

Gender Discrimination in Politics: An Assessment of Women Participation in the 2019 General Elections in Gombe State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigerian women are marginalized in the electoral process despite the numerical size they occupy in Nigeria's population. This disposition is aided by religious, cultural, biological and even cognitive dynamics. This study is an assessment of women participation in politics with reference to the 2019 general elections in Gombe State with the aim of examining the extent of voter turnout among women and the rate at which women obtain appointment to political offices after the 2019 general elections in Gombe State. The study made use of primary data which was obtained through questionnaire and personal interviews, and secondary data such as existing published books, journals, online newspapers. Inequality theory was employed in the course of the study. Findings of the study shows that women participation in the 2019 general elections in Gombe State was not encouraging as it was characterized by inequality and gross discriminations. It is recommended that the government needs to improve women's participation in electoral competitions at all levels by empowering them with quality education, and laws that will devote certain percentage of slots to women in the political space, employment opportunity, and through conscious efforts in encouraging women's participation in politics.

Keywords: Women, inequality, participation, election, assessment.

Introduction

The world's population has women to be way over a half of it, and women contribute in vital ways to societal development in general (Abiola & Lanre, 2003). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, (2015), the women in Nigeria constitute about half of the total population and about 51 per cent of women are involved in voting processes during elections. In spite of this, women are underrepresented. Women's position in most societies has been constraint to five key roles including motherhood, producers, home-managers, community organizers and socio-cultural and political activists. Women as political activists were brought about by the continuous discrimination meted on them over the time.

Women have suffered numerous kinds of gender inequality, discrimination, and exclusion, both socially and politically. There are series of movements and agitations for women to have equal recognition and treatment as men. These agitations are the resultant effect of the age long discriminations suffered by women folk. As it is in the labour market so also it is in politics (National Center for Women Development, 2016).

From 1999 till date for instance, Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor though there are a handful of states with female deputy governors. Studies have been conducted on issue of gender inequality as well as women's participation in politics in Gombe state, Nigeria, and across the globe. According to Solomon, (2015), until 2003 when the former Governor Mohammed Danjuma Goje appointed some female commissioners and another female legislator elected to the State House of Assembly women were not involved in governance. In 2007, one additional female was elected and the number of female legislators then increased to two. Governor Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo tenure witnessed a great improvement in women inclusiveness participation. The number of female appointments into executive offices increased to five, which was unprecedented. While there was a female elected to the National Assembly, no female got the State Assembly seat at the time. Dominic, Matthew, and Akunna, (2014) believe that women have been grossly dominated and discriminated against and this has hampered development as there cannot be reasonable development where women are relegated to the background and their potentials underutilized, and this is the situation across the globe.

In the 2019 general elections however, many women have risen to the challenges of the time. Many women have come to assume leadership positions in economy and politics. This is a positive step in the right direction as it will go a long way in breaking the jinx of gender inequality and male chauvinism in Nigeria society. The 2019 general elections presented women

with opportunities to navigate the way to power. The offer of free tickets to female party members especially by the All Progressive Congress (APC) which was also replicated by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) gave women folk a golden opportunity for participation at various levels. This action by the two major political parties was in tune with and further effort in actualizing the 35% Affirmative Action agenda of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan before the 2011 general elections.

There is no doubt that women in Gombe state face discrimination politically, which results in their low involvement in electoral completion (Solomon, 2015). However, there appears to be a gap in how this trend of low participation affects women's advancement in Gombe State. This work therefore examined the participation of women in politics with regards to voting, contesting political offices, and party membership using the 2019 general elections in order to bridge this gap. The study assessed women's participation in politics in connection with those factors that are responsible for the low political participation in elective and appointive positions in Gombe state.

Methodology

This study used both primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary sources include original data collected from respondents and informants who are residents in the study area through interview and questionnaire. Interview was conducted on respondents in the area of study including female politicians, political office holders, Political Party officials, and women groups in each Senatorial District, Local Government Areas and Wards. The questionnaires comprised of both open and closed ended questions in line with the objectives and assumptions of the study. A five-point Likert scale was used for closed ended questions. The obtained data was coded, discussed and interpreted. Published books, internet materials, journals and magazines formed the secondary source for the study.

According to the NBS (2019), Gombe state has a total estimate of 3.3 million people and eleven LGAs across three Senatorial Districts. The LGAs to be surveyed are Gombe LGA from Gombe North Senatorial District, with an estimated population of 529,283; Akko LGA from Gombe Central Senatorial District, with an estimated population of 337,853; Kaltungo LGA from Gombe South Senatorial District with an estimated population of 149,805. Following the Morgan table for determining Sample, the three LGAs were served with a total of 384 questionnaires across all the wards in the three LGAs from the three Senatorial Districts. The Krejcie and Morgan Table states that, from a population within the range of 100,000 to 1,000,000 a

researcher requires feedback from just 384 persons (Chanuan, Kajohnsak, & Nittaya, 2021).

