

## Women Participation in Local Governance and Nigerian Democratic System: a Study of Selected Local Governments in Lagos State (1999-2016)

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### Abstract

Political participation in local governance is a voluntary act which encompasses a wide range of political activities, including voting at election, contesting for political and party offices, attending political rallies, joining political parties and many more. This study examined the effects of women participation in local governance on Nigerian democratic system. It adopted a descriptive survey design and it relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was obtained from the Lagos State Ministry of Information and some selected local governments in Lagos State. Interviews were conducted with key informants. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentage and frequency distribution. Secondary data was also obtained through the review of extant literatures from journals, scholarly articles from the internet, books, newspapers articles and data from library archives. The findings of the study revealed that certain cultural values have impeded female gender from participating in grassroots politics and the society have been denied of the advantage of their full potential and they have been made to play second fiddle to their male counterparts. The study also observed that the travails of female gender in grassroots political participation includes humiliation, manipulation and marginalization through a number of culturally biased norms and practices which has culminated into systematic institutionalization of male superiority over the female in all spheres of life. The paper recommended among others that the main obstacles to women participation in local governance which stem from political structures, processes and parties as they determine political networks, potential benefits, reconciliation of parental and family responsibilities as well as the mobilization of women by the media can be ameliorated through the agents of socialization viz; the family, religious bodies, school, peer groups, work place, media and re-orientation of cultural norms. Also, at the level of political enlightenment, an aggressive re-orientation programs that are vital and healthy for the survival of Nigerian democracy which does not necessarily have to come during electioneering campaigns alone should be urgently put in place for the rural women.

### Keywords:

Women, Local  
Governance,  
Participation,  
Democracy

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### **Background to the Study**

Women's participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance. While women have increasingly moved toward greater gender equality at home and in the workplace, they are still under-represented in leadership roles and still considered an anomaly compared to men in high positions of political leadership (Olojede, 2016). Women participation in Nigerian politics at the grass-roots' level is an issue of great concern because women have been relegated to the background politically for a long time, which of course made them lose their rightful place in local governance. Studies have been documented on what constitute in the world's population and their contribution to societal development (Afolabi & Lanre, 2003; Anifowose, 2004). According to the 1991 census in Nigeria, women account for about 50% of the population but they are underdeveloped, they are under-empowered.

The issue of discrimination against women in governance at any level is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one, except that the developed countries are fast moving towards gender equality and equity (Agbalajobi, 2009), with the view of maintaining gender balance in every endeavor. Nigeria like other countries in the world is responding to the clarion calls made variously by the United Nations to rid societies of all forms of discriminations especially gender based discriminations (Ekpe & Eja-John, 2014). Nigeria took a bold step in the year 2000 when it adopted and passed into Law National Policy on women guided by the Global Instrument on the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Nigeria is currently reawakening its effort in achieving gender equality. To achieve this, a development process which takes women and men as partners in development, and more importantly that which challenges the structure which continues to produce gender-based inequalities in the society, and balances power relations between women and men both at micro and macro levels is inevitable (Ekpe & Eja-John, 2014).

Nigeria indeed has tried to respond to this development from the international arena by articulating policies and programmes that seek to reduce gender inequalities in socio economic and political spheres, however, the success of bridging the gap between men and women is far-fetched. Omonubi-McDonnell (2003) opines that politically, Nigeria women are negligible and undermined force, with little political involvement. Economically, they constitute the majority of the peasant labor force in the agricultural sector, while most of the others occupy bottom of occupational ladder and continue to be channeled into service and domestic occupations. The consequence of the unequal status between men and women is high level of economic and political powerlessness among women, powerlessness in turn retard development of any level, politically, economically and socially.

From the fore-going, this study aims to critically analyse the issues surrounding the participation of women in grassroots politics through the review of extant literature, and survey method. This study will critically analyze ten local government councils and local council development areas in Lagos State, Nigeria in order to determine the level of women participation in local politics in Nigeria. This study will be divided into four sections viz: the introduction, the literature review, methodology, data analysis and discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of women participation in Local Governance on Nigerian democratic system

The other objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the extent to which socio-cultural influence can affect the level of women participation in grassroots government.
2. Investigate whether political enlightenment can affect the level of women participation in grassroots government.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

#### **Women**

Women refer to the female gender, the opposite of male gender. There is the dependency syndrome that women are known to have being dependent on men. In other words, their roles are that of helpers to men (Luka, 2011).

