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Political Development Discourse: A Patriarchal Matrix of Representation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effect of patriarchal-construct on political development in Nigeria's fourth republic. It compares representation matrices by gender in both executive and legislative organs of government with a view to revealing wide gap that exists between the male and female political office holders since May 29, 1999. The paper relies extensively on secondary source of data collection and descriptive analytical method. The paper submits that it is the men construct of political power with less consideration of the women folk that accounts for low representation in Nigeria's fourth republic. It recommends a gender-reconstruct of political development that encourages women's participation and representation at primary and general elections; as well as strict adherence to democratic ideals and principles of electoral process.

Keywords: Electoral process, Nigeria's fourth republic, patriarchy, representation, women.

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1.0 Introduction

There is a relationship between political development and patriarchal representation. Political development of most nations of the world is bereft of strong female involvement due to patriarchal construct (UNDP,

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2009; Irabor, 2012, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1999). Patriarchy as a phenomenon has a global view and linkage which presupposes that patriarchy system itself is a very herculean task when dealing with women representation because it exhibits linkage transcending from one generation to another and from different origins (Watson, et al. 2014:1; Heintz, 2008). Thus, history, culture and nature brought about the disparity between male and female in the assumption of roles, either in private or public affairs (Kabeer, 2008; Heintz, 2008; UNDP, 2006; Rees, 1992). Informed by patriarchal world view, there appears great disparity in gender orientation which has led to a number of debates regarding obstacles to women's representation in the public domain of politics and the role of the state in tackling the associated issues as well as those that could enhance their participation (Phillips, 1995, 1998; Stetson & Mazur 1995; Lovenduski & Norris, 1993).

In Nigeria, patriarchal construct is spread in every sphere of human endeavors. Observably, the issue of women representation in politics and patriarchal construct began to gain momentum in the military era when the office the first lady became noticeable and vibrant. For example, the late Mrs. Mariam Babangida influenced the establishment of ministry of social welfare and women affairs and pet project such as "the better life for rural women." Most of these programs metamorphosed to other women's programs. However, with the entry into fourth democratic republic in Nigeria, tone of representation and patriarchal construct increased; yet, women representation in political offices has remained a serious concern.

The importance of the study is to contribute to the growing debate of women contributory role in political development in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Methodologically, the study utilizes secondary sources of data collection form similar works and utilizes both descriptive and historical analytical methods on women representation in public offices, with particular reference to legislative and executive organs.

The structure of the study starts with the introduction. It is followed by conceptual clarification. It also delves into patriarchal matrices and women's representation in public office in the fourth republic in Nigeria. Other sections are factors affecting under-representation of women, recommendation, and conclusion, and funding.

2.0 Conceptual clarification

2.01 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is defined as an institutional arrangement such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men (Millett, 1977: 35). Thus, patriarchy is a systematically organized process and pattern of initiating and maintaining control of women by men in any society.

Nigeria's political history is quite designed and permissive along patriarchal lines (Aina, 1998, Asiyanbola, 2005). It describes a socio-political structure that allows men to dominate women (Aina, 1998; Humm, 1989). Discernable from these is a formation of an ideological view of a socio-cultural and politically stratified people on gender basis right from the primitive to modern times. Not only that, it explicitly brings to fore how the males are classed as possessing superior qualities to lead; while the females possess the inferior qualities to lead, so they follow the leading of the males. This kind of arrangement is archetypal of the Nigerian fourth republic; exhibiting a predominantly patriarchal-construct where identities, voices, roles and representations of men gain higher prominence over the women folk in public affairs.

2.02 Representation and women: A Dicker concept

Very central to the discourse on political development is this ‘dicker concept,’ perhaps a-two-in-one or dual concept to “describing women’s participation in politics” (Abiola & Lanre, 2003; Agbalajobi, 2010; Anifowose, 2004; Conway, 2001; Ihemeje, 2013).

Dicker concept involves bargaining strategies whereby courageous and innovative women within and outside a given society find their way into politics; and they in-turn lobby other women into it through conscious efforts. Semantically, it is consciously used to reinforce the intent and aspirations of women towards a purposeful involvement in a particular task. For example, the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women’s political participation notes, “women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women” (UN, 2012). Thus, dicker concept describes a lobby group or organization put in place to champion the cause of women all over the world and systematically strengthening their views through various documents of agenda settings (UN, 2015; UN, 2012; UN, 2000; UN, 1996; UN, 1980; UN, 1979).