This study adopted a random sampling technique. The random sampling is one of the methods of collecting data from a population and it is one in which each member of the subset has equal opportunity to be chosen as a part of the sampling process. This technique is adopted first for its simplicity, and it is unbiased in its process of selection (Thomas, 2020). Thus, a total of 384 respondents were randomly selected from three (3) Wards, one from each of Akko, Gombe and Kaltungo Local Government Areas in Gombe Central, North and South Senatorial Districts of Gombe State respectively. Interviews were also conducted randomly in these three Wards, with the help of a research assistant who assisted in the interpretation and recording of conversation.

The data collected through questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative method of data analysis. Meanwhile, numerical data, charts, and tables are properly presented and analyzed. Also, the obtained data through interviews were interpreted in the explanation of the tables and bar charts in triangulation method.

Theoretical Framework

The Inequality Theory:

Inequality is a situation of unfair distribution of resources or unequal treatment among people of different race, color, gender, and culture, etc. A state of not being equal, in right, status, and opportunities is also termed inequality. It's a state of unequal treatment (Ferreira, Vega, Paes de Barros, & Chanduvi, 2009).

Many authors and proponents have tried to explain inequality from different perspectives and this effort has given rise to different forms of inequality. For instance, development theory is concerned with inequalities in the living standards especially as regards inequalities in nutrition, incomes or wealth, and education, occupation, legal and social rights (Irwin, 1999). There is also the social inequality which is a situation of uneven distribution of resources in the society, especially when it follows a particular normal way in which people are socially defined in specific patterns. This type engenders discriminations with gender which make female receive different treatment from male and most cases, unfair treatments. Examples of segregation in this regards include social status, difference in income, gender inequality, and health. The fact that social inequality involves unequal distribution of wealth and income, links it with development or economic inequality and social inequality theory has two main views. While one view aligns with the

functionalist theory, the other view aligns with the conflict theory (Irwin, 1999).

The two main proponents of inequality theory are Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Max Weber (1864-1920). Although Max Weber believed inequality is more complex and deeper than what Karl Marx described. While Marx conceives inequality and poverty as integral parts of the capitalist mode of production, as against Weber's diverse views of party, status, and class (<http://iupress.istanbul.edu>). Meanwhile, the main assumption of the inequality theory is the biological difference between male and female which cannot be escaped, among color, race, class, tradition and culture, whether developed or underdeveloped (Kemal, 2018).

Linsey (2011) established a difference between sex and gender by saying sex is the biological difference between male and female while gender is the making of the societal creation by structuring sexes using color, race, and political, socio-economic, cultural and traditional background respectively. It is important to note however that there are sharp variations among cultural and traditional practices from one place to another and are also dynamic as there are changes from time to time and generation to generation. Going by these differences, many countries, especially the Western world, have made efforts to set aside some laws while amend others to remove any form of existing differences, segregations, and discriminations, and promote equality between male and female, to enhance development. Regardless of this gesture however, the distinction is still there and would persist on as nature cannot be changed in this regard even with innumerable number of sex and gender analysis neither can any number of theorist thinking be able to analyze and explain biological difference.

Three contents of biological differences have been given much attention by the inequality schools of thought. These include susceptibility towards violence, physical capacity, and female reproduction. These three are the most exploited contents of biological differences to relegate women to the background. Only in a handful of societies would women occupy higher positions of authority than men across the globe as asserted by the Anthropologists. Also, reproduction everywhere is done by women that submit themselves to men, said some feminist theorists. Others have said that men set rules that put them at advantage over the women since they are physically dominant in whatever they are involved in. The men's aggressive propensity has put them at a dominant position which creates inequality between male and female. These three inputted differences have been built up in the norms and values of most societies and this has thrown a level playing ground between male and female to a total oblivion (Jacobs, 1996).

Connecting inequality theory to tradition has helped in the understanding that there still exists today a wide gender gap and low women empowerment in traditional Nigeria societies. Ideas that are traditionally established are more acceptable to and honored by the people as well as teaching their children. Meanwhile, where did gender traditions through which women are made subordinates to men everywhere, and are segregated and discriminated against, originate from? In my opinion, men have taken advantage of some natural attributes embedded in them, built norms and values around those natural attributes to suppress the women. Nonetheless, the emergence of feminist theorists, and change in time, arguments surrounding biological differences for gender inequality fades away gradually as it is becoming unpopular among civilized people and nations (Curtis, 1986).

Technological advancement has brought about men and women being able to perform same job functions without discrimination. In this regard, men and women can have equal opportunity to undergo trainings that would equip them with the required skills to operate these machines. This is gradually creating gender balance in work places and in the job market. Sadly enough, most traditional African societies have not attained this level of technological advancement. This is why biological explanation of the origin of inequality in gender is still very visible and valid in Nigeria (Anifowose, 2004). Inequality theory is therefore relevant to this study with respect to the persistent gender inequality in the political space in Gombe state and the discrimination against women regarding political participation in the state.

