

APPRAISING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND NORWAY

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Abstract

Despite increasingly sophisticated antidiscrimination laws, discrimination and inequality have proven remarkably resilient. This prompts questions about the limit of laws and chances to achieve social change. One way forward is to fashion legal tools, which impose duties to promote or achieve equality, rather than focusing on individual's right against specific perpetrators¹. Gender and politics have in recent times become a contemporary issue in the minds of publicists. The two concepts pervade legal, socio-cultural as well as political discourse thereby not only brooding hatred amongst 'being' (i.e., the male and female), but has become a deity of social activism which has rendered some prisoners of gender-base-thoughts and thrive for political equilibrium. This paper appraised Nigeria's Implementation of the National Policy of 35% Affirmative Action for Women with kin particularity to politics. 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. In comparison, this paper also examines the situation and level of compliance to the policy of affirmative action in Norway. Why have Norwegian women enjoyed greater legislative representation than Nigeria and other countries? This paper also examines the system employed by the Norwegian government to achieve success and suggests useful recommendation to liberate the Nigerian situation in the struggle for gender equality and to strike a gender balance in the Nigerian political milieu.

Keywords: *Affirmative action, Policy, Implementation, Comparison*

Introduction

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

¹ Sandra, F. 'Breaking the Mould; Equality as Proactive Duty' 2012, 60(1). The American Society of Comparative Laws 265.

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 Act² sponsored by Senators Joseph Clark and Clifford Case.

Importantly, Affirmative Action for Women began with agitations and movements within the United Nations in which the charter³ included a provision for equality between men and women. 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 politics⁴. 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 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 right 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.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative Action is a set of programs providing advantages for people of a group who are seen to have traditionally been discriminated against. This is a policy strategy designed to correct an existing imbalance and prevent possible discrimination against a disadvantaged

² The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the nation's premier Civil Rights legislation. The Act outlawed discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin, required equal access to public places and employment, and enforced desegregation of schools and the right to vote.

³ United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, 1945-chapter III, article 8).

⁴ Awofeso, O. and Odeyemi, T.I. (2014). Gender and Political Participation in Nigeria: A Cultural Perspective; in: Journal Research in Peace, Gender and Development 4(6); online:<<http://www.interesjournals.org>>

group or minority based on sex, race or even religion.⁵ According to Advanced Learners Dictionary⁶, affirmative action is seen as the practice of policy of making sure that a particular number of jobs etc. are given to people from groups that are often treated unfairly because of their race, sex etc.

“Affirmative action” means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and culture from which they have been historically excluded. When those steps involve *preferential* selection—selection on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity—affirmative action generates intense controversy.

The development, defense, and contestation of preferential affirmative action has proceeded along two paths. One has been legal and administrative as courts, legislatures, and executive departments of government have made and applied rules requiring affirmative action. The other has been the path of public debate, where the practice of preferential treatment has spawned a vast literature, pro and con. Often enough, the two paths have failed to make adequate contact, with the public quarrels not always very securely anchored in any existing legal basis or practice.

The ebb and flow of public controversy over affirmative action can be pictured as two spikes on a line, the first spike representing a period of passionate debate that began around 1972 and tapered off after 1980, and the second indicating a resurgence of debate in the 1990s leading up to Supreme Court’s decisions in 2003 and 2016 upholding certain kinds of affirmative action. The first spike encompassed controversy about gender and racial preferences alike. This is because in the beginning affirmative action was as much about the factory, the firehouse, and the corporate suite as about the college campus. The second spike represents a quarrel about race and ethnicity. This is because the burning issue at the turn of the twentieth-first century is about college admissions. At selective colleges, women need no boost; African-Americans and Hispanics do⁷

The Black’s Dictionary⁸ defines ‘Affirmative Action’ as an action or set of action intended to eliminate existing and continuing discrimination, to redress lingering effects of past discrimination and to create system and procedures to prevent future discrimination all by taking into account individual membership in a minority membership so as to achieve minority representation in a larger group.