#### **Participation**

Participation entails involvement of citizens in some way with making decisions in political system. Roberts & Edwards (1991) described participation as a term which is usually applied to voluntary rather than coerced activities.... In their view, when participation is used in political context it is "the voluntary activities of an individual in political affairs including inter alia: voting as one of the tenets of democracy, is found to be liberal and unrestrictive. Subscribing to this, membership and activity connected with political groups; political movement and parties; office holding in political institution; the exercise of political leadership informal activities such as taking part in political discussions or attendance of political events such as demonstration; attempts to persuade the authorities or members of the public to act in particular ways in relation to political goals"

Participation therefore is the voluntary involvement of eligible citizens in the political, social, and economic activities of the political system. Okolie (2004) perceives participation as "freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision process and the right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise". Political participation is one of the key ingredients of democracy in its real sense.

#### **Democracy**

Democracy according to Diamond (1989) provides the equal opportunity platform for political participation and fairness in such competition, thus: a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially political parties, for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair election, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and a level of civil and political liberties, freedom to form and join organizations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.

## **Local Government**

Local government, which can be described as government at the grassroots level has been defined by various scholars in different ways (Orewa & Adewumi, 1991). According to the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), local government is defined as “that level of government with constitutionally defined rights and duties to regulate and manage public affairs which are also constitutionally defined for the exclusive interest of the local population. These rights and duties shall be exercised by individuals that are freely elected on periodic basis by equal, universal suffrage while its chief executive shall be so elected or appointed with the full participation of the elected body” (Bamidele, 2011:11).

The United Nations Office for Public Administration defines local government as “a political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) State, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected...” (Ola, 1984:39). In the words of Appadorai (1975:287), a local government is a “government by popular elected bodies charged with administration and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place”. Ugwu (2002:24) defines local government as “the lowest unit of administration to whose laws and regulations, communities who live in a defined geographical area and with a common social and political tie are subject”. The definitions bring out at least ten key characteristics of local government.

- (i) Local government is government at the grassroots or local level;
- (ii) Local government lacks full sovereignty since it is a creation of a central or immediate legislature;
- (iii) It comprises of elected members, such as chairmen and councilors;
- (iv) It has a legal personality distinct from the State and Federal Governments;
- (v) It possesses the authority and the institutional structure necessary for achieving the purpose for which it has been created;
- (vi) It has jurisdiction over people inhabiting its geographical terrain;
- (vii) The inhabitant of the local territory directly or indirectly, participate in its government through their elected, nominated or appointed representatives
- (viii) It can impose taxes and incur expenses;
- (ix) It must provide avenues for the promotion of the welfare of the members of the community;
- (x) And it must enjoy substantial autonomy (Agagu, 1997; Igbuzor, 2003; Essien, 2010:148)

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework employed for this study is Kanter's “Glass-Ceiling Theory” (1977). This theory focuses on the ways in which the structure of work organizations, especially those with large proportion of white-collar workers, establish women in subordinate positions i.e, they put a 'glass-ceiling' over women's opportunities (Kanter, 1977).The key political positions in the political system of Nigeria especially at the local government level can be related to the organization referred to in Kanter's theory. He described work organization in terms of three dimensions:

### **Opportunity**

People who have less opportunity tend to be low in self-esteem and aspiration while people with more opportunity are competitive and have greater self-esteem.

**Power:** Kanter defined power as capacity to mobilize resources in support of individual interests. People with low power tend to be authoritarian, subordinating, coercive, critical, territorial and are not well liked. People with high power tend to be non-directive, encouraging to subordinates, helpful and popular.

