



ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNICATION SCHOLARS
& PROFESSIONALS OF NIGERIA
BOOK SERIES



CANADA UNIVERSITY PRESS

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To cite this article:

Khadijah Timitope Yusuf & Rotimi Williams Olatunji (2020). Female Candidacy in the 2015 and 2019 General Elections in Nigeria: Implications for Media and Governance in Media Freedom, National Interest and Governance, ACSPN Book Series 5, pp. 55 — 67

Retrieved from <http://www.acspn.com.ng>

(Institutional or Subscribed access may be required)

Please note that this is an electronic, pre-print version of this article published by the Canada University Press, Concord Ontario, Canada for Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN).

The ACSPN Book Series is exclusive to the Association of Communication Scholars & Professionals of Nigeria.

ISBN: **978-1-989271-07-0**

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Layout/Design: Ashroph De Grafico

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CHAPTER SIX

FEMALE CANDIDACY IN THE 2015 AND 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDIA AND GOVERNANCE

Khadijah Timitope Yusuf & Rotimi Williams Olatunji

Introduction

Women's participation in politics and governance are prerequisites for sustainable development. Promoting increased women's participation in governance is critical to development, human rights and moral obligation in societies. Inclusive parliaments have the capacity to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation among citizens. However, despite some progress in other African countries, women in Nigeria remain under-represented in all aspects of governance and political life. Available data show near-parity in male and female population profile. In the run up to the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria, the government of President Goodluck Jonathan, realizing need for women's votes, proposed to reserve 35% of all appointive positions for women and youth, although ignoring representation in elective positions. Early in 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law, the "Not-too-Young-to-Rule Act" which significantly reduced the age that people need to attain before vying for some positions and giving greater opportunities and inclusion for women and youth. Equally, Goal No. 5 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasizes the need to provide women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes. This chapter discusses the degree of women representation in the elective positions during the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, compared to the 2015 general elections.

Background

Women's participation in politics and governance is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Promoting increased women's participation in governance is critical to development, human rights and moral obligation in societies. Inclusive parliaments have the capacity to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation among citizens. However, despite some progress

in other African countries, in Nigeria, women seem under-represented in all aspects of governance and political life.

Globally, women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally (Oluyemi, 2016). This justifies the UNDPs' position of equality in all facets of societal development, but despite this position, women roles in the society are yet to be given adequate recognition (www.undp.org accessed 2019). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), New Partnership for African Development(NEPAD), African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD), among others have addressed the need for gender equality (Amadi, 2017). The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) also endorses affirmative action for promoting gender equality and the representation of women in elective offices based on equality (National Gender Policy, 2006, p.13).

The United Nations Organisation (UNO) also noted that "empowering people, especially women, to strengthen their own capacities is a main objective of development, and empowerment requires full participation of people in the formulation and evaluation of decisions, determining the functioning of societies" (United Nations, 1995, p.3). This also agrees with the Beijing Declaration, as stated by, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC, 1998, p.10) that "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in decision making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace ". We can state that from the above assertions that the media has inherently or coherently been one of the major factors belittling women visibility in governance. The aim is to highlight, in comparative terms, the level of progress made in ensuring gender equality and inclusiveness in governance in Nigeria, between 2015 and 2019.

The “Not Too Young to Run Act” was signed by President Muhammadu Buhari on 30th May, 2018. It reduces the minimum age for presidential candidates from 40 years to 35 years that of state governors and senators from 35 years to 30 years, while setting the age limit for state assembly at 25. Thus, the Act has consequently broadened the space for the participation of youths in politics. In addition, since the 2015 election, women's rights activists' groups, political interest groups, media and other political actors have increased awareness campaigns to enhance women participation in politics in Nigeria. The 2019 general elections were contested by a total of 91 political parties in Nigeria. Pertinent questions arising from the above background are:

- What is the degree of participation of women in electoral contest in the 2019 general election in Nigeria when compared to female contestants in the 2015 general elections based on available media reports?
- What is the proportion of elected women in presidential, governorship, National Assembly and States' Assemblies positions in the 2019 general elections compared with the 2015 general elections based on available media reports?