⁵ Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK. Available at: www.eajournals.org>

⁶ A S Hornby, Oxford University Press, 9th Edition, 25

⁷ Astin, Alexander W. and Dongbin Kim, 2004, “Cross-Racial Interaction Among Undergraduates: Some Consequences, Causes, and Patterns,” *Research in Higher Education*, 45 (August): 529–554.

⁸ Bryan A Garner 10th Edition, Thomas Reuters, 70

Policy

This refers to a plan of action agreed or chosen by a political party, a business etc.⁹ A framework of government Action-Plan with series of programmes designed to meet societal needs throughout the country. It is a standard of action that has been established by an organization.

Implementation

To implement is to put into practice. To enforce or carryout a work-plan. To execute and make reality and effective.

Comparison

To compare is to examine people or things to see how they are different or similar. Comparison is the process of matching two things or concepts together to figure out differences or similarity.

Woman: A Social-Cultural Construct

Nature is replete with binaries: day and night, front and back, up and down, male and female etc., and for reasons of comfort we seem to appreciate one than the other but, the other is in no way inferior to the other polemics set in when we hierarchize the binaries and tag some superior and positive, and others inferior and negative. Male and female are humans and the woman being is a human being. A human being is complex and should be viewed from religious, moral, philosophical, socio-cultural perspective, etc. Human dignity consists in the fact that a human being is made in the image and likeness of God and never to be treated as a means to some other end. While, we live in a world where gender superiority is a belief, it is important to note that nature made it that, women have powerful intuition; while a man crawls step by step to arrive at a conclusion, his wife is already there with the answer waiting for him. "Women use more of the right brain which is intuitive but men use more of the left brain which more analytic and systematic".¹⁰ Gender is a time honored social construct which has for aeon now gained socio-cultural usage and masquerades as a natural phenomenon. Just as in the analogy of the gendered tablespoon, chalk, yam and kolanut as demonstrated by M.P. Eboh,¹¹ there is no necessary connection between man/woman and the socio-cultural trappings of masculinity/femininity as cribbed to male and female respectively in terms of social status and roles. To term gender social cultural construct implies that it is construed and therefore can be deconstructed. Gender is a manipulative system of relationship between men and women married by inequality in the socio-political, socio-economic and even religious spheres of life resulting in favouritism or differential treatment in favour of men.

Gender is highly political. It is a hierarchical system of exploitative relationship between men and women wherein women are made subordinates and are permanently held down culturally by machinations systematically designed to be an inextricable mesh from which they cannot

⁹ A S Hornby, Oxford University Press, 9th Edition, 1117

¹⁰ M.P Eboh, A Tapestry of folklore, insight of proverbs, pearl publishers, P.H. 2013. P. 27.

¹¹ *ibid*

escape even if they want to. It is a well-coordinated patriarchal structure of oppression and repressive relationship wherein the structural injustice embedded in culture enslave women and even make women the purveyor of the very false values that oppress them. Gender has to a large extent dehumanized the woman such that our laws gives credence to gender exploitative laws against the woman.

In 2012, over a thousand of Nigerian women on hajj pilgrimage were deported right from Jeddah International Airport because they were unaccompanied by male chaparons. However, the men whether accompanied by their wives are allowed their freedom.¹² If humans are free moral agents, and the man is, the woman should also be allowed her right equally and in all ramifications. This socio-cultural marginalization finds its way into our laws and grows daily as discrimination. Gender inequality within families, inequitable division of labor within households, and cultural attitudes about gender roles further subjugate women and serve to limit their representation in public life. Societies that are highly patriarchal often have local power structures that make it difficult for women to combat. Thus, their interests are often not represented or under-represented.

Examining Gender and Politics

Liberal democracies initially represented only men and not women. Liberal democratic philosophers argued that women were best suited for the private world of the family. Because women's role was in the private sphere, women were excluded from owning property, voting and from entering politics. Liberal democracies addressed only the needs of men. Classical (liberal theorists) almost invariably assume that the 'individual' and 'citizen' are male¹³.