Background Of The Study Area

Gombe state is in the Northeastern part of Nigeria with its capital in Gombe. Gombe state was created on October 1st, 1996, by the then Military Government of General Sani Abacha. Gombe state like every other state in Nigeria has a nick name and it is called “Jewel in the Savannah”. The state has border with other five Northeastern states of Bauchi, Adamawa, Taraba, Yobe and Borno. Gombe State has savannah grassland as its vegetation, and it spreads within an area of 20,265 square kilometers. The state has two major climatic conditions: the raining and the dry seasons. It rains mostly from May to October and mostly dry from November to April, with a spasmodic harmattan, mostly between December and February annually. With eleven (11) Local Government Areas and three (3) Senatorial Districts, the State has ethnic group composition, both indigenes and non-indigenes alike, just like other states of the federation (Sule, 2019). The accommodating, and hospitable nature of Gombe state people is fascinating, with virtually all tribes of Nigeria with other foreigners living and working or doing businesses

in Gombe state.

Gombe State is popular for good academic system, with both Federal and State governments owned institutions of higher learning well spread across the state. The state is blessed with many natural resources, large bodies of water and versed area of arable land for farming. The presence of large bodies of water also gives room for irrigation farming during the dry season, which allows for continuous growth of crops and vegetables, and also keeps the people around the water engaged throughout the year. Cattle rearing and animal husbandry are another important arm of Gombe state agricultural system. These are done on a large scale predominantly by the Fulani ethnic nationality under the umbrella body of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (Awogbade, 1987).

Gombe state people are politically informed. The voting pattern is one that is not so common in most Nigerian states. Gombe State having been ruled by The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for a period of sixteen (16) consecutive years from 2003 to 2019 was previously known as a PDP dominated State. As it is common with the Nigerian type of politics, the elections were and still are usually dominated with thuggery, intimidation, and violence.

Gombe North Senatorial District (comprising Dukku, Funakaye, Gombe, Kwami, and Nafada LGAs) and Gombe Central Senatorial District (comprising Akko and Yamaltu/Debba LGAs) have demonstrated no loyalty to any particular political party since the return to democracy in 1999. They moved from voting for All Peoples Party APP (which later became ANPP) a former ruling party in the state, to People Democratic Party PDP, and later followed CPC (which co-formed the current ruling APC). These two Senatorial Districts have both settled for the All Progressives Congress APC, the current ruling party in the state. Gombe South Senatorial District (which comprises Balanga, Biliri, Kaltungo, and Shongom LGAs) has on the other hand shown a long time loyalty to the PDP by delivering elective seats to it since 1999 (Sule, 2014, 2019). There is also a notable gender sensitivity in political participation and voting pattern in the state as men tend occupy the political space, to be politically active, contest for political offices in Gombe North and Central Senatorial Districts while the Southern Senatorial District has less gender sensitive in political participation and voting, with women being more politically active with regards to contesting for elective positions than the other two Senatorial Districts (INEC, 2019).



Figure-1. Map of Gombe State showing the three Senatorial Districts, the eleven LGAs and the state capital. Source: Google map 2023

Women Political Struggle: Gombe State in Perspective

Women political struggle is universal and dated back to many decades. There are, however, local, and regional differences and peculiarities when it comes to the level of women political participation and involvement in governance. The low level of women's participation in politics and governance has elongated for too long. The Nigerian government has embraced and adopted the international agreements and instituted national policies to improve women's representation but has done so little to implement concrete measures. The Nigerian Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and other pro women movements through their different empowerment and public enlightenment programmes have been able to effect little changes over the years (Solomon, 2015).

In Gombe state, Northeast Nigeria, no woman was involved in the governance of the state whether appointed or elected during the tenure of Abubakar Habu Hashdu, from 1999 to 2003 despite the women's voting strength and moral support. Women began to come to the limelight when the former Governor Mohammed Danjuma Goje appointed two (2) female

commissioners in his cabinet with one woman also elected to the state legislature, and this increased to two in 2007. The state experienced a dramatic and unprecedented improvement in female executive appointive position when the succeeding government of Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo appointed five (5) female cabinet members, which is the highest in the history of the state executive council. This time one woman was the seat to the National Assembly but none to the State Assembly. This shows that there is still a challenge in the elective sphere. Meanwhile, the incumbent Governor Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya had three (3) women on his list of cabinet members when inaugurating his executive council in 2019 (Daily Trust, 2019). Only one (1) woman made it to the House of Representatives (INEC, 2019). It is also worth noting that out of all the sixty (60) candidates that registered with INEC in that election, only three (3) were female making a total of 5 percent (The Politico, 2019).