### **Proportions**

This is a social mix. The small proportion tends to be highly visible, highly stressed and stereotyped. The large proportions invisibly fit in with the group, find networking and the acquisition of sponsors. Discussing Kanter's opportunity as one of the three dimensions of work organization, the Nigerian political arena is not different: women are not given the opportunity to exercise their political right such as occupying key political positions ranging from the local government to the federal government level of decision-making. Instead, they are subjected to certain appointed positions where they would only act as figure-heads while men who appointed them indirectly control them too in the position, all within a patriarchal social structure. In terms of power, Nigerian women are just like as Kanter described those with low power, while men are those with high power, especially at the local government level. For instance, during elections, men mobilize women; enticing them with diverse incentives in order to vote, and never encourage them as to how to mobilize themselves, to be serious contenders for elective posts.

In similar vein, Nigerian women are the small proportion (in the context of the Kanter's analysis). It is an indisputable fact that Nigerian women are not only limited by patriarchy, they are duly and unduly stereotyped and highly stressed with responsibilities

### **Historical Development of Women Participation in Local Governance and Democracy**

There is abundant historical evidence which underline the fact that Nigerian women have for long been played a crucial role in local governance and democracy. The participation of Nigerian women in the nation's politics has contributed immensely to the shaping of the political system of the nation (Olojede, 2016).

Prior to colonization, women were engaged in local politics, which enabled them to challenge indigenous leaders and resist colonial domination. For instance, Queen Amina of Zaria in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a military legend and ruler. Women were known to have occupied very influential political offices, including the highest political office even in traditional rulership among various ethnic groups. This is evident in the table below.

**Table 1: Women in Traditional Rulership**

S/N	Name	Town/ Village	LGA	State	Type of rule	Date
<b>Southern Nigeria</b>						
1	Luwo Gbadiaya	Ife	Ife central	Osun	Ooni of Ife	Pre-colonial days
2	Iyayun	Oyo	Oyo LG	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
3	Orompoto	Oyo	Oyo LG	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
4	Jomijomi	Oyo	Oyo LG	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
5	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo LG	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
6	Eye-moi	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarch	Pre-colonial days 1705-1735 AD
7	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarch	Pre-colonial days 1850-51 AD
8	Queen Kanbasa	Bony	Bony LG	Rivers	Queen	Pre-colonial days
<b>Northern Nigeria</b>						
9	Queen Amina	Zauzau	Zaria	Kaduna	Emir	Pre-colonial days
10	Daura	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
11	Kofono	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
12	Gulfano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
13	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
14	Yakania	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
15	Walsam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
16	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
17	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days

**Source:** Awofeso & Odeyemi (2014) cited in Olojede (2016)

During this period women were powerful political forces who occupied very sensitive positions in the overall political hierarchy of their respective communities. Women in each society were indispensable in palace and community administration. This shows that women and men had equal access to political participation. Women participate fully in decision making at most levels (Olojede, 2009; Williams, 1989). But under colonialism, women suffer a setback in the progress towards control of political powers. The gendered colonial ideology thus denied women equal access to resources as men; women thus lost a source of political power. Women unlike before, became confined to the domestic sphere (Olojede, 2009). Women who used to wield political power in the pre-colonial societies were marginalized with the introduction of native administration. Despite the uncondusive political atmosphere, Nigerian women played very prominent roles in the struggle for independence. Women in contemporary Nigeria seem not to be able to match up to these legacies. This is because some women see themselves as inferior beings, due to their poor economic status, low educational, religious dictates, traditional beliefs and home-training which deliberately subject them to the daily rudiments of obeying without complaints (Mensah-Kutin, 2000).

As observed by Udegbe (1998), women representation at all levels of government since independence in 1960 till late 1990s was as low as two per cent. Similar trends were witnessed under successive administrations, both military and civilian. The little improvement made in women political representation in recent time were only marginal. Since the beginning of the fourth republic in May 29, 1999, notwithstanding the general clamour of women for the implementation of the 30% affirmative action for elective and appointive positions recommended by the Beijing Platform for Action of which Nigeria is a signatory none of the Governments (State and Federal) gave women up to 30% in their respective appointments (Olojede, 2016).