Furthermore, 'the classic (liberal) theorists ... argued that the natural freedom and equality were the birthright of one sex... (and) only men were free and equal' Women did not enjoy the same political rights as men. Men, in contrast, were viewed as more rational than women and could effectively represent the interests of all citizens. 'The classic texts assumed that women cannot transcend their bodily natures and sexual passions and they cannot be trusted as political decision-makers. Because of this attitude, women were not involved in politics and did not have their interests represented through public policy. Male legislators defined which issues were relevant for public debate. Not surprisingly, women, or family concerns, were not initially incorporated into the public sphere. According to Janine Brodie¹⁴ liberal democratic theory excluded women from acquiring citizenship rights. Liberal theorists argued that women were naturally suited as care takers in the family and 'concluded that women were permanently impaired from developing the requisite skills for democratic citizenship.' Furthermore, this

¹² M.P Eboh, "Philosophic Thoughts & Gymist Deconstruction of Gender" Pearl digital press, Port Harcourt Nigeria, P. 155-160

¹³ Pateman (1979). *The Problem of Political Obligation A - 0. rit-cal Andvs~s of L beycal Theorv*. Toronto: John Wiley and Sons.

¹⁴ Brodie, J (1994). " Women and Political Leadership- A Case Study for Affirmative Action". In M, Mancuso et al (eds). *Jleaders hi^ in Cd*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

explains why issues such as reproduction, sexuality and other concerns which have a direct impact on women's lives were not discussed in the public realm. Instead, politicians have mainly represented interests which are outside of the private world. Because arguments have been made that liberal theorist¹⁴ excluded women from -representative politics, it is important that we study examples of liberal philosophers who shared this view, provides a detailed demonstration of John Locke's and Thomas Hobbes¹⁵ attitude toward the role of women in liberal societies. She argues that Hobbes believed that men are not only sovereign in the public world, but they are also the masters of their family. She stresses that Hobbes does not even define women's role in liberal society. This attitude is evident when Hobbes argues " that a family is defined as being made up of ' a man and his children; or a man and his servants; or a man, and his children, and servants together. On this note, it is questionable whether or not Hobbes is treating women as the servants of the family. Locke, in contrast, acknowledges the role of women in liberal society. Unlike Hobbes, Locke argues that marriage is a voluntary and legal contract between husband and wife. Even though women also have responsibility over their children, Locke argues that husbands have power over their wives through. In other words, Locke (1980)¹⁶ 15 explains that " the rule should ... naturally fall to the man's share, as the abler and the stronger" in the marriage. Because of these attitudes, only men were viewed as being well-suited to decide what was best for all citizens in liberal democracies. This section has demonstrated that early liberal theories excluded women from the public world of politics.

Because liberal philosophers supported the exclusion of women from politics, interests such as reproduction, child care, and other issues which have a direct impact on women and the family were not discussed as public policy concerns during the formative stages of liberal theory. However, it is also important to note that liberal democratic governments played a limited role in public policy concerning society as a whole during this time. Because of this factor, other issues which fall outside of the private realm such as private property and the market were incorporated into the early stages of liberal democratic theory. Nevertheless, questions still remain. How did female philosophers respond to the public and private divisions between men and women?

Women Participation in Governance

Women in government refers to the history, demographics and participation of women in public offices. In many countries, women have had inadequate opportunities in social participation, especially in striving for political rights and power in the government and different institutions¹⁷ This historical tendency still persists, although women are increasingly being elected to be heads of state and government.

¹⁵J. Locke, ([1690] 1980). *Second Treatise of Government*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Namibia, Sister; Windhoek (1989). "Women in government". 1(3). 3. ProQuest 194900864
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ProQuest_\(identifier\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ProQuest_(identifier))

As of October 2019, the global participation rate of women in national-level parliaments is 24.5%. In 2013, women accounted for 8% of all national leaders and 2% of all presidential posts. Furthermore, 75% of all female prime ministers and presidents have taken office in the past two decades¹⁸. Women may face a number of challenges that affect their ability to participate in political life and become political leaders. Several countries are exploring measures that may increase women's participation in government at all levels, from the local to the national and international level. However, more and more women are pursuing leadership positions in the present day. Women face numerous obstacles in achieving representation in governance. The biggest challenges a woman in government can face occur during the pursuit of her position in government office, as opposed to when she is upholding said position. Studies show that one of the big challenges is financing a campaign. While women are more than capable of matching their male opponents in fundraising totals, studies show that they have to work harder in order to achieve the same result because men tend to receive more ready support from party leaders.

