



## SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS AS CORRELATES OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESS IN ONDO STATE

**Adekanmbi .G.O.**

Independent National Electoral Commission,  
Ekiti State University, Ado - Ekiti.  
E-mail: adekanmbiolufunke@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This study investigated sociocultural factors as correlates of women's participation in political process in Ondo State. The sample of the study was 300 respondents selected from 15 ministries, departments and agencies in Ondo State using multi stage sampling technique. The descriptive research design of the survey type was used for the study. Sociocultural factors and Women Participation in Political process Questionnaire (SFWPPPQ) was used to collect data. The data collected in this study were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance. The study revealed that there was significant relationship between sociocultural factors (patriarchy system, educational status and religion factor) and women's attitude towards participation in political process and that patriarchy system is the best predictor while religion factor is the least predictor of women participation in political process. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that there should be strict implementation of the Acts and Law in the country, reserving certain percentage (35%) of political offices for women. Also, any form of intimidation, harassment or act of violence against any woman venturing into politics must be severely punished, to encourage more women participation in the political process.*

**Key words:** Sociocultural Factors, Women, Participation and Political process

### Introduction

The outcome of the Beijing Conference of 1995 has led to giant strides in recognizing the need to accommodate gender issues in all aspects of livelihood globally (Anifowose, 2004). This is especially pertinent in view of the closing gaps in population distribution of the two genders. In the Nigerian context a National Gender Policy was developed and adopted since 2006, but not fully implemented widely. Current statistics appears that women are grossly under-represented in governance and excluded from the electoral process.

Although equal political opportunity for women is a goal shared by both men and women and despite increased support of women's equality, for thousands of years, women records poor participation in politics (Alkali, 2007). This is despite the fact that women constitute roughly half of the current world population (Bari, 2005). In Nigeria, like in other parts of the world, women are at least half the

country's population. According to the report of the 2006 census, women constitute 48.78% of the national population, yet this numerical strength of women does not automatically translate to increase in women's participation in political process in the country (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008).

The participation of women in politics falls short of the desired 30% by international standards and 35% as entrenched in the National Gender Policy 2006. Current statistics indicate that women are grossly under-represented in elective positions and excluded from the electoral process, such that in the 2007 elections, they constituted only 9% in the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 9.27% in the House of Representatives, 5.45% of the State Houses of Assembly and 0% of the Governorship and Presidential elective offices. After the 2011 general elections, it turned out even worse, with women only garnering 7.3% and 6.1% of members of the Senate and



House of Representatives respectively (Agbalajobi, 2012).

Political participation is an essential component that is required for ensuring the stability and legitimacy of every political system (Anifowose, 2004). Political participation is the sine-qua-non of democracy, because democracy involves a commitment to equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacities (Anifowose, 2004). Thus, democracy appears to be inconceivable without political participation. Political participation therefore, describes the extent to which individual members of society share, take part or get involved in the life of that society. Consequently, the political power that women or any group of persons in a society have would be linked directly to the degree of their participation in the political process of that society (Lewu, 2005).

Political participation here entails various variables of participation but basically voting in elections and contesting elective public offices. This is quite different from representation. Representation basically entails elective/public offices held in relation to other representation. For instance, the increase of votes cast by women in elections from 10 to 40% of total votes cast in eight years signifies a form of increase in participation. But when the number of women holding public offices, when compared to men, is relatively low there is under-representation. That is, there may be an increase in participation of women and yet under-representation of women in politics; or there could be high representation of women in politics and yet low-level of participation, depending on the standards used to measure participation, however, the former is rather common (Koleilat, 2013).

The right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. The 1999 Nigerian

constitution by virtue of Section 40 states the following:

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

Section 42(1) of the same constitution states further that:

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

This further confirms that you can go to court to seek redress if as a woman your franchise is violated and that the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Section 77 of the Constitution also states:

- 1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every Senatorial district or Federal constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Chapter shall return a member who shall be directly elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives in such manner as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly.
- 2) Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to a legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election.



From the foregoing, it appears that there is nothing in the constitution, which excludes the participation of women in politics in Nigeria. Yet when it comes to actual practice, there is extensive discrimination. Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections held in the country. Men dominate most public offices till date. Female gubernatorial candidates have emerged but none has ever won and same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women yet they remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts.

