

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN DURING  
2019 AND 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN OGBOMOSO NORTH LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT, OYO STATE**

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**Abstract**

Women's inclusion in political processes is a key aspect of democracy, but women are significantly under-represented in Nigeria's formal political institutions. This study compares the transition from political participation to political representation in the general elections of 2019 and 2023 in the area of study, Ogbomosho North LGA of Oyo State. The research explores the level of female involvement in voting, party membership, campaigning, political mobilization and in running for election, and how these activities led to political representation and decision-making opportunities. This study uses comparative descriptive research design and is mostly based on Feminist Theory and Institutional Theory. The sources of data for the study include primary field data and secondary sources such as publications of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), scholarly studies/reports on women's political participation in Nigeria. There is recent evidence that women are still seriously underrepresented among electoral candidates in the 2023 general elections. The statistics released by INEC revealed that women were just a fraction of the candidates in presidential, governorship, senatorial, House of Representatives and State House of Assembly elections. More recent micro level studies also show that women have made important contributions to electoral mobilization and party success without having had access to meaningful candidacy and political decision making. The core issue, the study asserts, is not just about the presence of women in elections; it's about their representation and political power. It calls for strengthening the institutional environment in which women's participation in politics becomes leadership and representation through the efforts of political parties, electoral institutions, civil society organisations, and community stakeholders. The study suggests the following party reforms to foster gender-sensitive political systems, including gendered political mentorship, greater access to political resources and better protection from electoral violence and effective affirmative-action systems.

**Key Words:** Women, Political participation, Political representation, Elections, Gender, Political parties, Ogbomosho North, Nigeria, 2019 Elections, 2023 Elections.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Participation in politics is a key tenet of democracy. Democracy assumes that citizens are involved in the processes by which political leaders are elected and public decisions made. Therefore, the extent to which a significant segment of its population suffers from ongoing barriers to meaningful participation in a political system is an indicator of its lack of full representativeness.

Women make a good percentage of Nigeria's population and electorate, but are not significantly represented in the formal political institutions of the country. This paradox has garnered a great deal of scholarly and policy interest. Nigerian women are voters, campaigners, party supporters, mobilisers and community organisers but their participation in elections has not been proportionate in terms of election participation in elective positions.

Political participation and political representation are then two factors that are important to make a distinction between. Political participation encompasses a variety of activities in which citizens are engaged in politics, such as voting, party membership, political meeting attendance, political campaigning, voter mobilization, contesting elections and influencing political decisions. Political representation, however, is related to the number of people or groups that hold office from which they have a direct opportunity to influence political decision making.

This distinction is crucial, as shown by recent research on the 2023 elections in Nigeria. A micro level study was conducted in Ikere Local Government of Ekiti State which revealed that women were making significant contributions to the political parties and in the

process of electoral mobilisation but did not have the same opportunities to contest and hold political office. The study contends that the role of women can be both political recruitment and representation disadvantages and remain active participants (Adebayo & Olutayo, 2024).

The national electoral picture echoes this, though. While the overall representation of women remained largely unchanged in the 2023 general election, there was a slight increase in their representation. An analysis of the election revealed that female representation among the candidates to the federal legislative constituencies continued to be low, with some variations across the states in Nigeria. Based on Carnegie's analysis, women held about 9% of seats in federal legislative positions and representation was significantly higher in southern states than in northern states (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2023).

Solutions to the persisting gender gap may be found in the question of why women's participation in electoral politics does not always result in political representation.

Such a question is especially pertinent at the grassroots. National numbers are useful indicators of the gender gap, yet may mask local differences in women's political experiences. Socioeconomic conditions and family relations, political networks and access to resources, local political parties, and community structures all affect political participation.

Ogbomoso North Local Government is a suitable context for the investigation of this. This study discusses the political process, not just participation, but representation as well, as women are not only viewed as voters, they are also viewed as voters who are

represented. It highlights changes in women's political involvement between 2019 and 2023 general elections and whether any such increase in political participation led to more women in political representation.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Although Nigeria has pledged itself to democratic governance and constitutional equality, women still face major constraints on their political participation and representation.

It doesn't have to be that women aren't involved in politics. Women are also actively involved in political campaigns, organizing voters, attending rallies, campaigning or boosting party organization in many communities. But their political giving does not always lead to political leadership or to election.

This results in participation-representation gap.

This is the national level example of this problem as seen in the 2023 general election. Women played an active role in the electoral process but their involvement as candidates was limited. Recent studies also highlight the continued existence of gender disparities in Nigerian's political institutions and explain political party structures, financial limitations, and institutional expectations as key obstacles to gender equality (Diala & Sarumi, 2025).