According to a survey conducted on a sample of 3,640 elected municipal officeholders, women face adversities with things such as financing a campaign because they are not as heavily recruited as men by party leaders. There are two factors that contribute to this trend. Firstly, party leaders tend to recruit candidates who are similar to them. Since most party leaders are men, they usually see men as prime candidates because they share more similarities than most women do. The same concept applies when discussing the second factor. Recruitment works through networks such as lower-level office holders or affiliated businesses. Since women are underrepresented in these networks, according to statistics, they are less likely to be recruited than men. Due to these challenges, women have to spend time and conscious effort building a financial support system, unlike men. Some have argued that politics is a "matrix of domination" designed by race, class, gender and sexuality.

Conceptual Analysis of Affirmative Action in Nigeria: Pre-colonial to the Renaissance

The concept of Affirmative Action has 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 Pessimists 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*

¹⁸ Jalaza, Farida (2016-04-15). "Introduction". *Shattered, Cracked, or Family Intact? Women and the Executive Glass Ceiling Worldwide*. Oxford University Press. pp. 1–2, 5. ISBN 9780190602093.

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.

A socio-political analyst, Crosby wrote¹⁹ "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. *'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.'*²⁰

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

¹⁹ Crosby, F.J., Iyer, A., and S. Sincharoen (2006). Understanding Affirmative Action. In: Annual Review Psychology. UK: Annual Reviews

²⁰ Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org)

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. Politically, in the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. For instance, in pre-colonial Bornu, women played active roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by male counterparts. Also, Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi and she made Zaria prominent Commercial Centre. The story was not different in ancient Yorubaland, where Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as female traditional chiefs. They consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari, cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed wonderful bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State.²¹

Colonial Period Colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise. It was also only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given the franchise. Three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo RansomeKuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs); Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance²². The Post-Colonial Period During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles. In 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. In 1961, Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo contested and won the election, becoming a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly till 1966, Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young also contested elections and won, they became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. In northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise even after independence until 1979 that is, the return of civilian government. As a result of this denial, prominent female politicians like Hajia Gambo Sawaba in the North could

²¹ D. T. Agbalajobi (2009). Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. A publication of African Journal of Political Science and International Relations Vol. 4(2), pp. 075-082, February 2010

²² O. T. Kolawole, K. Adeigbe, Adebayo, A.A., & M. B. Abubakar (2013). Women participation in the political process in Nigeria. Centrepont Journal (Humanities Edition), 2(15).

not vote and be voted for. Second Republic (1979-1983), saw a little more participation of women in politics. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives at the national level and also few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly respectively. However, During the same period, only two women were appointed Federal Ministers. They were Chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade and Mrs Adenike Ebun Oyagbola, Minister for Internal Affairs and Minister for National Planning respectively. Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in the states also. In 1983, Ms Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the Local Government Councils during this period.

Implementation of the policy of Affirmative Action in Nigeria

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.

Women in Politics in Nigeria

Under international standards, both men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to everything worldwide, most especially to participate fully in all aspects and at all levels of political processes. Globally, women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies, women assume some key roles, which are: mother, producer, home-manager, and community organizer, socio-cultural and political activists. Of these many roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by women movement. In line with global trend, Nigerian women constitute nearly half of the population of the country. But despite the major roles they play with their population, women roles in the society are yet to be given recognition. This is due to some cultural stereotypes,

abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. In Nigeria the awareness about the role of women in development of a nation came up in 1980s. The International Conference on women in Beijing in 1995 enhanced the effective participation of women in politics in Nigeria. In Nigeria, about 51 percent of women are involved in voting during elections. Despite these, women are still under represented in both elective and appointive positions. Available statistics revealed that overall political representation in government of Nigeria is less than 7 percent²³. This shows that Nigeria has not attained 30 percent affirmative as prescribed by the Beijing Platform of Action. Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions this is a growing concern to many Nigerians. However, concerted efforts have been made by government and non-governmental organizations to increase the level of participation of women in politics, in line, with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. However, in Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively. The under representation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in our society, much of which were obvious from pre-colonial era till date. However, the re-introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women political participation both in elective and appointive offices in Nigeria.

There are few women in political and leadership spaces in Nigeria. Currently only seven out of 109 senators and 22 of the 360 House of Representatives members *are women*²⁴. Dame Virginia Ngozi Etiaba, CON (born 11 November 1942) who was Governor of Anambra State from November 2006 to February 2007, a state in south-east Nigeria,. Paved the way into the first female governor in Nigeria's history. She was instated as the previous governor, Peter Obi, was impeached by the state legislature for alleged gross misconduct. She transferred her powers back to Obi three months later when an appeal court nullified the impeachment.

Following the implementation of the policy in the country, notwithstanding the challenges that betide the women in their bid to getting fully involved in politics and governance, 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. There are different factors Militating Against Women Active Participation in Politics Nigeria”.

As a case study, he 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

²³ D. T. Agbalajobi (2009). Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. A publication of African Journal of Political Science and International Relations Vol. 4(2), pp. 075-082, February 2010

²⁴ <<https://theconversation.com/nigeria-has-few-women-in-politics-heres-why-and-what-to-do-about-it-159578>>

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.

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 59.1 67 76.3 25.6 29.1 6.1 0 20 40 60 80 100 South-West South-East North-East Poverty rate Political participation rate²⁵ • 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 organizations 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 vise-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 vise-versa.

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

²⁵Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org) 17

identifiable socio-economic variables like literacy rate, patriarchal system, Culture, race, religion; violence, night meetings, blackmail, rigging; societal

- iii. 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

Norway and the Implementation of Affirmative Action²⁶

The Kingdom of Norway is located in Northern Europe, where it borders Sweden, Finland and Russia. In spite of its considerable large area, Norway has a population of only around 5.3 million inhabitants and is estimated to surpass the 5.5 million-mark before now. Among the reasons for this estimated increase is the positive development in overall life expectancy - Norway's showing a remarkable 2-year increase - from 2005 to 2015. The highest number of urban inhabitants can be found in the country's capital, Oslo, with approximately 660,000 Norwegians living there²⁷. Although Norway is among the founding members of the NATO, the Nordic Council and the United Nations, it is not a member state of the European Union.

Nevertheless, it is still associated with the Union through a membership in the European Economic Area (EEA), since Norway is among the EU's most important export and import partners. The Kingdom of Norway gained its independence from the union with Sweden in June 1905, but it was later that year, in October, when Sweden officially recognized the union's dissolution. Norway now is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy that is divided into 19 administrative divisions. The state ranks high on the global peace index, making it one of the most peaceful countries in the world.

Norway boasts a stable market economy and an ever-increasing growth rate of about 1.02 percent as of 2016. It has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe; most of the EU member states struggle with a higher percentage. In 2016, Norway imported goods worth more than 70 billion U.S. dollars, and exported goods of roughly 89 billion U.S. dollars, leaving it with a sizeable trade surplus. The most important import partners are Germany and Sweden, and its main export partner is Great Britain. More than a decade after world leaders agreed to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, their empowerment remains a necessary element in attaining development targets'—this was observed by the then United Nations Secretary General Ban ki-Moon 2010.