However, despite these international instruments to encourage women involvement in political activities, the world still witnesses slow progress of women participation in political process (Lewu, 2005). Recent research suggests that women are less competitive and hierarchical than men (Kaminski and Yakura, 2008). Women all over the world are generally referred to as weaker sex. This gives the impression that women are powerless or not as strong as men. Due to this perception, political process are generally regarded as not for women. This impression, no doubt has affected women political participation. It is generally believed that women duties are believed to give birth, nurture and bring up of children, who will grow to become adults of tomorrow and that the kitchen is the right place for them. However, modern trends have shown and indicated that women after all are not as weak as may be perceived, through their conducts and beliefs are still controlled by socio-cultural factors.

Socio cultural factors are said to be the larger scales forces within societies and cultures that affect the thoughts, behaviours and feelings of individual members of those societies and cultures. Social and cultural factors are influences derived from the customs, traditions, perceptions

and beliefs of an individual's culture and can be a key determinant on a person behaviours. Cultural norms and social practices appear to have great influence on women's political participation. Ajayi (2007) defines socio-cultural as a socially created phenomenon that is influenced by the history, social experiences and material circumstances of the people. They are the elements that are related to the combination of social and cultural habits. These factors include aesthetics, patriarchy system, educational status, language, law, politics, religion, economic factor, values, attitudes, social organizations, reference groups, family, a person's role and status in their chosen society, technology and material culture (Odi, 2010). For the purpose of this research work, three sociocultural factors were considered namely patriarchy system, educational status, and religion as a correlate of women participation in political process.

Among the socio-cultural factors that affect women's political participation is patriarchy system (Bari, 2005). Patriarchy is characterized by male kinship, permanent marriage and paternal authority. Ajayi (2007) note the influence of patriarchy cultural structure on the social status of the female gender and they defined patriarchy as a set of social relations with a material base that enables men to dominate women. In other words, patriarchy describes a distribution of power and resources within the family in a manner that men maintain power and control of resources, and women are powerless and dependent on men (Alkali, 2007). Thus, men dominate the political game, and set the standards for evaluation. This negative factor entrench feelings of inferiority complex and other vices that perpetually put women at a disadvantaged position (Ajayi, 2007). Additionally, research finding shows gender role ideology which does not only create duality of femininity and masculinity, but also places them in



hierarchical fashion in which women are subordinated to men. Women also find it hard to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres (Bari, 2005).

Education is seen as an important factor that can help women to be more active in political process participation. The knowledge, qualities, skills, attitudes and capacities, which could be as a result of education, enables individuals to become conscious of their political environment. Active participation in a systematic process such as political process requires an appreciable level of education.

The debate surrounding the impact of different facets of Africa's triple heritage—traditional African religion, Islam and Christianity—on women's political participation has resurged. Religion forms part and parcel of people's everyday life and this is more obvious in societies with avowed religions. The influence of religion on women's participation in political process could be positive or negative, depending on several other factors. Some religions do not support women participation in political process or heading a particular position in the society. Such religion may hinder active participation of women in political process.

Considering the socio-cultural factors as a whole, patriarchy system, educational status, and religion are the likely correlates of women's participation in political process. What is less clear however is the degree to which these three factors uniquely influence women's participation in political process.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, there has been raging debates over the participation or desire of women in Nigerian politics. With regard to political participation, women have been grossly underrepresented. The last general

election revealed a 6 percent representation of women across all levels of elected offices across the country. Some argue that women are regarded as weaker sexes which have neglected their meaningful contributions and have placed them in a subordinate position to men in the nation's political system. The political enfranchisement of women in Nigeria politics seems to have maintained on the surface a level of gender equity politically, because it is assumed that constitutionally that there are no barriers to women's participation.

Nigerian women are contributing their quota to the development of the nation, but their potentials seem not to have been fully tapped due to low political participation. Disparities still exist between men and women in political participation in Nigeria. This may be as a result of lingering constraints including poor economic condition of Nigerian women, patriarchy system, unequal access to education, religious belief, lack of assertiveness among women among others. Level of education, religious belief and men's perception on the need for women's participation in development have been viewed as determining factors in women's participation in political process. Against the backdrop of this study, this research work examined the three socio-cultural factors (patriarchy system, educational status and religion) as correlates of women's participation in political process in Ondo State, Nigeria.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This study investigated socio-cultural factors as correlates of women participation in political process in Ondo State, Nigeria. Moreover, the study examined the relationship between the three socio-cultural factors (patriarchy system, educational status and religion) and women's participation in political process. The study also examined the relative contribution of each of the socio-cultural factors to the participation of women in political process in Ondo State.



