Sweden, South Africa, Nicaragua and Iceland operate *voluntary political party quotas*, while Senegal operate *legislated candidate quotas*, and Rwanda operate *reserved-seats system* for women. But Bethune and Hoof (2014:5) noted that the Belgian case is different thus:

There are some unique aspects of the Belgian system that need to be taken into account when explaining the success of the quota acts. First, it should be stressed that the most recent quota law not only imposes a 50–50 quota for every election list, but also a requirement for the two candidates at the top of the list, stating that the first two titular and substitute candidates may not be of the same sex. Another interesting feature is the enforcement mechanism. Unlike in other countries, Belgian electoral law does not give parties the option of ignoring the quotas by, for instance, paying a fine. Election lists that are not compliant will automatically be nullified, hence preventing political parties from participating in elections if they are not willing or able to observe the quota rules.

In essence the political fit achieved for women in Belgian politics which gave them 38% of the seats in the House of Representative and 41% seats in the Senate over the global 20% average was due to the strategies adopted which are provided in the electoral law thus:

- (i) Imposition of 50-50 percent quota for every election list;
- (ii) Two top candidates in every election list not being the same sex;
- (iii) Payment of fine by political parties that fail to observe the quota rules;
- (iv) Automatic nullification of any political party's election list that are not willing or able to observe the quota rules;
- (v) Preventing political parties from participating in elections if they are not willing or able to observe the quota rules.

Gap in Literature

In the foregoing expositions, NPWF (2015), ACLU (2000), and Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen (2006) conceptualized "Affirmative Action"; Ajibade, Ocheni, and Adefemi (2012), Castillejo (2009), Bethune and Hoof (2014) carried out empirical studies in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Belgium on women political participation and affirmative action in Nigeria, marginalization of women in party-politics in Nigeria, factors militating against women active participation in politics in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Women's political participation and

influence in Sierra Leone, to gender issues in Belgian party politics and elections. None of these studies appraised Nigeria's implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action . Ajibade, Ocheni, and Adefemi (2012) only assessed the factors militating against women participation in the politics of Ofu L.G.A. of Kogi State. Hence, this study is poised to examine the extent to which Nigerian Women have participated in politics given the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy in the pre-election, election, and post-election periods in different parts of the country.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the non-experimental design. In other words, it was not a survey design but qualitative design. The population of Nigerian women based on the 2006 Census Count is 69,086,302. In the course of study, relevant materials were sourced from the libraries of Ebonyi state government, Ebonyi State University, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Political Party Offices, Ministry of Women Affairs, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), as well as the libraries of some individuals considered relevant to the research. The researcher also visited the official internet websites of the INEC, NBS, and Nigeria's government, as well as some private organisations and drew relevant information from their publications.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher retrieved documents relevant to the study from the identified sources, read the contents thoroughly, reviewed and extracted the information and data needed. Essentially, the researcher made use of documents and archives such as textbooks, journal articles, internet, government gazettes, research reports, newspapers and magazines deemed to contain relevant information and data relating to Nigeria's National Policy of 35% Affirmative Action for Women.

Method of Data Analysis

Content analysis techniques, especially descriptive statistical tools like simple percentage calculations, tables and charts were employed for the analysis of data. The contents (information and data) of the various documents on the subject matter of this study were analyzed through the interpretivist processes which included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Asika, 1991; Obasi, 1999; Orji, 2009). Whereas the data reduction in a research of this nature involved the processes of selecting, simplifying, summarizing, paraphrasing, and subsuming data in a large pattern; data display involved assembling and organizing the information that help in understanding policy implementation and permit conclusion drawing; while conclusion drawing involved making inferences and meanings out of the reduced and displayed data (Obasi, 1999; Orji, 2009). Conclusion drawing took the form of noting the meanings and implications of specific regularities, patterns, themes, configurations and causal flows in social events (Orji, 2009). Essentially, in order to elicit information and data relevant to the study, the contents of the literatures gathered were thoroughly read, simplified, summarized, classified and assessed with focus on the research objectives raised and the period under study. Consequently, conclusions were made based on the interpretations and logical inferences made from the analysis of the information and data generated from relevant documents.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data Presentation

The extent which the 35% Affirmative Action has been achieved in Nigerian Politics.

The data presented in this section for analysis is mainly the election outcome which will show the extent to which women have been involved in political participation.