Media and Good governance

Governance is a system through which “power is exercised in the management of a country's political, economic and social resources for development”, with emphasis on “the use of power to control political and economic resources of the nation”, (World Bank, 1993). Thus, governance is

about securing political power in order to control economic power for the purpose of national development. Governance requires the use of a nation's wealth for the benefit and well-being of the citizens. To the IMF (2016) governance is seen as “all aspects of the way a country is governed, its economic policies and regulatory framework”. Governance therefore has to do with the totality of actions and activities that are geared toward the realization of sustainable economic, political and developmental agenda of a nation by groups who exercise leadership in society. The concept of 'good governance' came to prominence after the end of the Cold War around 1990 in donor discourse. The World Bank also adopted 'good governance' as a condition for lending to developing countries (Udo, 2004). The former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan sees 'good governance' as “the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development” (Annan, cited in UN 1998). To Annan, lack of good governance engenders hunger, unemployment and underdevelopment. It is through good governance that impact of governmental activities can be felt, particularly in the area of economic growth and development. Good governance is about striving for the rule of law, transparency, equity, effectiveness/efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision in the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority. Good governance is therefore the avenue for public officers and institutions to ensure equal participation, equal distribution and equal appointments in every governance position especially those that are highly representative. Inclusive gender participation in politics represents a pathway to good governance.

The participation of women in governance and politics is of strategic importance not only for women empowerment, but also because it has wider benefits for the society (British Council Gender in Nigeria report 2012). The commentary on low women's involvement in the Nigerian politics hinges on issues of marginalisation, male domination, cultural practices, abuse of religion, poverty, economic and social instability (Agbalajobi, 2010, p.1). However, Izugbara and Onuoha (2003) have explained how oral traditions, surviving religious cults, relics and indigenous political cultures in different parts of Nigeria support the view that women were major players in the political system in the past.

Ezeigbo (1996, p.34) observed that women's active role in politics during the colonial era significantly contributed to making Nigeria a great nation. Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country and thus should play a vital role in the society. In spite of this, women are discriminated against (Agbalajobi, 2010, p.42). This is due to some cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. But Murdock (1949, p.106) is of the opinion that “biological differences such as greater physical strength and musculature and the fact that women bear children, tend to lead to gender roles out of sheer practicality”. Agbalajobi (2010, p.77) contended that women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the following ground that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. Secondly, based on natural justice and the fact that all human beings are equal, and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life, the right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law, especially in the 21st century that witnessed the emergence of the issue of gender mainstreaming.

The present empowerment agenda seems incapable of addressing the ever-increasing challenges confronting women folk. It is important to note that the provision of conducive environment for reawakening women's consciousness to contribute meaningfully to and compete favourably in the social, political and economic development may not be realized through empowerment alone. Some practices in politics need to be discarded. Political participation in an efficient democracy

can be contextualized within the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which emphasizes the need to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. To do this, there is a need to “end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life”(UNDP, 2015). But there are grounds for hope. More girls are in school now compared to in 2000. Most regions have reached gender parity in primary education. The percentage of women getting paid for their work is on the rise. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to build on these achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere (UNDP, 2015).

The mass media constitute the backbone of democracy. The 'Fourth Estate of the Realm', clearly expresses the role and place of the media in democratic politics and the society in general. McNair (1999, p.22) lists five main functions of the communication media in the “ideal type democratic societies”. These include: informing citizens of what is happening around them (that is, surveillance or monitoring functions); providing platforms for public political discourse; facilitating the formation of public opinion; and feeding that opinion back to the public from whence it came; giving publicity of governmental and political institutions. Implicit in the above is the role of media in the provision of space for the expression of dissent, equal participation of political actors especially in the issue of women participation, without which the notion of consensus politics would be meaningless. Accordingly, media play fundamental roles in the promotion of good governance in the contemporary Nigerian democracy. The media provide the oxygen of growth to sustain democracy. The role of the media in promoting good governance is being recognized by the governments and policymakers in modern democracies. In the UK, for example, a “Survey of Policy Opinion on Governance and the Media” published by BBC (2009) reveals that:

Although the emphasis on good governance in the development agenda is questionable, there seems to be increasing recognition of the media's role in governance in the development community. There are also some indicators that media are being more recognized by the policymakers as having a central role in development.