### Research Hypotheses

Based on the aforementioned purpose of the study, the following hypotheses were generated

1. There is no significant relationship between patriarchy system and women's participation in political process.
2. There is no significant relationship between educational status and women's participation in political process.
3. There is no significant relationship between religion factor and women's participation in political process.
4. Socio - cultural factors will not significantly predict women's participation in political process.

### Research Design

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. Descriptive research was considered appropriate because it focuses on the observations and perception of the existing situation. Here it describes and interprets what is concerned with issues like patriarch system, educational status and religion without manipulation of variables.

### Population

The population consisted of all female workers in government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in Ondo State.

### Sample and sampling techniques

The sample for this study was 300 female respondents selected from 15 government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in Ondo State. Multistage sampling technique was used for this study. Stage one involved a simple random selection of 15 government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in Ondo State. In stage two; female workers were stratified into two categories (junior and senior) based on the existing administrative classification in each ministry, departments and agencies (MDAs). Stage three, twenty (20) respondents were randomly selected from the stratum of each ministry, departments and agencies (MDAs).

### Instrumentation

A questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged "Sociocultural factors and Women Participation in Political process Questionnaire (SFWPPPQ)" was used to collect relevant data for the study. It consisted of three sections namely Section A, B and C. Section A sought for bio-data of the respondents, section B consisted of 15 items to elicit information on socio - cultural factors that determines women participation in political process while section C consisted of 20 items on women participation in political process.

The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured by assessing the instruments through facial appraisal to ascertain their claims. The instrument was presented to experts of Tests, Measurement and Evaluation. In so doing, these professionals assisted to assess both the face validity of the questionnaire.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through the test-retest method. A trial test was carried out in two ministry, departments and agencies (MDAs) outside the sampled area. The instrument was administered on ten respondents from each ministry, departments and agencies (MDAs). The data collected on the two tests was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics which yielded a co-efficient of 0.79

### Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to the administration of the instrument, the researcher sought the approval and assistance of all those needed to carry out the research work such as the head of each of the ministry, departments and agencies (MDAs). A total of 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 20 respondents in each of the ministry, departments and agencies (MDAs) covered by the study. The four hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results



**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between patriarchy system and women’s participation in political process.

**Table 1:** The relationship between patriarchy system and women’s participation in political process

Variables	N	Mean	Stan . Dev.	r-cal	r-tab	Remark
Patriarchy System	30	15.0	1.09			
Women’s participation in political process	30	11.1	1.01	0.79	0.19	Significant

\*P<0.05

Table 1 shows that r-cal (0.791) is greater than r-table (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between patriarchy system and women’s attitude towards participation in political process. The relationship between patriarchy system and women’s participation in political process was positive and high.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between educational status and women’s participation in political process.

**Table 2:** The relationship between educational status and women’s participation in political process

Variables	N	Mean	Stan . Dev.	r-cal	r-tab	Remark
Educational Status	30	13.	1.1			
Women’s participation in political process	30	11.	1.0	0.46	0.1	Significant

\*P<0.05

Table 2 shows that r-cal (0.466) is greater than r-table (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. The null

**Table 4:** Regression Analysis showing the Relationship between women’s participation in political process and the sociocultural factors

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t-Stat.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F
	(Beta)	Std Error	(Beta)	Std Error				
Patriarchy System	.680	.056	.502	.056	9.402	0.799	0.638	96.47
Educational Status	.359	.051	.287	.051	4.181			
Religion	.141	.04	.092	.04	2.51			

hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between educational status and women’s participation in political process. The relationship between educational status and women’s participation in political process was positive and moderate.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between religion factor and women’s participation in political process.

**Table 3:** The relationship between religion factor and women’s participation in political process

Variables	N	Mean	Stan . Dev.	r-cal	r-tab	Remark
Religion factor	30	11.88	1.13			
Women’s participation in political process	30	11.19	1.01	0.317	0.195	Significant

\*P<0.05

Table 3 shows that r-cal (0.317) is greater than r-table (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between religion factor and women’s participation in political process. The relationship between religion factor and women’s participation in political process was positive but however low.