²⁶ <<http://www.bfd.dep.no/engelsk> The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud> <<http://www.ldo.no/en> KILDEN Information Centre for Gender Research in Norway> <<http://eng.kilden.forskningsradet.no/> Women in Science <http://eng.kvinneforskning.no/> Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK) <http://www.nikk.no/English/> Center for Equality> <<http://www.kvinneuniversitetet.no/English/tabid/2930/Default.aspx> Women in Science – Norway> <<http://forskerbasen.no/> FOKK Organization for Research on Women and Gender in Norway> <http://kilden.forskningsradet.no/c35087/artikkel/vis.html?tid=61475&strukt_tid=35087 EEA Grants and Norway Grants>

²⁷ <<https://www.statista.com/topics/3888/norway/>> July 8, 2021

Norway provides a substantial contribution to the reduction of social and economic disparities in Europe. Through the EEA and Norway Grants 2004–2009, more than 1200 development projects, programmes and funds within a range of priority areas are supported in the 12 new EU member states, Greece, Portugal and Spain. The projects are run by central, regional and local authorities, research and academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and businesses. The EEA and Norway Grants also aim to strengthen the relations between Norway and the beneficiary states. For the 2009–2014 programme period, EUR 1.79 billion will be made available to important areas with a particular focus on the environment, climate change, health, education, research and the judiciary. Efforts to strengthen the civil society will be continued, and a new fund to promote tripartite cooperation and efforts to combat social dumping will be established. Norway, as the largest donor, provides 97 percent of the EEA and Norway Grants funding.

Women in politics in Norway

Woman participation in Norway has saw the brightness of light as far as 1980s. Gro Harlem Brundtland born Gro Harlem, 20 April 1939 a Norwegian female politician, served three terms as Prime Minister of Norway (1981, 1986–89, and 1990–96) and as Director-General of the World Health Organization from 1998 to 2003. She is also known for having chaired the Brundtland Commission which presented the Brundtland Report on sustainable development²⁸.

During the last 40 years women in Norway have entered the political arena at a progressive rate. But experience shows that the proportion of women in political bodies does not increase without special efforts, and quotas have proved the most effective means of achieving a more balanced representation. The issue of quotas was highly controversial when introduced in the 1970s and early 1980s. The Norwegian experience is that affirmative action and legislation in the field of gender equality is needed and lead to change. The use of quotas is simply a tool to display women's competences. It started in the 1970-ties when some political parties on voluntary basis adopted quotas on the electoral lists. Today the gender balance is complete with the 50 – 50 per cent representation.

Also, five of the six major Norwegian political parties apply a gender quota system. The Gender Equality Act has since 1981 contained a clause of at least 40 per cent of both men and women to be represented in publicly appointed committees etc. The positive effects of this affirmative action, has led down to our legal regulation – quota – of 40 per cent of the underrepresented group in 4 types of companies. The most famous being the large Public Limited Companies (PLCs), (which often are noted on the stock exchange). Today highly competent women have

²⁸ "UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Appoints Special Envoys on Climate Change". United Nations. 2007. Retrieved 3 August 2007.

taken their righteous seats at the boardroom tables²⁹. In Norway, the tripartite cooperation between the State, Employers Federations and the Unions in focusing on gender equality and family issues has been an important factor since the 50's. Norway has designed enabling structures and reforms which allow women - and men alike - to choose to have family and children combined with professional lives and incomes. Headwords have been: • Greatly extended and improved parental leave rules and benefits • Work-life-balance when having young children • A rapid increase in kindergartens and day-care centers. The length of parental leave in Norway with 100% wage compensation is 46 weeks. Norway introduced the father's quota in 1993, and the parental leave scheme reserves today 10 weeks for the obligatory, nontransferable father's quota in Norway. For EU-27 there are significant variations between the member states. Council Directive 92/85/EEC gives a minimum maternity leave of 14 weeks. There is no common policy for fathers leave.

More than 41 percent of all representatives elected for the Norwegian parliament held in September 11, 2017 were women, up from a share of 39.6 percent reached in the preceding election year 2013. Compared to the share of women in the parliaments of other global countries, Norway came in 13th place. With 61.3 percent,³⁰

The Problem of Nigeria: Implementation

The 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria has not been achieved for over 16 years of Democracy as is the case in Norway 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 as the case is in Norway. 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.