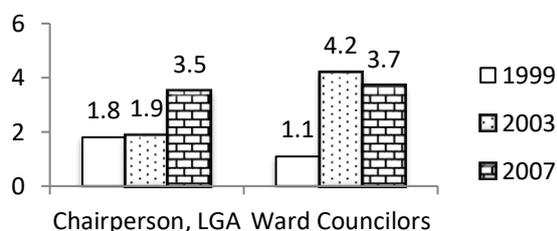
Table 1: Comparative Data on Women Representation after the 1999, 2003, and 2007

General Elections at Local Government Level

Position	No. of Available Seats	Number and Percentage of Women Elected					
		1999	%	2003	%	2007	%
Chairperson, LGA	774	13	1.8	15	1.9	27	3.5
Ward Councilors	6368	69	1.1	267	4.2	235	3.7

Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

Figure 1: Percentage Representation of Women after the 1999, 2003, and 2007 General Elections at Local Govt. Level



Data Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

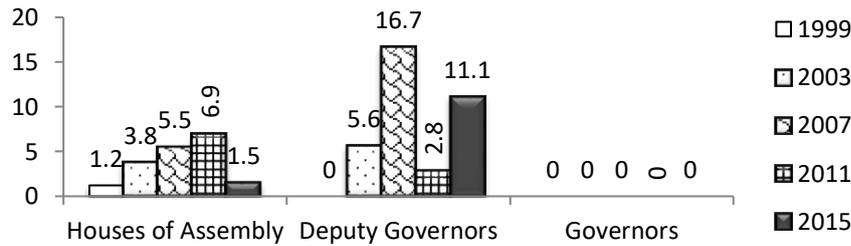
The data in table 1 and Figure 1 show the trend of females elected into political positions at the local government level in 1999, 2003, and 2007. It indicated that for the positions of chairperson and ward councilors, there were increases in 2003 from the records of 1999, but the percentage dropped in 2007 from what we had in 2003 despite increasing campaigns. Besides, in all, the 35% Affirmative Action was not realized.

Table 2: Comparative Data on Women Representation after the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 General Elections at State Level

Position	No. of Available Seats	Number and Percentage of Women Elected									
		1999	%	2003	%	2007	%	2011	%	2015	%
Governors	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deputy Governors	36	0	0	2	5.6	6	16.7	1	2.8	4	11.1
Houses of Assembly	990	12	1.2	38	3.8	54	5.5	68	6.9	15	1.5

Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

Figure 2: Percentage Representation of Women after the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 General Elections at State Level



Data Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

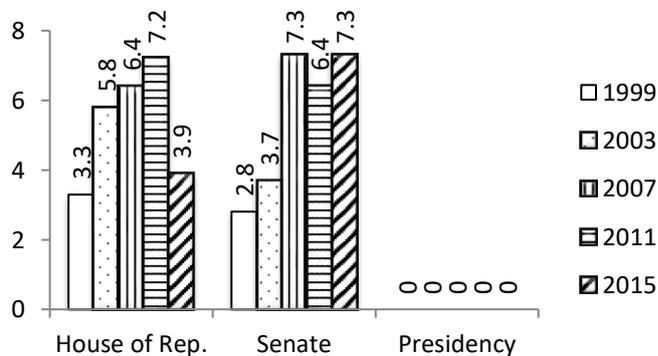
At the state level, not only that the 35% Affirmative Action was not realized, the data fluctuated. In the state houses of Assembly, the percentage remained on the increase thus: 1.2% (1999), 3.8% (2003), 5.5% (2007) and 6.9% (2011); but dropped to 1.5% (2015). Similarly, that of the Deputy Governor was 0% (1999), but it increased to 5.6% in 2003, 16.7% in 2007, but dropped to 2.8% in 2011 and rose again to 11.1% in 2015. For the governorship, no female candidate had ever been elected into that position.

Table 3: Comparative Data on Women Representation after the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 General Elections at Federal Level.

Position	No. of Available Seats	Number of Women Elected									
		1999	%	2003	%	2007	%	2011	%	2015	%
Presidency	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senate	109	3	2.8	4	3.7	8	7.3	7	6.4	8	7.3
House of Rep.	360	12	3.3	21	5.8	23	6.4	26	7.2	14	3.9

Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

Figure 3: Percentage Representation of Women after the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 General Elections at Federal Level



Data Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

At the Federal level, the 35% Affirmative Action was not also realized and the percentage of women elected into power positions fluctuated for the various years though with some extent

of increasing trend. For the House of Representatives, women won 3.3% in 1999, this increased to 5.8% in 2003, 6.4% in 2007 and 7.2% in 2011; but dropped to 3.9% in 2015. Similarly, the percentage for women in the Senate increased from 2.8% in 1999 to 3.7% in 2003, 7.3% in 2007 but dropped to 6.4% in 2011, and rose again to 7.3% in 2015. For the presidency, no woman had ever occupied the position.