**Hypothesis 4:** Socio - cultural factors will not significantly predict women’s participation in political process.



factor		8	1
Constant	.219	.05	4.182
		2	

Table 4 indicates that the three predictors accounted for 63.8 percent of the socio-cultural variables towards women participation in political process ( $R^2 = 0.638$ ),  $F(2,297) = 96.47$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Patriarchy system ( $\beta = 0.502$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ), Educational status ( $\beta = 0.287$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ), and Religion factor ( $\beta = 0.092$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ) demonstrated significant effects on women's attitude towards participation in political process.

The coefficients of the model indicate that the three regressors can be ranked from best to least in order to quantify their influence on the dependent variable starting with Patriarchy system (0.502), Educational status (0.287), and Religion factor (0.092). The resulting regression equation is given as:

$$Y = 0.219 + 0.680X_1 + 0.359X_2 + 0.141X_3$$

where:

$$\begin{aligned} X_1 &= \text{Patriarchy System} \\ X_2 &= \text{Educational Status} \\ X_3 &= \text{Religion factor} \end{aligned}$$

### Discussion

The study showed a significant relationship between patriarchy system and women's participation in political process. The finding is consistent with the submissions of Kaminski and Yakura (2008), Ajayi (2007), Lewu (2005) and Bari (2005) who all concluded that patriarchy system influence women's participation in political process. The study also revealed a significant relationship between educational status and women's participation in political process.

The study further revealed a significant relationship between religion factor and women's participation in political process. This is in line with Anifowose (2004) who observed that religion has a very strong relationship with women participation in political process. However, some religion doctrines strictly bar women from some political

endeavour that can facilitate their political ambitions. The implication of this finding is that if religious institutions do not discourage political participation, women's participation in political process might increase as some religious doctrines militate against the active participation of women in political process.

Lastly, the study revealed that among the three sociocultural factors, patriarchy system has the highest significant strength in predicting women's participation in political process while religion factor has the least significant strength in predicting women's participation in political process.

### Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that patriarchy system, educational status and religion factor are related to women's participation in political process. Patriarch system is the best predictor while religion factor is the least predictor of women participation in trade political process.

### Recommendations

Based on the following findings, it is hereby recommended that:

1. There should be strict implementation of the Acts and Law in the country, reserving certain percentage (35%) of political offices for women.
2. There should be a reformation of religious institutions of the states to avoid discrimination against women's involvement in public life.
3. Education of women is a tool to give women exposure and confidence to compete with men. Great importance should therefore be placed on women education.



4. Any form of intimidation, harassment or act of violence against any woman venturing into politics must be severely punished, to encourage more women to participate in the political process.

#### References

- Agbalajobi, D.T. (2012). Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 4(2), 075-082,
- Ajayi, K. (2007). Gender Self-Endangering: The Sexist Issue in Nigerian Politics. *Journal of Social Science*, 14(2), 137-147.
- Alkali, R. (2007). Nigeria: *The Challenges Women Face in Politics*. Retrieved on December 18, 2017 from the website ([www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org))
- Anifowose, R. (2004). Women Political Participation in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects. In Akinboye (ed) *Paradox of Gender Equality in Nigerian Politics*. Lagos: Concept Publications
- Bari, F. (2005) *Women's trade unionism and Political Participation: Issues and Challenges*. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) EGM/WPD-EE/2005/EP.12
- Kaminski, M. and Yakura, E.K. (2008). Women's Union Leadership: Closing the Gender Gap. *The Journal of Labour and Society*, 11, 459-475.
- Koleilat, L. (2013). Women Political Participation, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore, available at, <http://sc6214.wetpaint.com>, accessed on 8 May 2017.
- Lewu, M. A. Y. (2005). Women in Nigerian Politics. In Hassan A. Saliu (ed) *Nigeria Under Democratic Rule (1999 - 2003)*. Ibadan: University Press plc.
- Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report (2008). The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report Submitted to the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women held at the UN Plaza New York.
- Odi, M. (2010). *The Power of Women's Collective Action*. Lagos: Muhamasaid Press.