Challenges Militating Against Women in Politics

Women face numerous obstacles in achieving representation in governance. The biggest challenges a woman in government can face occur during the pursuit of her position in government office, as opposed to when she is upholding said position. Studies show that one of the big challenges is financing a campaign. While women are more than capable of matching their male opponents in fundraising totals, studies show that they have to work harder in order to achieve the same result because men tend to receive more ready support from party leaders.

²⁹ Kelly, Thomas A., ed. (14 October 1981). "Socialist Government Resigns in Norway". *The Post*. **73** (175). West Palm Beach, Florida: Daniel J. Mahoney. p. A13 – via Newspapers.com.

³⁰ <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/741351/share-of-women-in-the-norwegian-parliament/>>

According to a survey conducted on a sample of 3,640 elected municipal officeholders, women face adversities with things such as financing a campaign because they are not as heavily recruited as men by party leaders. There are two factors that contribute to this trend. Firstly, party leaders tend to recruit candidates who are similar to them. Since most party leaders are men, they usually see men as prime candidates because they share more similarities than most women do. The same concept applies when discussing the second factor. Recruitment works through networks such as lower-level office holders or affiliated businesses. Since women are underrepresented in these networks, according to statistics, they are less likely to be recruited than men. Due to these challenges, women have to spend time and conscious effort building a financial support system, unlike men. Some have argued that politics is a "matrix of domination" designed by race, class, gender and sexuality.

Conclusion

Women Participation in Nigerian politics is a topic of importance. Politically, women have been relegated to the background, despite the tremendous effort put forward by government and nongovernmental organizations following the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action and National Gender Policy (NGP) recommendation of 35% affirmative action for a more inclusive representation of women both in elective and appointive positions. It is worthy to note that Nigerian women are still being marginalized due to the style of leadership inherent in the country. Despite the challenge's women are facing, women activism and advocacy, education of women, positivity on the part of successive governments towards women empowerment and interest of women to participate in politics is getting a lot of positive energy. This is an indication that the participation of women in politics has a bright future. Therefore, the relevant stakeholders are advised to advocate for the protection of women from abuse, empower them economically and politically and review the necessary legislations to accommodate the growing interest of women in politics both elective and appointive positions. Interestingly, Norway is on a green bar indicating a higher-level success economically and politically too. Records have it that it is among the leading nations where the women participation in politics is equal or almost equal as the male counterpart following from the political parties. Suffice it to say therefore, that the implementation of the Policy of Affirmative Action for women in politics is a catalyst for national development.

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.

Also, training is crucial. Women need training in the fundamentals of politics. They need to understand grassroot politics and start from there. When people are unknown at the grassroots, they aren't successful. Another way is networking and mentoring. Women also need to see that politics is not all dirty. They need to see governance as what affects every member of a society.

Legislative changes are needed too and that is where affirmative action comes in. A quota system that reserves a fraction of electoral positions for women can be legislated. Financial support is crucial. Some women can't afford to buy party forms. And when payment for forms is waived for women, they are often made to step down for the man who has paid. Women need financial support that will not impede on their rights to participate or vie for positions.

Women must also ensure that only women who are efficient and have the capacity to lead are encouraged to vie for positions. The media must change their attitude towards political coverage of women. They sometimes project women in ways that are not relevant to leadership, politics or election. The media must help educate people of the dangers of cultural norms and harmful gender stereotypes, and monitor fairness in elections. There are cases where election violence has badly and specifically affected women. The media have to report these and hold perpetrators accountable. Advocating for affirmative action at the state and political party level is also important. Political parties have been known to tell a woman to step down from the electoral process. Countries like Rwanda and South Africa have used a quota system to pave the way for women representation in politics. In Rwanda, over 50% of political positions are held by women. Affirmative action or a quota system provides role models. Seeing women in positions of power can encourage others to confidently aspire to leadership positions.

Affirmative action also promotes diversity and increases opportunities for a disadvantaged group. It can decrease the potential for conflict as members of society begin to find themselves at the same level, politically, economically and socially. 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 party-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.