



GENDER POLITICS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

Since the Beijing Declaration in 1995, the clamour for more involvement of women in politics has received greater momentum. Feminists and gender advocates claim that women have what it takes to foster socioeconomic development of states and nation-states, and the purported suppression of women in active politics has been the bane of a smooth peaceful political process. Therefore, this research interrogated the nexus between gender politics and socioeconomic development in Nigeria through good governance. Two research questions guided the study. The study was anchored on feminist political theory. Using an ex-post facto research design and purposive sampling technique, data was collected from 55 female politicians in Cross River State, Nigeria employing questionnaires and interviews. Analysis was done through qualitative and quantitative means. Results showed that women's participation in politics is significantly linked to good governance and socioeconomic development. It was therefore recommended that women should be encouraged through political empowerment to venture into politics through elections and appointment into public posts.

Keywords: Gender politics, women's political participation, good governance, socioeconomic development, feminist.

1. Introduction

The concept of gender has been viewed from diverse backgrounds. The World Bank Report 2001 conceives gender as "socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with females and males." Uboho and Ataire (2018, p. 4) described gender as "the social meanings associated with being male or female, including the construction of identities, expectations, behaviour and power

relationships that derive from social interaction." The whole concept of gender can therefore be seen as the social status, role, expectation, behaviour and attributes associated with being a male or a female. Due to gender stereotypes and masculine chauvinism, the female gender has been relegated to the base.

The place of women in societal transition, transformation and regeneration cannot be

discarded. Women's catalytic disposition in development cause cannot be ignored. Every covert and overt attempt to denigrate this noble status receives direct affront from feminist advocates the world over. Human society has a way of conferring a subservient or second-fiddle status on the woman folk. This ascribed status inherently subjugates and inhibits the effective, wholehearted contribution of women to the development agenda. Gender prejudice is a worldwide phenomenon in the development of societies with women at the receiving ends of it its consequences. Jonyo (2014) maintained that development theories prior to 1950 did not recognise women's role in development as women's place was secluded to the domestic enclave. This is further explained by Bhatnagar (2009):

Along with other categories like caste, class, age and race, the category of gender gets typified. While class is achieved status, gender, race, caste and age tend to be ascribed statuses. The notion of generalised status associated with category results in institutionalised normative expectations both of role-taking and role performance. There are two distinct features of the gender – role of women: first, commonly women perform two roles, and secondly her status as a woman cuts across one-dimensional statuses like class, caste. Consequently, she suffers from dual deprivations: one, that of being a woman, and the other being a woman of a lower caste or class.

To curtail this ugly situation and trend, several gender activisms and advocacies have emerged to protect the interest of the female gender. Gender politics effectively took the world stage in the early 1970s. Specifically, Akanji (2004) recounts that the seminal work of Boserup (1970) gave impetus to the rise of a stream of feminist theoretical and conceptual positions aimed at beaming an analytical torch on gender issues in social and economic development. This gave rise to the evolution of ideals such as Gender in Development (GID), Women and Development

(WAD), Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). As attention was drawn to women's role in the process of development beginning from the 1970s, WID emerged from a group of liberal feminists to advocate for the involvement of women in development. The WAD was a paradigm set to ensure that international structures became equitable. GID recommended empowerment tools to close the male-female gap in gender relations to development. GAD emerged in the 80s with a focus on social relations of gender. It advocated for the delivery of such social service as could enhance women's emancipation.

Still, in furtherance of mainstreaming women in sustainable development, the UN Declaration of Women's Year culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. The UN convened a Third-World Conference in 1985, and the NGOs forum in Nairobi for the purpose of reviewing and appraising the achievement recorded in the preceding decades. Apart from inculcating the spirit of activism among women, “the conference adopted a strategy of equality, development and peace” (Jonyo, 2014). Other action plans and conferences emphasised the empowerment of women in development. Besides CEDAW mentioned above, others include the Beijing Platform for Action, the Beijing Declaration (1995) and Resolution, the Cairo Program of Action, and the Millennium Declaration. All of these stressed gender equality and empowerment. Empowerment in this context, according to Sheikh, Meraj and Sadaqat (2016), entails the power, or “the capability to act independently” at different levels such as society, institutions, organisations, households and individuals (p. 2). In the context of this research, so much emphasis is laid on gender roles in the social and economic development of Nigeria from the perspective of women's involvement in political governance. The good governance

women are expected to bring into the social system, according to Aina (2011, p.3) refers to:

The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs, and the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens' groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences. Accountability, transparency, participation and legitimacy are the core elements of good governance. Gender responsiveness is essential to all of these, and is a measure of good governance.