Factors militating against the implementation of the national policy of 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria.

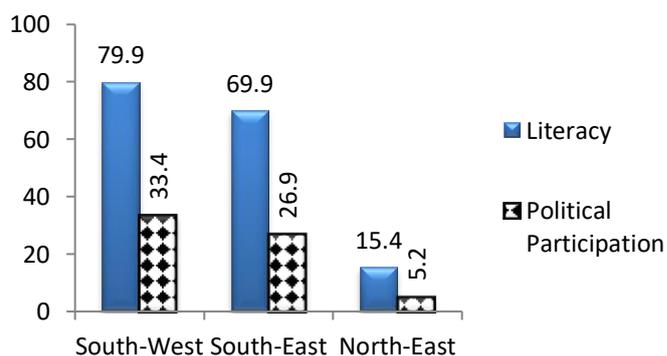
The factors which have been largely blamed as being responsible for the low participation of women in Nigerian politics like in other countries largely border on socio-economic variables. These socio-economic variables include *literacy rate* and *poverty rate*. The statistics on these two variables will now be presented in comparison with women's rate or level of political participation in some selected geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

Table 4: Distribution of Females' Literacy and Political Participation Rates in Percentage

Geopolitical Zone	Literacy %	Political Participation %
South-West	79.9	33.4
South-East	69.9	26.9
North-East	15.4	5.2

Data Sources: compiled by Omenka (2016) from Obasanjo, (2016); Akpan (2015); Nwogbaga (2016)

Figure 4: Distribution of Females' Literacy and Political Participation Rates in Percentage



Data Sources: compiled by Omenka (2016) from Obasanjo, (2016); Akpan (2015); Nwogbaga (2016)

A critical observation of the Chart shows a correlation between *literacy* and *political participation*. The trends of literacy rate and political participation rate are all negative; also among the geopolitical zones, the literacy rate reflected in the level of political participation regarding contest for the 2015 House of Assembly elections. The North-East with the lowest literacy rate (15.4%) had the lowest rate of political participation (5.2%), followed by South-East with 69.9% literacy rate and 26.9% political participation rate, while South-West with the highest literacy rate of 79.9% also had the highest political participation rate of 33.4% in the contest for the 2015 House of Assembly elections. This analysis suggests that there is a strong

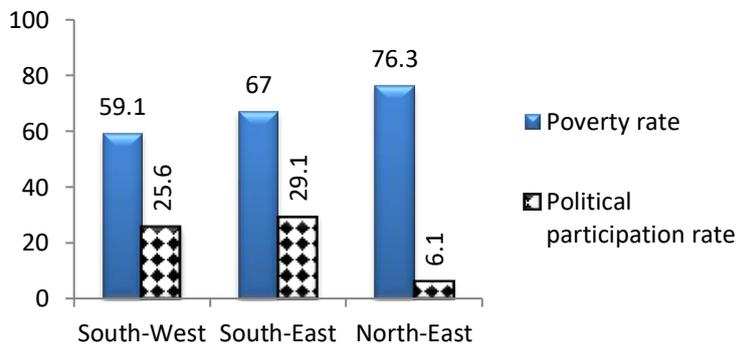
relationship between education and political participation among Nigerian women which invariably affected the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy especially in the North-East. Hence, the higher the literacy rate, the higher the rate of political participation.

Table 5: Distribution of Females’ Poverty and Political Participation Rates in Percentage

Geopolitical Zones	Poverty %	Political Participation %
South-West	59.1	25.6
South-East	67.0	29.1
North-East	76.3	6.1

Data Sources: compiled by Omenka (2016) from Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014); Obasanjo, (2016); Akpan (2015); Nwogbaga (2016)

Figure 5: Distribution of Females’ Poverty and Political Participation Rates in Percentage



Data Sources: compiled by Omenka (2016) from Obasanjo, (2016); Akpan (2015); Nwogbaga (2016)

A critical observation of the Chart shows a correlation between *poverty* and *political participation*. Among the geopolitical zones, the poverty rate reflected in the level of political participation regarding contest for the 2015 General Elections for the National Assembly Seats. Whereas North-East with the highest rate of poverty (76.3%) recorded the lowest rate of political participation (6.1%); South-East with 67% of poverty rate had 29.1% of political participation; while South-West with the lowest poverty rate among the women had 25.6% of political participation. This analysis implies that there is a strong relationship between poverty rate and political participation among Nigerian women which has affected the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action negatively especially in the North-East. Hence, the higher the poverty rate, the lower the rate of political participation.