Good governance is facilitated by the existence of a strong, pluralistic and independent media within the society (UNESCO, 2005). According to UNESCO (2005) there are various ways the media can contribute to good governance. Participation is a key element in good governance and this implies equal involvement of ordinary citizens (men & women) in politics, decision-making and governance. According to UNESCO (2005), participation is a crucial element for good governance in two ways: it allows greater transparency as well as helping to ensure that political decisions are adapted to the needs of the people and affected by them; it is important for democratic legitimacy. Dunu (2013) also observes that citizens' participation in governance is engendered by the media and other intermediate institutions.

Media in Nigeria are very crucial for enhancing massive participation in politics in Nigeria since the days of anti-colonial struggle to the present. This role was especially evident during the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria. However, there is paucity of evidence to suggest that female candidates during the previous two election cycles in Nigeria enjoyed generous mention in the media, compared to their male counterparts. The male candidates seemed to have been given more prominence and considerations than the female candidates, given the monetised nature of politics and electioneering processes in Nigeria.

According to UNESCO (2005), the purpose of transparency is to allow citizens access information on governance and corporate performance, to hold institutions, governments and markets accountable for their policies and performances. Transparency is conducted in such a way that substantive and procedural information is broadly understandable to people and groups in society, subject to reasonable limits protecting security and privacy (Bellver & Kaufmann, 2005). Access to information by the media and subsequently the public is guaranteed by free and independent media. The media can play a key role in increasing government accountability to the general public by explaining government policies and actions in this manner; what is to be done, how and why an action has to take place, who is involved and by what standards decisions are made, and in this way government actions and inactions are exposed to the glare of the general public. It is perhaps in the area of engendering transparency in the society that the Nigerian media continue to be acknowledged (Olutokun & Seteolu, 2001; Jibo, 2003; Olaiya et al, 2013).

One research report (ACSPN, 2018) shows extensive use media for mobilisation of the electorate, including women for mass participation in the 2015 general election in Nigeria. As well, the social media were massively deployed by activist groups, independent media and other political actors to create mass awareness for participation in the electoral processes. The foregoing cannot be separated from the monetisation of politics and the 2015 general elections. However, due to paucity of fund, in the 2019 general election, role of media seemed to have waned, which also implies that female candidates received less attention. The implication of this is that there were no significant awareness campaigns showcasing the potentials of female politicians during the 2019 general elections to enhance good governance. Holding government accountable therefore is a constitutional requirement of the Nigerian media. Access to information is the cornerstone of accountability. It is only when publics are provided with the relevant and adequate information can they hold those in authority accountable for their actions and inactions. As the main purveyor of information, the media owe a sacred duty to the public to provide them with truthful and regular information (Dunu, 2013).

A quick scan of various studies carried out in the area of media, politics and gender marginalization in Nigeria (Enwefah, 2016; Oyesomi and Oyero, 2012; Oyinade, Daramola and Lamidi, 2013) have proven that the Nigerian media have not done so much in salvaging the current situations of gender marginalization in Nigerian politics, rather the media have over the years reflected its male-dominated reportorial world (Enwefah, 2016). This chapter therefore attempts a comparative analysis of level of women participation in seeking elective positions in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, compared to the 2015 general elections. This is aimed at establishing the extent to which the political atmosphere in Nigeria over time has facilitated gender equality in elections in Nigeria, benchmarked against the fifth of the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The discussion that follows is hinged on development democracy theory as articulated by Stokes (2002). As a discursive category, democracy has attracted massive scholarly works due mainly to the diverse experiences of countries and the different stories following from these experiences (Kothari, 2007; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2005). On a general note democracy is an idea and a political system that guarantees a role or participation of citizens in political processes. As an idea, democracy has remained an ideal worth striving for even amidst frustrating experiences of many societies where the social characters of democratic institutions are questionable. In any case, as an idea, democracy is inherently protective of human rights, freedoms and liberties. Schumpeter's (1976) definition of democracy as elites' struggle for votes from citizens speak volumes about democracy being a political system characterized by regular elections by which citizens participate in the political process. This minimalist understanding of democracy involves