Another issue is that political structures might be male dominated, where women that try to go from political support to candidacy might be met with some resistance. Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023) illustrate how women politicians make sense of political spaces that are often gendered 'masculine' and political space can be 'privileged'. Political parties are of particular significance because they serve

as a link between citizens and elective office. They affect who is nominated, who gets political backing and who is involved in party decision making processes.

The issue here is not just a matter of women's willingness to participate. It's about the institutional structures that shape the ability to transform participation into representation and influence. However, at local-government level, there is limited empirical literature that is specifically on this transition in Ogbomoso North. This study aims to fill the gap by comparing the levels of women's participation in the 2019 general elections and 2023 general elections and investigating if their participation led to meaningful political representation.

The overall aim of this study is to compare and contrast the relationship between women's political involvement and political representation in the 2019 and 2023 general elections in Ogbomoso north LGA of Oyo state. The following questions are used to guide the study: How was women's engagement in the 2019 general elections in Ogbomoso North? What were the differences in the turnout of women in 2019 and 2023 elections? What were the impacts of the political party organization on women's participation and representation?

### **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

#### **Political Participation**

Political participation are the activities that citizens engage in to try to influence the political processes and decisions of government. It encompasses voting, participation in political parties, political campaigning, political meetings, and running for office and political advocacy. The study

takes a broad definition of women's political participation as women's participation in political activities prior to, during and after elections. This is a broad definition as it would be incorrect to limit the political contribution of women to voting. This is the case as shown in the micro-level study of Adebayo and Olutayo (2024) in Ikere Local Government where women seem to have important role to play in political mobilisation and party activities but are underrepresented as political candidates.

### **Political Representation**

Political representation is the representation and involvement of people or groups in political processes in which political decisions are made. The level of inclusion of women in politics can be assessed by means of: women's candidacy, Women elected to political positions, Women who are party leaders, Women's participation in political decision making and the status of women in the policy process. Participation and representation are not the same thing, and neither should they be considered as such in politics. This is a woman who can be actively involved in political campaigns without running for office or being elected. This difference is the analytical focus of the present study.

### **Nigeria and the Politics of Women**

Nigeria's political journey is an example of a continuous gender imbalance. Women have been involved in politics since the colonial/post-colonial era, but have not enjoyed full political status. In the Fourth Republic that began in 1999, there has been an extended time to participate in a democratic process, but the gender gap has not changed. Umeh, Ujunwa and Eze (2022) reviewed the status of gender equality and

women's political participation in Nigeria between 1999 and 2019 and the obstacles that have prevented women political participation. They call on political parties to develop strategies which will foster greater gender balance in their work.

New studies are ongoing to uncover comparable issues. Despite the wide range of political participation activities, including voting, party membership, rallying and contesting into political office, which Diala and Sarumi (2025) identify, Nigerian women still face low rates of participation and representation. These findings are consistent over time, indicating that the issue is structural.

### **Women in the General Elections 2019**

The general election of 2019 gave another chance for women to join in the Nigeria's democratic process. Women were voters, members of the party, campaigners, election observers, political organisers and candidates. The female candidates, however, were still a large number less than their male counterparts. This shows how electoral participation and political representation are different. A woman can vote for a candidate, go to a political rally and engage other voters and still never be given the chance to enter the office she sought to help bring to office.

The present study is relevant to this situation because the question of whether women participated or not is not really of interest but whether they were given pathways to political representation is a question of interest.

### **Women in the 2023 General Elections**

The 2023 general elections offer a more up-to-date source of information on women's political engagement in Nigeria. The data and analysis by INEC reveal women's

representation of candidates remained significantly low.

In 2023, Carnegie's analysis revealed that women ran about 9% of the candidates for Federal legislative seats. It also identified significant differences across regions, with the south having higher levels of female candidates than the north. This national trend is applicable to Oyo State as the South-West is an area where women's candidacy has been higher compared to some parts of Nigeria.

The regional average must not be taken to be representative of Ogbomoso North. Local political systems have the power to create varying results. This study, therefore, goes beyond the national figures and focuses on the women's actual experiences in the political arena in Ogbomoso North.

### **Participation to Representation**

The main thesis of this article is that being involved in politics is not the end goal of gender-inclusive politics. While voting is important, it does not necessarily mean someone is represented. Similarly, party membership does not necessarily provide women with decision-making power. Does not mean one must become a candidate to participate in a campaign. Being a candidate is not a guarantee of winning election.