3.0 Patriarchal matrices of women’s representation in public office in Nigeria’s fourth republic

The country has experienced uninterrupted democratic transitions for over sixteen years whereby elections were conducted in five major periods: 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 respectively. Given the professional capacity of the electoral umpire, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), elections were conducted successively under the leaderships of Justice Ephraim Akpata in 1999; Sir Abel Guobadia in 2003, Professors Maurice Iwu in 2007 and Attahiru Jega in 2010 up till June 30, 2015. The importance of INEC is quite relevant in this analysis because it plays the role of political educator, enlightenment, and sensitization, conflict resolutions between/among political parties and above all, conducting elections where women were found to be grossly under-represented, as will be shown in different tables.

Table 1: Distribution of women elected to public office in Nigeria, 1999-2011.

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011	
	Seat Available	Available Seat Occupied by Women	Seat Available	Available Seat Occupied by Women	Seat Available	Available Seat Occupied by Women	Seat Available	Available Seat Occupied by Women
Presidency	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3 (2.8%)	109	4 (3.7%)	109	9 (8.3%)	109	7 (6.4%)
House of Reps	360	7 (1.9%)	360	21 (5.8%)	360	27 (7.5%)	360	25 (6.9%)
Governors	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
State House of Assembly	990	24 (2.4%)	990	40 (3.9%)	990	57 (5.8%)	990	68 (6.9%)
Local Government Chairpersons	710	13 (1.8%)	774	15 (1.9%)	740	27 (3.6%)	740	-
Councilors	6368	69 (1.1%)	6368	267 (4.2%)	6368	235 (3.7%)	6368	-

Source: Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013:14)

Table 2: Participation in elections by gender in April 2011 in Nigeria.

Office Contested	Gender		Total
	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	
President	1	19	20
Vice President	3	17	20
Governor	13	340	353
Deputy Governor	58	289	347

House of Reps	220	2188	2408
Senatorial	90	800	890

Source: British Council (2012)

Table 3: Statistical trends of women deputy governors in Nigeria, 1999-2015

Election Period	No. of Women Dep. Governor
1999	1
2003	2
2007	6
2011	1
2015	4

Source: Author's Compilation

Tables 1, 2 and 3 illustrate vivid experience of under-representation of the Nigerian women in the electoral process and how they occupy political offices between 1999 and 2015. It is not only alarming but calls for worry why women never attained chief executive positions at the state and federal levels, except at the local government level. The highest they have ever attained are those shown in table 3. Exception with utmost reservation is however drawn to two notable Nigerian women; Mrs Dame Virginia Etiaba and Mrs Patricia Olubunmi Eteh. One, for Mrs. Dame Etiaba to have been democratically elected and sworn in on March, 2006 as Deputy Governor and later sworn in on November 3, 2006 after the impeachment of her boss, Mr. Peter Obi for gross misconduct, is a big plus for her and the Nigerian women (Odunfa, 2006). Nevertheless, Mrs Etiaba can be described as a governor of circumstances because the governorship position she attained was not contested for; she was filling a vacuum and it was on an interim service to the people of Anambra State and Nigeria. Two, it is correct that Mrs. Patricia Eteh assumed/became the first female speaker in the fourth republic but the position was short-lived as she resigned due to alleged gross misconducts having spent 176 days in office (Ogunmodede, 2007).

Much has been said about 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections which recorded huge electoral malpractices, electoral conflicts and marginalization of women in Nigeria while little is said about 2015 elections. 2015 elections revealed a period of worse outing for women in politics in terms of participation and representation in the political history of Nigeria since May, 29, 1999.

In a more recent occurrence, the fact still remains that 2015 election results proved women's participation to have grown from bad to worse; such retrogression in the country's civilian administration led to the growing concern amongst women because the percentage of their participation in elective positions witnessed decline or nose-dived from 2007 to 2011 and now in 2015 (Gabriel, 2015:4).

Specifically, gubernatorial elections were held in 29 states and the representation of women seeking the office of governor and deputy governor were 87 out of 380 candidates (22.9%) ran for the positions. For the senatorial seats, 122 women out of 747 candidates, representing 16 percent were cleared by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to run in the March 28 and April 28 election of 2015. This result was not any better in the contest for lower chamber of parliament where 267 women out of a total of 1774 candidates who ran for the seats at the House of Representatives, representing 15 percent (Gabriel, 2015:4).