Nigeria's march to its Eldorado, its promised land filled with milk and honey with "a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunity for all" as the five cardinal National Development Goals contained in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) have been stalled by bad governance. Youth unemployment remains alarming, poverty and hunger dwell comfortably in the land, health care service is poor, physical infrastructure remains dilapidated, and human development indices are not favourable. All known development indicators are not speaking well for the country. Seeing all of these, one wonders, if it is because gender politics does not favour women, is the reason why Nigeria has not achieved so much development. Several literatures have indicated that there is a close link between women and development. Some of them have been reviewed in this paper. However, particular reference has not been made to this link in the aspect of women's political office occupation, especially in Cross River State of Nigeria. This gap needed to be filled and is filled by this empirical research. Therefore, this study was meant to provide an answer to the following puzzle:

How does women's participation in politics relate to socioeconomic development through good governance?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Theory of patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to a social system and order that inherently gives men the basic authority and dominance in all forms of leadership spheres including family, social gatherings and even inheritance. Patriarchy is also a set of ideas, a patriarchal ideology, which explains and justifies masculine dominance and characterises it as inborn normal contrasts among people. Numerous sociologists look at male controlled society as a result of social communication and not a result of an inborn contrast between the genders. This group of sociologists will generally focus on the way that orientation jobs in a general public influence power differential among people (Pateman, 2016). Notwithstanding contrasts in degrees of domination, the expansive standards continue as before, for example men are in charge. The idea of this control might vary. So it is important to comprehend the framework, which keeps ladies overwhelmed and subordinate, and to disentangle its functions to enhance women's advancement. The theory of patriarchy's main assumption is that male dominance or sexism exists as a result of private enterprise as well as something very discrete from the industrialist method of production and which will withstand private enterprise (capitalism).

Concerning the current study, this theory suggests that the struggle for women's emancipation and effective and active participation in politics is hampered by the inherent social order that places man at the helm of all social affairs. By implication, for women to truly take power and contribute to socioeconomic development by bringing their good governance skills, men would have to relinquish power to them or they must strive hard to upset the prevailing social order that places them in subservient status.

2.2 Study objective

The central objective of the study is to determine the nexus between gender politics and socioeconomic development through good governance in Nigeria, Cross River State as a case study. The specific objectives included to examine the relationship between:

Women in politics and socioeconomic development through good governance

2.3 Hypothesis

Women's participation in politics does not significantly relate to socioeconomic development through good governance

3. Literature review

3.1 Women in politics and socioeconomic development through good governance

Women's political participation has been a topical issue of discourse among feminist scholars across board. The clamour for women's active role in the political process is usually aimed at bringing their home-grown experiences and expertise to bear in the polity to enhance the socioeconomic advancement of society. This assertion is in corroboration with Ogbogu (2012:1), who maintained that "women's involvement in politics varies throughout the world and their participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance," and Mehrotra (2000), who posited that "governance does, in fact, start within the home (p.64)." this author further opined that "the overall practice of good governance must evolve from the foundation of good domestic governance, which builds and moulds the ideals we expect to be perpetuated in public governance." This is directly referring to women, who society places as the home-keeper and homemakers. Ene and Nkamnebe (2011) aptly described the role women play in development as 'unsung.' It is instructive to state here that the ability and potency of women to gainfully contribute to the nation through good governance can only be realistic when they are allowed to handle political offices – political empowerment.

However, studies reveal that despite the clarion calls from various conferences including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) among others, the level of women's involvement in politics is still a far cry from what it ought to be (Ofong, 2002). Agbalajobi (2010) held that women's overall representation in politics is only 7 percent.

In a study by Koroma (2014) in Sierra Leone to examine the link between gender gap in that country and challenges to women in politics, it was held that involvement of women in governmental issues changes all through the world and their political participation and the popularity based process has turned into an essential piece of contemporary talk on governance and development. The author further claimed that this will have a critical effect which will be noticeable in the biological, cultural, social, economic and individual security of the general public overall. This implies that women play a crucial role in the development agenda of nation-states. Accordingly, the exclusion of women in politics even in Nigeria is a natural disservice to national Nigerian national development. This is because women bring new insights and a new basis for an organisation as noted by Chandler et al in Koroma (2004).

In a report as far back as the year 2000, the United Nations Development Programme noted that regardless of significant obstructions, decision makers among in emerging nations have previously started to put a particular stamp on administration components, establishments and more extensive political discussions (UNDP, 2000). But it also draws attention to the fact that much more still needs to be done. Yet this is cheering news. It goes to show that with more women in politics, greater socioeconomic development would have been recorded through good governance.