### Women Participation in Local Governance in Nigeria

The issue of discrimination against women in governance at any level is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one, except that the developed countries are fast moving towards gender equality and equity (Agbalajobi, 2009), with the view of maintaining gender balance in every endeavor. There are quite a number of views that describe women in the contemporary period. Fundamentally the bulk of support and clamoring for women emancipation, liberalization, and even empowerment have emanated mostly from the feminists. According to Marxist-feminists, while exposing the ills that capitalism has brought upon women, they opined that there is high level of oppression on women, particularly in the sexual division of labour (Costa and James, 1981; Eisenstein, 1984 cited in Olojede 2008: 2005), the liberalization of women will only be possible when the liberal state is overthrown and its capitalists and patriarchal structure is dismantled (Olojede, 2008:2005).

While women in Nigeria have always been active economically, the extent and significance of their activism has not always been rewarded by commensurate degrees of political power vis-a-vis men. Over the years, women in Nigeria have been relegated to the background on issues of overall development, especially in democratic leadership. This is borne out of the sentimental attachment on feminine gender (Allah-Mensah, 2005). Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigerian women have tried to gain access to political decision-making positions by contesting for elective positions at various levels. Through concerted efforts made by women groups, women advocates and activists, civil society organizations, international agencies and donor communities to increase women's participation in politics and decision making. Their efforts however have not translated to appreciative gains as subsequent elections since 1999 revealed (Olojede, 2016). Available evidence shows that the participation of women in local governance and democracy has been generally low. This is evident in the table below.

**Table II: Women representation in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 Nigerian Elections**

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011	
	Available seat	% of Women	Available seat	% of Women	Available seat	% of Women	Available seat	% of Women
Local Govt Chairperson	774	13 (1.8)	774	15 (1.9)	774	27 (3.6)	774	-
Local Govt Councillors	6368	69 (1.1)	6368	267 (4.2)	6368	235 (3.7)	6368	-

**Source:** Adapted from Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014) cited in Olojede (2016).

**Table III: Local Government Chairmen in Lagos state under different administration (1999-2017)**

S/N	Administration	Men		Women	
		No	%	No	%
1	Tinubu Administration	16	80%	4	20%
2	Fashola Administration	20	100%	0	0%
3	Ambode Administration	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

**Source:** Compiled by the Authors

The above tables show that only very few Nigerian women emerged in Nigeria's political landscape at the local level in Nigeria since 1999. One of the main reasons for the minimal participation of women in politics in general and low representation at the local government level in particular has been the assumption that women are subordinate to men consequent to social and institutional discrimination. In Lagos state, between 1999 and 2007, out of the twenty local government chairpersons, four (4) are women. The above analysis shows that in Lagos state few women have been able to emerged as the Chairperson of various local government in the state.

### **Challenges of Women Participation in Local Governance**

It is an incontestable fact that women constitute over half of the world's population. Nigeria's case is not different; women constitute a significant part of the nation's population (Agbalajobi, 2010). Unfortunately, this numerical strength as not found corresponding expression or representation in Nigeria's public life. Women's participation in politics and governance is of strategic importance, not only for women's empowerment, but because it has wider benefits and impact. Many people have expressed the view of the great importance of women's participation and representation in governance of their country that it can bring to national development. Hillary Clinton, an ex- secretary of State and a former presidential candidate in United States politics argues that “if half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal, and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy. We still have a long way to go and the United States must remain an ambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women's right in every country, every region, on every continent.

Madeleine, K. Albright, (an ex- US Representative in the UN and an ex-Special Adviser) chairperson, of the National Democratic Institute of Nigeria also said “every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they are never given a chance to compete in the electoral process, then countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent”. Anifowose (2004) asserted that for any nation to realize the noble idea of democracy with its emphasis on participation, competition and liberty of the people, there is need for the promotion of gender equality. Democracy will not bring development to a country where there is no active involvement and participation of the two sexes; male and female.



It is apparent that women struggle to get relevant in political leadership continued to be hindered by certain factors. Cultural norms and customary practices have great influence on women's political participation. Among the cultural ideological factors that affect women's political participation is patriarchy system. In a patriarchal system, gender inequality is determined by the patriarchal division between public and private life (Pateman, 1988). In Nigeria, traditions continue to emphasize and often dictate, women's primary role as mothers and house wives. Few women who ventured into politics were intimidated by unwritten tradition which men foster while women acquiesce (Olojede, 1999).