The 2019 Nigerian Senate election in Gombe State held on February 23, 2019, had three (3) male winners to the three Senatorial seats in the state. Bulus Kilawang Amos from Gombe South, Mohammed Danjuma Goje from Gombe Central and Sa'idu Ahmed Alkali from Gombe North all won on the platform of All Progressives Congress (INEC 2019). No single woman made it to the Senate seat from Gombe State. As a matter of fact, out of the total forty-five (45) candidates that registered with INEC for the Senatorial election, only six (6) candidates representing 13.3 percent were women while thirty-nine (39) were men (The Politico, 2019).

A total of twelve (12) candidates contested in the election in Gombe South. APC candidate Bulus Kilawang Amos won the election, defeating PDP candidate, Binta Bello and nine (9) other contestants. From Gombe Central, a total of fourteen (14) candidates contested in the election. Mohammed Danjuma Goje of the APC won the election, defeating Abubakar Nono of the PDP and eleven (11) other party candidates. Nineteen (19) candidates took part in the election from Gombe North Senatorial District. The APC candidate Sa'idu Ahmed Alkali won the election defeating the PDP candidate and former Gombe Governor, Ibrahim Dankwambo and 16 other party candidates. No woman made it to the Senate just as no woman won the state House of Assembly seat (INEC, 2019).

The Governorship contest in the 2019 election was not in any way better if not even worse off. Ten (10) male candidates with no single female contested in the primaries under the APC. The PDP on the other hand had just two candidates and both were also male. (INEC, 2019). It is worth noting that out of the thirty-two (32) candidates that registered with INEC for the Governorship seat in Gombe State, only one was a woman (The Politico, 2019).

Meanwhile, all the challenges have not been without struggles both on the part of individual and groups to ensure the situation does not remain the same. For instance, the Gombe State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs. Naomi JJ Awak, made a call for equal opportunities for both men and women. According to her, discussion on gender and equal treatment for men and women is an issue of sustainable development and not of right any longer and governments at all levels should make this as an agenda in order to bring sustainable development to their people (The Punch, 2022). She had at one point and another occasion in 2021 also led women in Gombe state to demand for an impartial and gender sensitive Federal Constitution. Mrs. Awak demanded that there was need for an all-inclusive constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that captures everybody regardless of the gender (VON, 2021).

Many Advocacy groups such as The Nigerian Women Charter of Demand was drafted in 2014 by the combined efforts of the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) and the Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF), are also pushing for more decisive government **action**. Although, this was not a Gombe-based advocacy but by virtue of being part of Nigeria, this noble call also has a direct bearing on Gombe State and her women (The Politico, 2019).

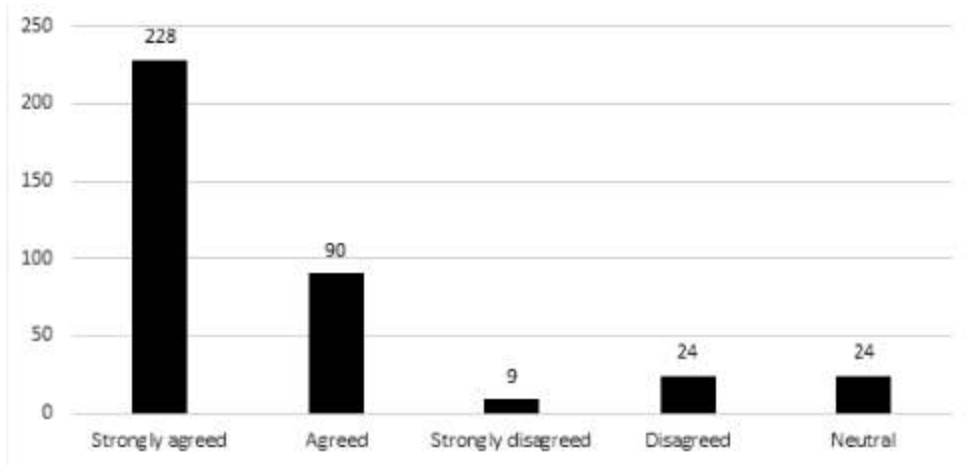
Assessment of Women Participation in the 2019 General Elections in Gombe State

The joy and feelings of being a part of a game sometimes surpasses that of winning. In any game, one needs to be accorded a chance to participate before such a person can either win or lose. The ideal of democracy is for everyone that is qualified, irrespective of gender to participate without any form of discrimination. In Gombe State however, many factors limit the participation of women in politics, ranging from socio-cultural, socio-economics, biological and the likes.

It is therefore salient to ask the following questions:

What is the extent of voter turnout among women in Gombe state in the 2019 General elections? What is the level of participation by women in elective positions in the 2019 General elections in Gombe State? At what rate do women obtain appointment to political offices after the 2019 General elections in Gombe State? The findings to these questions would place this paper in the heart of assessment of women participation in the 2019 general elections in Gombe State. The following assessments of women political participation are conducted.