Bradshaw, Castelliono and Diop (2013), in buttressing the nexus between women's participation in politics and socio-economic

development, stressed that social orders that segregate by orientation will generally encounter less fast financial development and poverty decrease than others that treat men and women all the more equally, and that social orientation variations produce financially wasteful results. They concluded by stating that on the off chance that African nations had shut the gender gap in education around 1960 up to 1992 as speedily as East Asia did, this would have created nearly a multiplying effect on per capita development in the continent.

This must have prompted Mboho and Ataire (2018) to assert that equal participation of women in politics is a significant end in itself, an acknowledgment of their entitlement to talk and be heard. All the more extensively, it is a way to social change. Choices made and approaches carried out by institutions of government at worldwide, national and local levels help to shape view of the jobs that women and men play in the public eye, and also decide their admittance to freedoms and assets. They equally bemoan the fact that ladies and men don't have an equivalent degree of political presence, opportunity of affiliation and articulation that "voice", and thus describe these as the bane of effective governance for socioeconomic development in Nigeria.

Evidence from the study of Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) showed that women's participation in politics can make a difference in socioeconomic development. Their study on panchayats (local councils) in India found that the quantity of drinking water projects in regions where women led was 62% more than in the areas led by men. Similarly, Bratton and Ray (2002) concluded from Norway that a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found.

Unfortunately, available data reveals that gender disparity in politics is alarming currently. Facts and figures from UN Women (2019)

present that: only 24.3 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women as of February 2019; 11 women are filling in as Head of State and 12 are filling in as Head of Government; just 3 nations have 50% or more females in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda with 61.3 percent, Cuba with 53.2 percent and Bolivia with 53.1 percent; however, a more noteworthy number of nations have arrived at 30% or more.

These statistics reveal that gender balance in political participation and decision-making, which is the target set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action still has a good distance from now and its achievement.

4. Methods

This study employed the survey research design. The population comprised female politicians in Cross River State of Nigeria. Cross River is one of the six states in South-South Nigeria. It is a state with a high level of woman participation in politics having produced women senators, House of Reps members, a deputy governor, and ambassadors among other high-profile political offices at the state and local government levels. The purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 155 female politicians, political activists and top civil servants in the study area clustered in the Calabar metropolis, the state capital. A structured questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. It is structured on a four-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Data collected were subjected to statistical test Pearson product-moment correlation analysis at 0.005 level of significance.

5. Results

The hypothesis that directed this study states: Women's participation in politics does not significantly relate to socioeconomic development through good governance. While women's participation in politics is the independent variable, socioeconomic

development is the dependent variable. The tool for statistical analysis is Pearson product-

moment correlation analysis. The result is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis of women's participation in politics and socioeconomic development (N= 155)

Variable	$\sum X$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	\bar{X}	SD	r-cal.	Sig.
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$					
Women's participation in politics	2665	46481	45148	17.19	2.071	.205*	.001
Socioeconomic development	2614	45578		16.86	3.115		

*Significant at 0.05 level, critical r = 0.198, df = 153.

The summary of results presented in Table 1 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.205 is greater than the tabulated r-value of 0.198 at a 0.05 level of significance with 153 degrees of freedom. The table also showed that the p-value of .001 is less than the .005 significant level. On this note, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld. This means that women's participation in politics significantly relates to socioeconomic development through good governance. However, the relationship is a weak one.

6. Discussion

The result of the analysis reveals that there is a significant positive relationship between women's participation in politics and socioeconomic development. It implies that though the relationship is weak, women's involvement in political activities is a plus to the socioeconomic development of states. The finding aligns with certain previous research. Specifically, it supports Bratton and Ray (2002), Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), Castellionio and Diop (2013) and Mboho and Ataire (2018).

The empirical finding of the first two authors referred to above out rightly shows that women's presence in governance results in increased infrastructural development such as water and health care facilities compared to where men dominate or hold sway. Similarly, Castellionio and Diop (2013) maintain that socioeconomic development indicated by rapid economic growth, reduced poverty and hunger are prevalent in societies with notable gender discrimination. Lastly, the current finding agrees with Mboho and Ataire (2018) bemoan the fact that men and women don't have an equivalent degree of political presence in governance, opportunity of affiliation and voice, and thus the bane of effective governance for socioeconomic development in Nigeria.

7. Conclusion

Based on the finding made in this study, it was concluded that women's participation in political activities is crucial for the socioeconomic development of Cross River State, Nigeria as it brings about good governance practices in the polity. Simply put, women in politics is a means

to accelerate the socioeconomic advancement of the state.

8. Recommendations

In line with the conclusion, it was recommended that women's empowerment should be prioritised by the political class so that more women would be encouraged to participate in politics and bring about greater development of the country through their good governance skills. In other words, all mechanisms should be put in place to encourage women to venture into politics. Again, all recommendations from the various conferences, conventions and fora geared to foster gender affirmative action of 35% should be implemented without further delay.

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