regular elections that are free, fair, inclusive and credible in the determination of succession. In a similar vein, Lansford (2010, pp. 391-392) argues that modern or full democracies are those systems in which there are universal suffrage, regular elections, an independent judiciary, relatively equal access to power for all groups, and extensive civil liberties that are combined with protection for women, minorities and disadvantaged groups. Robert Dahl (1971) is perhaps the most celebrated scholar on procedural notions of democracy on which modern representative democracy rests. In his famous book of many years ago, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Dahl (1971) explains that there are two characteristic aspects of modern democratic practice namely, public contestation and participation.

Following from Dahl's seminal contributions to the debate on modern democracy, it seems clear that democracy can partly be measured by the extent of freedom and liberty which groups or individuals are allowed in engaging competitively with rival political forces for power through the electoral process. Similarly, Leininger (2010) argued that besides procedural features of democracy such as the existence of civil and political rights, democracy requires substantive values or features of economic, social and cultural rights. This is noteworthy since the practice of democracy even in the so-called advanced world has revealed that political elites driving representative democracies undermine substantive values of democracy.

Furthermore, Stokes (2002) opines the key concern of development- democracy is the common good. It emphasizes the importance of citizens' rights to social justice as a resource for enhancing political participation. This means that citizens in developmental democracy have a wide assortment of rights which they are entitled to, ranging from political and civil to economic, social, security and cultural rights or welfare of citizens. This means that the theory enhances citizens' exercise of their natural rights civil and political and economic, social and security rights. This also includes equity in gender participation in politics. An important supposition of this theory of democracy is the acknowledgment of formal methods of citizen political participation such as elections along with the participation of citizens in the informal, non-governmental, group or associational life of citizens in society as part of their political participation. After all, some of these groups can provide education in their organizations and serve as relevant sites for democratic processes.

This chapter relies on secondary data released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and sourced from the Commission's website. The researchers obtained data via internet to gather data such as number of political parties and candidates, with reference to female candidates that contested the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Relevant data are presented in tables. A comparative analysis of data for the two election seasons was presented and discussed, based on the two guiding objectives of this study.

Female Candidacy in the 2015 and 2019 General Election in Nigeria

In this section, two distinct tables are presented. The first deals with total number of female candidates who contested various elective positions in Nigeria during the 2015 and 2019 election seasons. These female contestants were drawn from all the political parties that took place in both elections. What really is the degree of participation of women in electoral contest in the 2019 general election in Nigeria when compared to female contestants in the 2015 general elections based on available media reports? The results are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Analysis of Female candidates that contested for the 2015 and 2019 General Elections

ELECTORAL POSITIONS	2015		2019	
	FEMALE (%)	MALE (%)	FEMALE (%)	MALE(%)
PRESIDENT	1 (1%)	90 (99%)	6 (8%)	67 (92%)
VICE PRESIDENT	4 (4%)	87 (96%)	22 (33%)	45 (67%)
SENATE	122 (16%)	625 (84%)	232 (9%)	2424 (91%)
HOUSE OF REPS	267 (15%)	1507 (85%)	531 (43%)	4139 (57%)
GOVERNOR	1 (1%)	90 (99%)	307 (10%)	2639 (90%)
DEPUTY GOVERNOR	5 (5%)	86 (95%)	275 (10%)	2364 (90%)

Source: <https://www.inecnigeria.org/elections/election-candidates/>(DATE ACCESSED: August 17, 2019)

Table 1 shows that a mere one (1) per cent of females contested the office of the Presidency of Nigeria in 2015, which rose to 8 percent in the 2019 Presidential election. Interestingly too, 4 percent of the Vice-Presidential candidates during the 2015 election cycle were females as against 33 per cent female Vice-Presidential contestants in 2019.