The nature of politics in Nigeria has been characterised by violence, electoral irregularities and various criminal activities. However the continuous campaign for women to be actively involved in the democratic process has yielded little compare to the increasing number of women heading key positions in other domain. In addition, politics in Nigeria involve a lot of money, material and human resources. Women's access to and control of productive resources such as land and capital are minimal (Olojede, 2016). Unfortunately many Nigerian women do not possess the wherewithal to mobilize for elections. The violent nature of Nigerian politics, which was amply demonstrated pose an obstacle to women's participation in governance (Diamond, 1988). Given the general abhorrence of women for violence, many women were discouraged from participating in politics.

The attitude of some women to their fellow women who occupy political offices is another impediment to women participation in politics. Their attitude is basically borne out of their own false belief that political offices should be the preserve of unmarried women or those without committed domestic responsibilities. Women who ventured into politics may be portrayed as wayward and as prostitutes. As a result of this negative attitude towards women participation in public affairs, many politically qualified women were shielded away from politics. This phenomenon is an outcome of negative socio-cultural practices against women.

### **Methodology**

This study is descriptive in nature. The survey design is used in the conduct of this research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted to obtain the data that would be used in the study which involved the use of data from the Lagos State Ministry of Information, interview of key informants such as Chairmen of Local Government, Councilors, Sole Administrators as well as bureaucrats. Extant literatures from scholarly articles, books, journal publications and newspaper articles were also reviewed.

The population of the study are the ten local governments in Lagos State, Nigeria which includes: Agege, Alimosho, Badagry, Epe, Ifako-Ijaiye, Ikeja, Oshodi/Isolo, Mushin, Surulere Local Government Councils and ten local council development areas which includes: Iba, Ayobo-Ipaja, Bariga, Coker-Aguda, Ejigbo, Eredo, Ifelodun, Lekki, Orile-Agege, Yaba. The Method of Analysis is the use of Simple Percentage Arithmetic Table.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

The study area of this research is Lagos State and ten local government areas and ten local council development areas were chosen for the purpose of this research. These samples were chosen based on their population and on the 5 zonal divisions in Lagos State, to ensure that all data are equitably distributed.

The study employed a non-probability and probability sampling techniques. The ten communities that comprise Lagos state were clustered according to their population proportion and the ten most populated communities were purposively selected. This study is both a quantitative and qualitative research using structured interview schedule to generate quantitative data and in-depth interview (IDIs) to elicit information that are often difficult to obtain through the quantitative method

**Table IV: Statistics of Male and Female Local Government Chairmen in 10 Selected Local Government Councils in Lagos State, Nigeria From 1999-2016.**

S/N	Local Governments	Male	Female	Male (%)	Female (%)
1.	Agege	5	-	100	0
2.	Alimosho	5	-	100	0
3.	Apapa	5	-	100	0
4.	Badagry	3	-	100	0
5.	Epe	3	-	100	0
6.	Ifako-Ijaiye	3	-	100	0
7.	Ikeja	5	-	100	0
8.	Oshodi/Isolo	5	-	100	0
9.	Mushin	5	-	100	0
10.	Surulere	5	-	100	0

**Source:** Researcher's Field Survey, October, 2016.

The table above shows that 100% of the male gender dominated the local governance in Lagos State. This further proves that there is a wide gap between the male and female gender when it comes to participation at the local level. This has proved beyond reasonable doubt that women have been relegated to the background in leadership and decision making process at the grassroots level in Lagos State in particular and Nigeria in general.