Figure 2: Women participation in elective positions in 2019 general election was perceived low



Source: field work 2022

The assessment of women participation in politics in 2019 general election shows that 228 representing 60.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the participation of women in elective positions was very low. 90 respondents representing 24 percent of the respondents agreed that women participation was very low, and 2.4 percent strongly disagreed, while 6.4 percent disagreed to the assertion. Meanwhile, 6.4 percent were neutral.

Mrs. Loveth Ibrahim, an informant and resident of Gombe LGA of Gombe state has this to say:

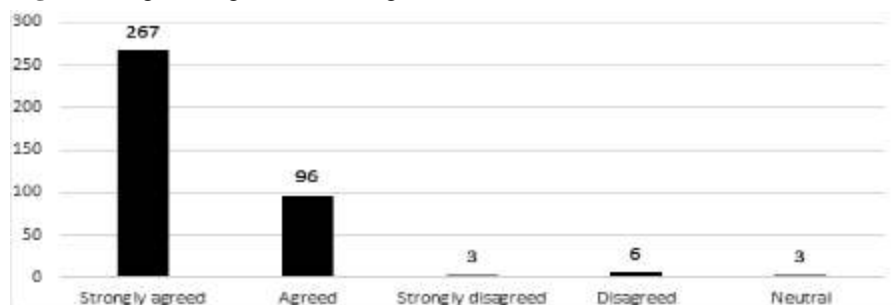
Marginalization against women is a general thing in Nigeria but it is worst in the North when you compare with the southern part of the country. Truth be told, our Governor is trying when it comes to appointment of women into political offices compared with other part of the North but he needs to do better. He is currently doing below his immediate predecessor, and we are supposed to rather go higher. Women can also be elected as a Governor or deputy. We need more women in the state and national assembly too. As you may know, no single

woman in Gombe state House of Assembly currently, and only one in House of Representative, none in the Senate (November, 2022).

Mr. Sunday Pampammi, a politician and resident of Tumfure in Akko LGA of Gombe State said:

It is true that participation of women in elective position was very low in 2019. It has always been that way and except the political parties do something to correct it, it would continue to be like that. It will be difficult for women to compete with the men in this our current type of politics. Politics require much money and other resources and men have these resources more than the women. Another reason political parties need to help and support the women is the area of fielding stronger candidates against the oppositions. If for instance party “A” fields a male candidate, it takes much more political strength for party “B” to present a female candidate and win. The calculations for political parties generally is how to win. This is why women get more appointments than they get elected but both put together are still far below even 20% (November, 2022).

Figure 3: High voting turnout among women in 2019 General Elections.

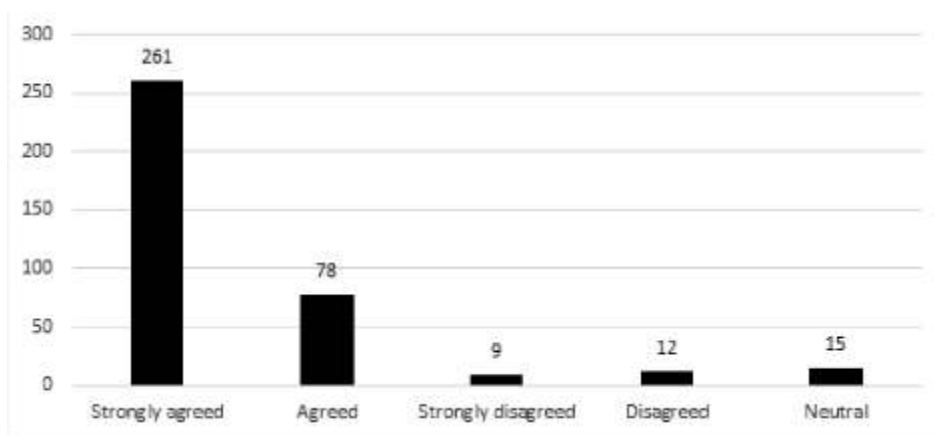


Source: field work 2022

The table shows that 267 respondents representing 71.2 percent strongly agreed that there was high voter turnout among women in the 2019 general elections. While 25.6 percent agreed to this assertion, only a meager 0.8 percent strongly disagreed with it, while 1.6 percent disagreed. Another 0.8 percent however were neutral on the issue. Mr. Bulus Yohana, an interview informant and a resident of Awak Ward in Kaltungo, LGA of Gombe state said:

Women are only seen as relevant when it comes to voting as they wooed them in their large number during elections to come and vote while the men are the beneficiaries. That was the case in the 2019 general elections in Gombe state (November, 2022).

Figure 4: Religion is a barrier to women political participation in Gombe State.