Moreover, 16 per cent of women sought elective position to the Senate Chamber of the National Assembly in 2015, compared to a mere nine (9) percent during the 2019 National Assembly election. This sharply contrasts with the results of 15 per cent and 43 per cent females in 2015 and 2019 respectively that contested the House of Representatives election. Overall, more females contested positions into the National Assembly in 2019 compared to those of 2015. This trend was sustained with regards to female aspirants into the office of Governorship position across the states of the federation, which was one (1) per cent in 2015 but increased to 10 per cent in 2019. Similarly, while 5 percent of females contested the Deputy Governorship positions in 2015, the figure doubled (10%) in 2019. However, this seeming increase in number of female aspirants is far from the ideal and did not translate to increased number of successful female aspirants during the two election seasons.

What is the proportion of elected women into presidential, governorship, National Assembly and States' Assemblies positions in the 2019 general elections compared with the 2015 general elections?

Table 2: Analysis of Female candidates that were elected in the 2015 and 2019 General Elections

ELECTORAL POSITIONS	2015		2019	
	FEMALE (%)	MALE (%)	FEMALE (%)	MALE(%)
PRESIDENT	0	1 (100%)	0	1(100%)
VICE PRESIDENT	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (100%)
SENATE	8 (7%)	101 (93%)	7 (6%)	101 (94%)
HOUSE OF REPS	14 (4%)	346 (96%)	11 (3%)	349 (97%)
GOVERNOR	0	36(100%)	0	36 (100%)
DEPUTY GOVERNOR	5 (14%)	32 (86%)	4 (11%)	32 (89%)

Source: <https://www.inecnigeria.org/elections/election-candidates/>(DATE ACCESSED: August 17, 2019)

Table 2 shows consistently across all the elective positions, that there is a drastic decline in the number of females who were successful during the general elections of 2015 and 2019 general elections. From the primaries to the general elections, women remain an insignificant participant in governance.

The European Union Election Observer Mission (EUEOM) investigated the level of participation of women in Nigeria in the 2015 elections and reported a negative trend (EUEOM. 2015). The report shows that only eight (8) women won Senate seats, 18 women won seats at the Federal House of Representatives. Also, there was just one female presidential candidate during the 2015 presidential election; about 11.4% of gubernatorial candidates were women and 14.36% candidates who contested in the different Houses of Assembly elections at state levels were women. Moreover, “Most of the female candidates in 2015 elections ran for small parties. Only one woman ran for presidency (out of a total of 14 presidential candidates) and only four vice-presidential candidates” (EUEOM. 2015, p.41). Accordingly, the report concluded that the proportion of women elected (during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria was thus clearly below the 30% target set by the Beijing Declaration for Action, as well as the 35% target set by National Gender Policy in Nigeria. The present study confirms the earlier report of EUEOM(2015)

In the Nigerian context a National Gender Policy was developed and adopted since 2006, but not fully implemented widely. Current statistics indicate that women are grossly under-represented in governance and excluded from the electoral process. It is worthy of note that a bit of improvements has been made in appointive positions (as Ministers/ Commissioners, Heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies) reserved for women nationwide. The participation of women in politics however falls short of the desired 30% by international standards and 35% as entrenched in the National Gender Policy 2006.

According to the *Premium Times* (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/>accessed August 17, 2019) newspaper, in the 2019 federal elections - Presidency, Senate and House of Representatives women's candidature is unimpressive. For the presidential elections, men swamp women by a 12:1 ratio. Women's presidential candidature stands at eight per cent. At the National Assembly, women's candidature is only 12 per cent of the total seats available, given that a total of 763

women contested seats for the Senate and House of Representatives out of 6,563 places available. Simply put, at eight and 12 per cent candidature for the presidential and National Assembly elections, respectively, the prospects for gender parity in Nigeria remains a distant dream.