**Table V: Statistics of Male and Female local government Councilors in 10 selected local government councils In Lagos State, Nigeria.**

S/N	LCDAs	Male	Female	Males (%)	Females (%)
1.	Iba	3	1	75	25
2.	Ayobo/Ipaja	5	-	100	0
3.	Bariga	5	-	100	0
4.	Coker-Aguda	5	-	100	0
5.	Ejigbo	5	-	100	0
6.	Eredo	3	-	100	0
7.	Ifelodun	3	-	100	0
8.	Lekki	3	-	100	0
9.	Orile-Agege	3	-	100	0
10.	Isolo	3	1	75	25

**Source:** Researcher's Field Survey October, 2016.

The table above shows that there was 75% of male participation in local governance of Iba and Isolo local council development areas and 25% of female participation. There is still a wide gap needed to be closed. This shows that Nigeria as a country needs to work harder at bringing about gender equality at the local level.

During an interview with Hon. Ayeni Lawrence a former Local Government Councilor at Oshodi/Isolo Local Government in Lagos State, he made it clear that women hardly participate in local politics as it is very stressful and dangerous at times. According to him women participation in local government politics requires a god-father who can support and recommend her for the post. He also went further to say that the money involved in campaigning is very high and a woman may not want to spend a huge amount of money on election campaign. One of the challenges he pointed out was that sometimes, sex was demanded from women who intended to participate in local governance and most women refused that condition. These, according to him are largely responsible for huge dearth of women participation in local politics and governance. He added further that most women at LGAs and LCDAs are mostly appointed and not elected.

Other respondents who were political functionaries interviewed in the sampled local governments and local community development areas such as Chairmen, Councilors, Sole Administrators as well as bureaucrats all agreed that women participation in local governance have been hindered mainly due to the fact that some women see themselves as inferior beings, due to their poor economic status, low educational, religious dictates, traditional beliefs and home-training. Thus, their low level of education and enlightenment when compared to their male counterpart as well as discrimination associated with socio-cultural factors which believe that women are home makers are responsible for their subordination to men in decision making and governance at the grassroots in Nigeria.

In the same vein, interviews were held with some selected women opinion leaders in Ikeja, Agege, Surulere, Ajeromi Ifelodun, Badagry, Epe, Ifako Ijaiye and Mushin Local government areas. These respondents unanimously agreed that women have been relegated to the background in the scheme of things at the grassroot level in Nigeria compared to what was obtainable in the pre-colonial Nigeria. Many of them were of the view that colonialism and long period military interregnum in Nigerian politics were largely responsible for this. In their views, women were not allowed to participate actively in Nigerian politics under colonial rule and this development continued in the post colonial Nigerian state.

It is obvious from the foregoing that since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigerian women have tried to gain access to political decision-making positions by contesting for elective positions at various levels as observed by Olojede (2016). However, available evidence shows that the participation of women in local governance and democracy has been generally low.

## **Conclusion**

It is expedient to note that the rate at which women are represented and the level of their representation in democratic leadership at the grassroot level determines the effectiveness and efficiency of their contribution in the political process which in turn affects the development of the country.

Arising from literatures and theoretical framework employed in this study, it can be established that women involvement in governance is just gaining ground, despite the popular declaration of '30 percent affirmative action' in Nigeria, characterized by parochialism, poor attitude, low participation, and high deprivation tendencies. Marginalization of women in local governance is nothing but an elongation of male dominance in virtually all political affairs. As such, historical fact of this nature is strongly associated with the attitudinal views which had often impede the chances of women to having more political representatives at the various local government levels in Nigeria. Nonetheless, god-fatherism, corruption, political violence, parochialism is few of the many challenges that assails the participation of women in local governance.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends as follow:

1. Political parties should reserve 30% of all elective positions for women. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should ensure that this policy is implemented. Any political party that flouts this rule should be disqualified. This to an extent will uphold the Affirmative Action in the country as not mere voluntary action, but explicit specifications and clear guidelines for modalities and implementations that enhance women empowerment.
2. Government should also, monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at the grassroots level. There is the need for Nigeria to change its attitude towards women and accord them the necessary due respect required. Also, there should be equality in the sharing of political offices on the basis of quota system between competing candidates. This will enable both men and women have equal chances of control in such public offices.
3. At the level of political enlightenment, an aggressive re-orientation programs that are vital and healthy for the survival of Nigerian democracy which does not necessarily have to come during electioneering campaigns alone should be urgently put in place for the rural women.

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