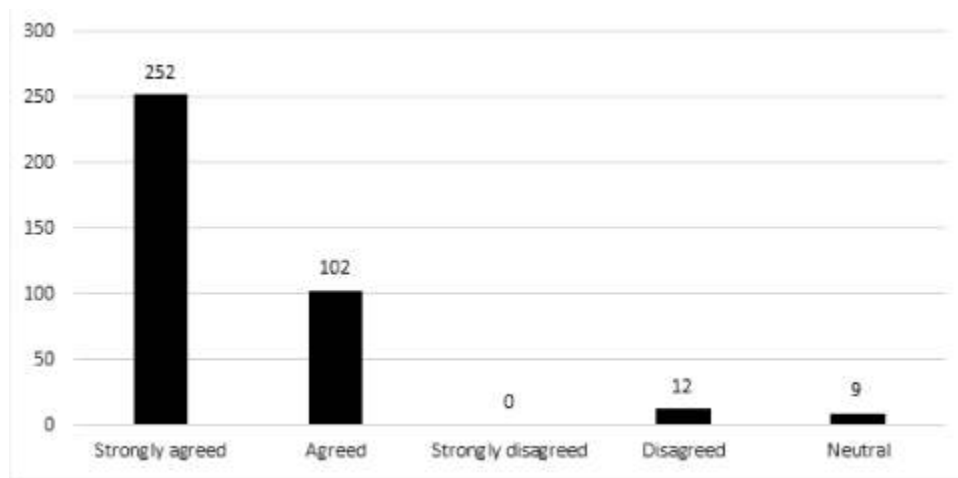
Source: field work 2022

It is quite obvious from the table that religion plays a critical role on women political participation in Gombe State. This role is however on the negative side. Only 21 respondents representing 5.6percent actually disagreed with the fact that religion places a barrier on women political participation in Gombe State. While 15 respondents, that is, 4 percent of the total respondents remain neutral on the statement, 339 respondents representing 90.4 percent believe that religion is a barrier to women political participation in Gombe State. The position of the interviewees is that women especially of the Muslim faith are not allowed to participate in elective position and only very few are available for appointive positions and their

participation is limited to voting in elections.

It is also revealed that the sociocultural dynamics of the Gombe people has impact on women political participation and electoral competition in 2019 general elections.

Figure 5: The impact of culture on women's political participation in Gombe State is obvious.



Source: field work 2022

From the table, 252 respondents representing 67.2 percent strongly agreed and another 102 respondents representing 27.2 percent agreed that there is a great impact of culture on women political participation in Gombe State. 12 respondents representing 3.2 percent however disagreed while 9 respondents representing 2.4 percent were neutral on the issue. It is crystal clear from the table that culture has a great impact on women's political participation. Anas Muhammad Jibrin, a resident of Gombe LGA and one of the interview informants asserted that:

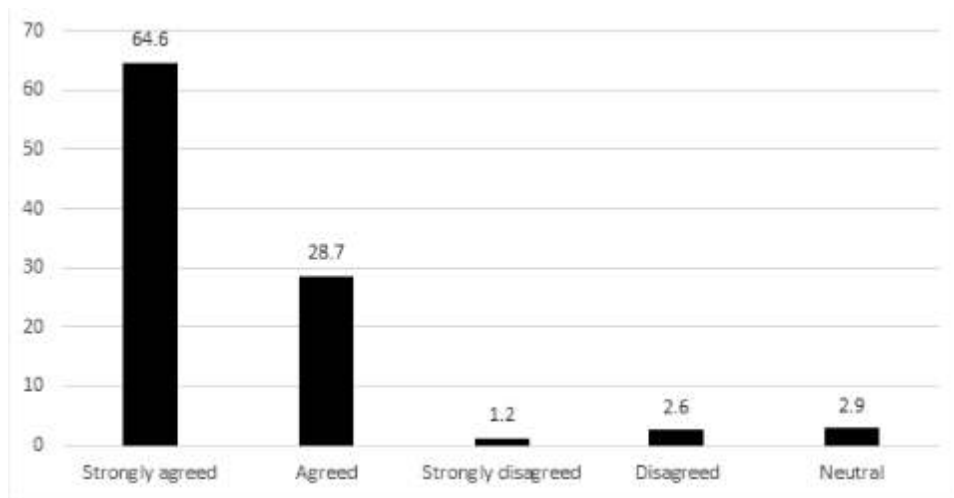
Culture is a way of life of a people and as far as Northern Nigeria is concerned, the tenets of Islam is the way of life of the majority of the people and has a great influence on the women, their involvement, and their behavior in the society. It affects them in selection for appointive positions as well as participation in contest for

elective positions. Women early marriage and the full house wife system are central to this. Their political participation is mostly seen and felt in voting during elections (November, 2022).

Hajia Farida Usman Aliyu in her own opinion said in Tunfure a Ward in Akko LGA of Gombe state said:

Africa has a culture that makes women to bow to the authority of men generally and this makes the women do only what they are permitted to do. This is not exception in Gombe. The cultural norms affect family life, politics and every aspect of the society (November, 2022).

Figure 6: Economic power lies in the hands of men hence the inequality in the political sphere in Gombe State.