In simple terms, a total of 2,970 women contested for different political offices in 2019 general elections, only 62 were elected (INEC, 2019). This indicates a percentage of 4.17% compared to 2015 that had a record of 5.65%. Even with the affirmative action of 35% representation of women in political and non-elective positions in Nigeria, the number of women in the legislative houses and state government is not encouraging as a result of the patriarchal dominance of the men in Nigeria. It is even more alarming to note that, majority of the electorates (voters) are women. This study confirms Oluyemi (2016) position that factors such as the patriarchal nature of the Nigeria society, discrimination, stigmatization, low access to educational and other opportunities, lack of enabling environment amongst others militate against robust women's participation in politics.

Patriarchy refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, which in turn has given rise to women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-partisans in decision making process in households not to talk of coming out to vie for political positions. Religious and other prejudices lead to discrimination and sometimes stigmatization of women which in turn hinder effective women representation. Often, women aspirants who ventured into politics are looked upon as shameless and promiscuous. Moreover, politicking in Nigeria is highly monetized, militarized, sectionalized and ethicized all of which work against involvement of women in politics.

Inadequate voters' education and lack of media sensitization of women serve as hindrances to participation in politics. The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2010 published by National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult literacy rate in English in Nigeria is 50.6 per cent while literacy in any other language is 63.7 per cent (female adult age 15 and above). This explains why most women are least qualified for political offices due to low educational attainment. This is also an effect of colonialism, where men were more favoured than women. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world.

The ongoing discussion shows that the lack of adequate representation of women in elective positions in Nigeria denies the nation the benefits of developmentalist democracy and good governance. Developmentalist democracy according to, contrary to Stokes (2002) emphasizes the importance of citizens' rights to social justice as a resource for enhancing political participation. Gender inequality represents a gross denial of female citizens' rights to inclusiveness and effective participation in governance. Women in Nigeria are thus denied the dividends of developmental democracy that include a wide assortment of rights including political, civil, economic, social, security and cultural rights. The low level of women involvement in politics in Nigeria, in spite of the near parity of both genders in terms of population figure means that developmentalist democracy eludes a large majority of women in Nigeria, stifles women's fundamental human rights as well as hurting the attainment of the fifth SDG that identifies the need for gender equality as the path to sustainable growth and development of society.

Providing adequate support for female candidates through media attention and portrayal, Nigerian media often downplay or do not mention achievements of women in the past. Ashimi (2008) agrees to this position by saying thus: “the ability of the media to make or mar the image of women in the society cannot be denied or underestimated. In fact, the United Nations document recognizing the media as a critical area for women listed the media as one of the ten obstacles to women advancement.” By inference, the media are major agenda setters in effectively portraying female representation in positive light to the public. Similarly, Zhu and Blood (1997) in Olisa (2015) attest to this media agenda setting power by the media signal the importance of certain issues by giving these issues preferential treatment, such as more frequent coverage and more prominent positions. Thus, media players and proprietors should ensure journalists are properly trained in using appropriate frames and media tools in portraying women in politics.

Social media and female participation in elections

Technological innovations has changed the landscape of political participation and political campaigns in Nigeria. The model of political visibility has shifted from the realm of the traditional media and opinion leaders to the landscape of social media. Women have overtime remain insignificant in political positions as well as appointed positions in Nigeria, but the narrative is beginning to change as they make their way to the social media space, which seems to give more recognition and visibility to female candidates. The digital age has brought with it tools that can help women to achieve greater political parity. Whereas traditional news media exhibit many of the gender biases found in the broader society (Rosenbluth, et.al, 2015), social media are as available to women as they are to men (Andrew, 2015). Social networks like Facebook, micro blogs like Twitter, WhatsApp and video-sharing platforms like YouTube provide women with powerful tools for their advancement.