The decline or drop in women representation in 2015 could attributed mainly to inadequate support, poor preparation, insufficient fund, and translated to few female contestants in the March 28 and April 11 general elections. Buttressing this view, a Gender Advisor, Search for Common Ground Nigeria, Ene Ede reported that: noticeable retrogressions were identified only in the number of candidates who contested March 28 and April 11 Presidential, National, Governorship and State House of Assembly elections; but also with a gender focus...the 2007 and 2011 had better focus on processes, issues and candidacy as it concerns women and other marginalized and excluded groups. Only one female candidate contested

the 2015 elections, one main governorship contender and five deputy governorship; and 15 percent of 1,774 House of Representatives and 17 percent of 747 Senate seats. Apart from the processes leading to the selection and nominations to various offices, the election crisis resolution, mediation platform and structures were gender insensitive (Akor, 2015:1).

Further study on 2015 polls and outcome reveal that out of current 109 members of the National Assembly, 8 are women from: Northwest (Adamawa State); Southwest (Ekiti, Lagos and Oyo States), Southeast (Anambra State), South-south (Cross River State) (Uzoanya & Awodipe, 2015:8). This electoral gesture does not only exhibit wide disparity against women rather it failed to capture a geopolitical spread of the women representation by excluding Northcentral and Northeast from law-making body of the country.

Worthy of documentation is the participation cum representation on political party basis. Remember that there are 2 dominant parties: APC and PDP. A total of 15 women were elected on the platform of APC and PDP to the lower house of representative; seats are shared in ratio 10 to 5, 10 for PDP and 5 goes to APC (Jimoh, 2015). At the executive arm, gubernatorial elections have produced four female deputy governors; they are Oluranti Adebawale (Lagos State), Mrs Yetunde Onanuga (Ogun State), Ipabilo Banigo (Rivers State) and Cecilia Ezeilo (Enugu State) (Uzoanya & Awodipe, 2015:8).

4.0 Factors affecting low level of representation in political offices among Nigerian women in the fourth republic

The need to improve the quality and quantity of women participation by representation demands a careful knowledge of the draw-backs. One, various significant factors have been identified to be responsible for low participation levels of women ranging from gender orientation, education and age (Vecchionne and Caprara, 2009). Corroboratively, Verba et al. (1995) claimed that education is a dynamic predictor of political participation while Conway (2001) stressed that, although gender gaps in political participation are shrinking, male population is still more actively engaged than females.

Two, the role of poor civic engagement is another factor. In a Survey conducted by IFES, it is noted that women consistently report lower rates of participation than man in attending community meetings and visiting a community leader; with results showing that only 39% of women, compared to 57% of men have taken part in civic activities in the past while 61% of women have never taken part in any civic activity to express their views or resolve an issue (IFES, 2015). Three, the passive or spectator nature also affect their level of participation (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013:40). The fourth factor is the timid or reluctant support they get (IFES, 2015). Fifth is incessant resistance from the society through its norms and attitudinal perceptions (IFES, 2015, Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013).

5.0 Recommendation

A gender-reconstruct of political development that encourages women's participation and representation at primary and general elections; they are mandatory, pronounced and qualifying stages to attaining a political office. Connectively, it is recommended that strict adherence to democratic ideals, principle of electoral process and compliance to the Electoral Acts of 2010, as amended, or any other future electoral instrument be effectively upheld.

Others include more advocacies by the academics and civil society groups, adherence to the practice of affirmative action of 30 and 35%, attitudinal change about cultural and religious beliefs, encouragement from the male folks, correct interpretation of the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria about equal gender right to politics, imbibing confidence, shunning political violence and money politics.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper has been able to contribute to political development discourse through its investigation on patriarchal matrix of representation in Nigeria's fourth republic. The paper delves into conceptual clarification of major terms used in the paper as well as a comparative analysis of women's political participation level with particular reference to representation at the executive and legislative organs since 1999. Factors affecting low political representation are identified.

It is observed that there is a long way for women's political representation to sojourn in the midst of strong resistance in terms of societal perceptions, customs and belief systems, misinterpretation of constitution and unhealthy cultural practices, education and poor economic-base. They in no small measure contribute to the low level of electoral outcome from the women. Once there is such occurrence women under-representation in decision making is certain. Hence, there is need to review approaches that can effectively increase women's political representation, and accommodating new proactive measures.

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