Source: field work 2022

As we can see from the table, 223 respondents representing 64.6 percent strongly agreed that economic men are in charge of economic power in the state. Another 99 respondents representing 28.7 also agreed to the assertion. While 1.2 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, another 2.6 percent of the respondents have also disagreed. Meanwhile, 10

respondents representing 2.9 percent were neutral on the issue. The table shows that men holds the economic power and therefore use it to gain political power, and to hold on to it at the expense of the female gender. An informant, Alhaji Babangida Arzika a resident of Pantami clearly stated that:

Politics is very expensive in Nigeria and one needs a lot of money to do a lot of things. Our women don't have the kind of money required to contest for an elective position to be sincere. The few women that are contesting are doing so either at the mercy of their husband or a godfather. Majority of women in Gombe state are not working and the few that are working are not into high salary paying jobs. For anyone to agree to sponsor another it requires a lot of calculations. No one would want to gamble with so much money. Hence, there political sponsors prefer to support men who have money to contribute and who also stand a better chance to win (November, 2022).

He went further to say:

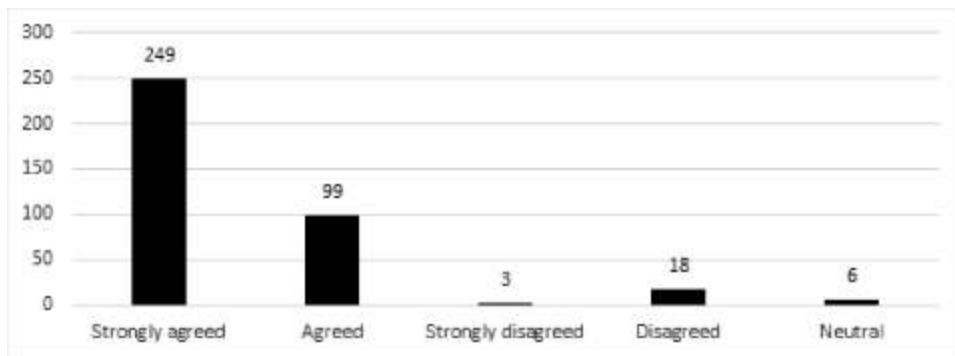
This same reason affect the women when it comes to appointive positions as most appointment are based on contributions by individuals. The few women appointed into political offices are more of candidates of some political bigwigs (November, 2022).

Another informant, Abdullahi Rufai Ahmad, also a resident of Pantami Ward in Gombe LGA of Gombe State said

Financial resources and strength is a summary of all other factors or the result the combination of these other factors produce. For instance, you cannot put a woman indoor and also expect her to make money, she needs to

go out and work for money before she can make money. So lack of money to compete favourably is still traceable to religious and sociol-cultural factors (November, 2022).

Figure 7: Violence, thuggery, intimidation, and unfavorable meeting schedules are also strong factors working against women in Gombe State politics.



Source: field work 2022

From the table. 66.4 percent of the respondents strongly agreed while 26.4 percent agreed that violence, thuggery, intimidation, and unfavorable meeting schedules are strong factors working against women in Gombe State politics. Meanwhile, 0.8 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed and 4.8 percent disagreed with the assertion. 1.6 percent however did not indicate their support for or disagreement with the statement.

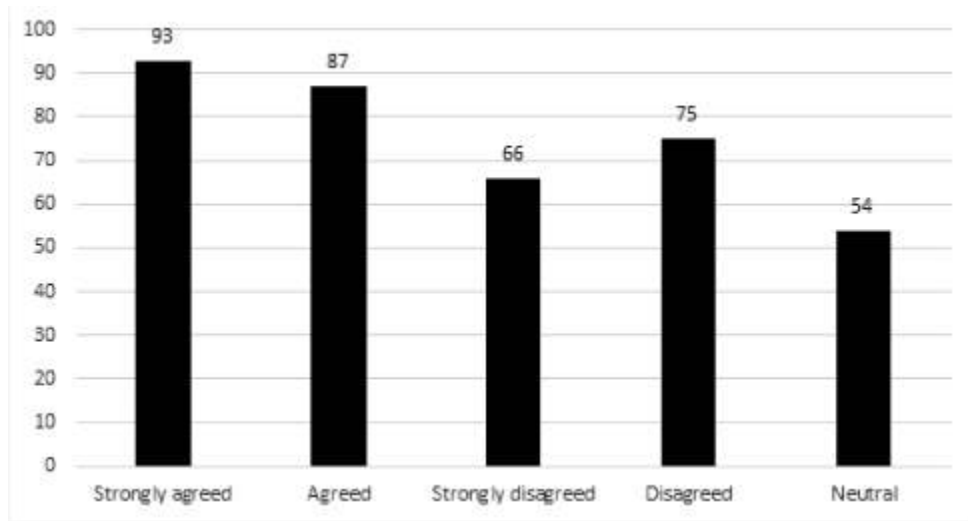
It is clear from the tables that violence, thuggery, intimidation, and unfavorable meeting schedules are also strong factors working against women in Gombe State politics. This is as affirmed by respondent and interviewees across the three Senatorial District of Gombe State. This can be seen clearly on the above table. The interview conducted shows that women by nature cannot stand the fear and intimidation resulting from the acts of violence by thugs and overzealous supporters of politicians. This in their view scares women away from contesting or even play certain active roles in politics aside just to cast their votes which is in most cases favor men.