Enhancing the Implementation of the national policy of 35% Affirmative Action to increase their participation in Nigerian politics

The improvement in women political representation indicated in the analysis above was due to the conscious affirmative efforts of the various regimes to involve more women in political administration. Some of these enforcement mechanisms include:

- The adoption of the 1995 **Beijing Declaration**

- Nigeria's National Women Policy (2000) which provided for the 30% Affirmative Action;
- Nigeria's National Gender Policy (2006) which increase the Affirmative Action to 35%;
- The decision of political parties to waive for the women, the payment of pre-registration levies for political aspirants in the country;
- The national summit for all women politicians organized by the International Human Rights Law Group, CEDPA, GADA held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja with the objective of enhancing women's active participation in Nigerian politics;
- The various awareness campaigns by gender-related organisations and NGOs to spur women in the federation to vie for political candidature general elections.

FINDINGS

Based on the foregoing expositions, it is observed that:

- i. Literacy rate affected the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy in Nigeria to the extent that the higher the literacy rate, the higher the level of women political participation and vice-versa.
- ii. Poverty rate affected the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy in Nigeria to the extent that the higher the poverty rate, the lower the level of women political participation and vice-versa.
- iii. The implementation strategies of the 35% Affirmative Action are not adequately enhanced to increase women's political participation in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The extent to which the 35% Affirmative Action has been realized in Nigerian politics is still far below expectations. The highest percentage attained so far was in 2007 when we had only 16.7% (6) of the women as Deputy Governors after which the percentage of women elected into political positions drastically began to either drop or fluctuate despite increasing campaigns to enhance their involvement in politics. In essence, women's political participation in Nigeria is still predominantly at the spectator level while men dominate the gladiatorial and transitional level

The non-realization of the 35% Affirmative Action and the cornering of women to the spectator level in Nigerian politics for 16 years of Democracy have been largely blamed on some identifiable socio-economic variables like literacy rate, patriarchal system, Culture, race, religion; violence, night meetings, blackmail, rigging; societal attitudes, social cohesion, and social capital; Poverty rate, Earnings/Income Opportunity, cash benefits, property ownership/rights of inheritance, house hold division of labour, party funding etc. (Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014; Akpan, 2015; Luka, 2011; Bethune and Hoof, 2014; Okuchukwu, 2015). This claim was verified with available data on literacy rate and poverty rate in selected geopolitical zones (South-West, South-East, and North-East) and found to be true because of the observations.

The implementation strategies of the 35% Affirmative Action are also not adequately enhanced to increase women's political participation in Nigeria. This submission is corroborated by the position of Bethune and Hoof (2014) that mere adoption of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy without adequate enforcement strategies cannot sufficiently enhance women's political participation. This partly explains why women's political participation in Nigeria have not been on a constant progression but even decreases despite increasing campaigns for women. As Sacchet (2005) observed, the reason why this policy has been more successful in some countries than in others has to do with certain conditions that are mainly related to the electoral system. In countries which have a system of laws to enforce compliance, the number of women elected has been far higher; hence the progress made by women in Argentina, Costa Rica (Sacchet, 2005) and Belgium (Bethune and Hoof, 2014) were as a result of the compulsory enforcement mechanisms applied.

CONCLUSION

The 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria has not been achieved for over 16 of Democracy because of the socio-economic variables that negatively affected the implementation processes. It however observed that in some countries like Belgium, Argentina, and Costa Rica, where the identified socio-economic variables like poor literacy rate, poverty, violence, and discrimination etc, also affect women political participation, it has been realized even beyond 35% because of the legally backed enforcement mechanisms of the Affirmative Action Policy especially at political party level. Hence, the 35% Affirmative Action Policy for Nigerian women will only be realized if the government makes laws that will compel political parties to comply with the policy requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. In order to sustain and increase the level of women political participation in Nigeria, implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action Policy should be backed by educational empowerment programmes for women.
- ii. Given that being educated alone does not automatically guarantee increase women participation in politics as to realize the 35% Affirmative Action, there is need to empower the women economically for political contests.
- iii. The implementation strategies of the 35% Affirmative Action should go beyond mere policies, programmes, and campaigns to legally involve the Political parties that take major electoral decisions on contestants as obtainable in Belgian Party politics. This includes: imposition of 35% Affirmative Action for every election list; two top candidates in every election list not being the same sex; payment of severe fine by political parties that fail to observe the affirmative action rules; nullification of any political party's election list that did not observe the affirmative action requirements; prevention of political parties from participating in elections if they are not willing or able to observe the affirmative action requirements.

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