Although, studies have demonstrated that the traditional mass media still take on a significant role in the campaign ecology (Enli, 2017), the emergence of social media, which is specified as “platforms for interaction and information exchange” (Himmelboim, et.al, 2014), has introduced a new pathway for inducing political attitudes and participation and enhancing participatory communication, as well as faster dialoguing, and engagement (Ross & Burger, 2014). Women in Nigeria politics have significant presence on social media platforms such as Instagram WIMBIZ Women in Politics (WIMPOL) training that canvasses for women participation and involvement in politics, they have been able to attract more women interest in political involvement and has seen a tremendous growth since its inception. According to Uduh (2019), Gender Activist, Dr. Marian Nwaokolo, in an interview explained the reason for social media support, “the real misogyny is outside social media. I'm sure the larger voting masses are not on social media.” Dr. Akinreti confirms that social media is more of an elitist tool. A lot of the people using social media do not even register to vote. Many of the voters in the rural areas do not have access to the internet, not to talk about smartphones, but they will decide the fate of the elections. Most of the electoral campaigns are still done on the ground, face to face with the electorate, or on radio where it is much more difficult to remain anonymous and unchallenged; certainly one of the major reasons why hate speech regardless whether directed towards female or male contenders has not yet conquered the campaign discourse on social media.

Uduh (2019) asserts that, the Nigerian online space is kind to women politicians. They get a lot of support, with a sprinkling of online defamation, which is not based on their sex. Nevertheless, most women contestants will not win the seats they are contesting for, because of several mitigating cultural factors. The most salient of them is that the true nature of Nigeria's misogyny is expressed outside the borders of social media. A large percentage of the Nigerian population

does not have access to the internet. Even at that, not many people who support women politicians have Permanent Voters' Cards (PVC). Thus, it is evident that with more sensitization by relevant bodies, social media can be used as a very significant political campaign platform if utilized properly. Accordingly, women interest groups, rights activists, female politicians should re-direct attention away from mere usage of social media for socialisation among females to political mobilisation of females in Nigeria. Given the pervasiveness, potency, interactivity and instantaneousness of the social media, new media can be utilized to galvanize females to participate in politics, support female political candidates and champion the socio-political and economic rights of females.

Recommendations and Conclusion

There is a need for female representation in the media houses who can adequately analyze and portray women the way they are and not the preconceived notion of the male journalists. No one knows a woman better than a woman. In addition to positive portrayal, media mobilisation and education on female rights towards the publics are part of activities to salvage the gender inequality situation. This is so because customs and traditions are part of the major causes of inadequate female representation in Nigerian politics and the media is in best place to counter these anti-female beliefs, customs and traditions through effective mobilization and education on female representation in Nigerian politics. Mass advocacy in form of campaigns, adverts, opinion articles and programmes are instrumental to educating and re-orientating Nigerian populace on the relevance of gender equality and female representation in politics.

For inclusiveness at party level, women should also be at the fore front of party primaries, in terms of leadership and decision making. This will enhance confidence level among aspiring female candidates, who might be intimidated by an all -male leadership. Moreover, governments in Nigeria should emphasize the need to educate and even train political parties on women's political participation and their impact on democracy and good governance. Such training will expose the political parties to basic principles of internal democracy, gender and democratic governance. Also, gender sensitive provisions should be mandatorily included in party's constitution and manifestoes as this will serve the purpose of mainstreaming gender into its activities. In the final analysis, new media can be utilized to galvanize females to participate in politics, support female political candidates and champion the socio-political and economic rights of females

In addition , relevant bodies (INEC) should take steps to assess the process of the conduct of party primaries with a view to formulating and implementing reforms that will support a more gender friendly process and as well create a level playing field for all participants. There is a need for a Gender Institute that will not only train aspiring candidates but will also conduct gender orientation seminars for party members as well as electorates (voters).

This chapter has demonstrated that women participation in elective positions during the 2015 and 2019 general elections has been very low; it continues to be in the decline. Moreover, number of women elected into various positions remain abysmally low, which suggests that political parties as well as the electorate are not sensitive enough to the important issue of gender equality. Moreover, in numerical terms, population of female registered voters are almost at par with the male counterparts. However, this is not reflected in gender representation at all levels of elective or appointive positions in the country, which calls for increased intervention by media and other stakeholders in increasing awareness on women participation as candidates during general elections in Nigeria. Quantitative and qualitative involvement of women as candidates during election will promote gender equality and good governance.

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