Mrs. Binta Godiya Samuel who lives in Kaltungo LGA of Gombe state has this to say:

The kind of politics played in Nigeria is not meant for women. The politicians

are too desperate and they would do anything to get what they want. Every election period is categorized with thuggery, violence, and intimidation. There was a time when a group of armed thugs known as the Kalare Boys were used by politicians in Gombe state to intimidate oppositions. How many women can stand this? Women by nature can neither stand violence as opposition nor support a violent act against opposition and so, they are automatically out of the game. (November, 2022).

Figure 9 Government is taking measures to improve the poor political participation by women in Gombe State.



Source: field work 2022

The table shows that the government is actually taking measures to improve women's political participation but this may have fallen short of the people's desire and/or expectations. On the table, 180 respondents representing 48 percent of the total respondents both strongly agreed and agreed to the fact that government is taking measures to make things better as regards women's political participation in Gombe. However, 141 respondents representing 37.6 percent of the respondents have both strongly disagreed

and disagreed with the fact. Meanwhile, 54 respondents representing 14.4 percent were undecided.

The Gombe state Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya has pledged more empowerment to the women by way of increasing inclusiveness in political appointment and showcasing them for elective positions. In an event in Abuja where the Governor was given an award as the 'Most Women Friendly Governor of the Year', during the 7th Henna Ball and Awards Night 2022 on 26th November, 2022 which was attended by dignitaries from the Northern part of Nigeria, Alhaji Yahaya said that women are so important to the state and by extension, Nigeria, and they should therefore be accorded necessary supports and be pushed for success. (This Day Live, 2022). Mal. Sagiru Iliyasu, one of the interview informants who resides in Pantami said:

The government is trying in the area of carrying the women along. For example, the Governor, Alhaji Inuwa Yahaya is supporting women programmes and he also gives some of them political appointments. The women are also employed into state ministries and many of them enjoy empowerment programmes of the government. This is why this government enjoys the supports of the women. In my own view, this is a good encouragement for the women from the government (November, 2022).

Summary

From the results obtained in the research work, it was found that women face lots of obstacles that hinder their participation in politics. Apart from the fact that majority of men do not allow their spouses to participate in politics, which is evident from the findings. The study also revealed that because of the domineering attitude of the men in the field of politics, a little chance has been presented to the women to be actively involved in the political arena of Gombe state. Furthermore, the findings show that economic disadvantage played a key role in the poor performance of women in the 2019 general elections in Gombe state. The low level of economic empowerment among women and the requirement for huge spending for party funding, purchase of forms, campaign and electioneering, it is a clear indication that there is a correlation between low participation of women in politics and economic

disadvantage in the study area.

Conclusion

Women are yet to acknowledge the existing gender competition in the contemporary world. The inability of women to realise this have resulted to certain outcomes such as perceiving politics as a dirty game, name calling of female politicians as deviant, and voting overwhelmingly for men contestants rather than women in elections. The poor level of women consciousness regarding gender and class struggle with men is a product of two deficiencies, majority of Gombe state women are educationally disadvantaged. As much as 61% of the women population have not attended formal school (Ojuolape, 2000). Gombe state has consistently not abided by the internationally agreed 35% affirmative actions (1985 Nairobi and 1995 Beijing United Nation Declarations and the 1999 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women) on gender equality in the political process.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this research on the basis of the findings are as follows:

To begin with, enactment of legal framework by the National Assembly that will make it mandatory for governments at all levels to ensure 40% minimum women representation in all public affairs. Such gender sensitive legislation will also alter the prevailing discriminatory attitude by men, and therefore guarantee women's political future as well as increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. In order to ensure active participation of women in politics, Government and political parties should increase the level of awareness of women by organising seminars, workshops not only in the cities but also in villages in Gombe state.

Government at all levels should encourage girl child education which can be made free and compulsory. This will give them equal opportunity with their male counterparts in the political arena. Socio-cultural and religious obstacles to women's participation in elective and appointive positions should be discouraged as women need to be adequately involved in governance. They also need to be actively engaged politically and empowered economically as they also contribute to family upkeep. Adequate inclusion of women in governance will also give more meaning to the nation's emerging democracy. Pro-women organisations and Non-governmental organisations should intensify efforts in creating more awareness, public enlightenment and women political education programmes, so as to keep the women informed about the ongoing discrimination against them by the men folk, and

be equipped to favourably compete during elections. Finally, there should be a sincere and an intentional effort by the government at all levels to protect the women against thuggery and any form of political intimidations. While the security agencies guide all citizenry, efforts should be geared towards securing the women more to allay the fear of being hurt by political thugs.

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