Hence, the concept of empowerment for women can be viewed as a step-by-step process: It starts from Political awareness – Political participation – Party involvement – Political aspiration – Candidacy – Electoral success – Political representation – Policy influence. A problem is that many women seem to be very active at the initial stages but not sufficiently advanced to the later stages in Nigeria. This argument is in line with recent

micro-level research. Adebayo and Olutayo (2024) observed that women participated in political parties' election success in Ikere, but were not given equal opportunities to be candidates. This results in what can be called the participation-representation gap.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Feminist Theory**

The main theoretical approach to the study is underpinned by Feminist Theory. Feminist scholarship challenges social institutions and structures that create disparities between men and women. Feminist approaches/arguments to the under representation of women in politics cannot simply be attributed to women's lack of interest in politics. Rather, it turns focus to the structures of power and patriarchy, gender expectations and institutional practices that shape access to political resources.

Politics has been a preserve for males in Nigeria. Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023) argue that Nigerian politics is one set of circumstances in which political participation can be highly masculinised and for women to access the political, they have to negotiate with the patriarchy. Hence, Feminist Theory is suitable to examine the question of why women might be over-represented in politics but under-represented in the government.

## **FACTORS IMPACTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT**

### **Patriarchal Norms**

Expectations of political leadership may be seen as being predominantly male. These expectations may impact women's political ambitions and voters' perceptions of women candidates.

## Financial Constraints

Political competition comes with a lot of costs. Women without financial means may struggle to pay nomination fees, organise campaigns, attend political rallies or sustain an effective campaign organisation.

## Political Party Structures

Political parties are a big obstacle to political offices. If party nominations are run by a network of men, women could be at a disadvantage. The importance of political party recruitment processes in women's access to political candidacy is highlighted by Adebayo and Olutayo (2024).

## Political Violence and Intimidation

Women are less likely to run for office because of threats of violence and political harassment. A climate of political insecurity can decrease political interest and political participation.

## Limited Political Networks

Political networks offer information, money, campaign tools and access to political decision-makers. This can therefore result in disadvantages for women with weaker political networks.

## Family Responsibilities

Traditional expectations around domestic duties can impact women's time and resources to engage in political work.

## Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotype may affect perceptions of women's leadership competences. This stereotype may impact women's political ambitions and voters' likelihood to vote for women.

## POLITICAL PARTIES AS GATEKEEPERS

The role of political parties lies between political representation and citizens. They determine: who contests elections, the one who is nominated by the political party, Who is supported by the campaign, Whose leadership roles are held in the party and all those who engage in political decision-making. Thus, the need for political-party reform to enhance women's representation is crucial. According to Adebayo and Olutayo (2024), adopting solely social and economic development to boost women's numerical political representation is not enough and that political-party strategies play a part.

Affirmative-action systems, however, have to be well-designed. However, the same study cautions that this might cause a reinforcement of the perception that women are being offered opportunities simply on the basis of gender and not political skills. Thus gender inclusion should not be left to the goodwill of a single political leader but need to be institutionalised.

## THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Media is a key determinant in political visibility. Media attention can shape voters' impressions of candidates and help determine who gets the public's attention. A study on gender bias in the treatment of female political aspirants and candidates in media coverage during the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria revealed evidence of gender bias. The study involved analyzing thousands of political stories to determine coverage of female aspirants and candidates (Onwuemena et al., 2023) and this revealed very low coverage, with stories on female aspirants and candidates being relatively limited. Thus, political representation of

women is not only about the structure of the political parties but also the communication environment through which political competition takes place.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study is descriptive survey and comparative research based. It is appropriate to use comparative approach because the study focuses on the political participation of women during the two election periods of 2019 and 2023. The study area is situated in Ogbomoso North Local Government Area of the Oyo State in Nigeria. The study's focus on local government enables it to examine political participation in a specific grassroots political arena. The population of the study is 17.3%. The population includes the eligible women voters and other relevant political actors in Ogbomoso North Local Government. The population might be: female voters, Women members of political parties, female political aspirants, party officials, community leaders and other relevant stakeholders.

### **Sampling Procedure**

To ensure that a sample is representative, it should be selected with the appropriate sampling technique depending on the population and research design. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling can be used to select respondents for the questionnaire part. The political party officials and political stakeholders could be selected purposively due to their knowledge of the political activities in the area.

### **Data Analysis**

Frequency distributions, percentages, means scores and appropriate inferential statistics

should be used to analyse quantitative data. For the hypotheses, where appropriate, chi-square test, t-test, correlation test or regression analysis can be used. Qualitative responses should be thematically analysed. Ogbomoso North is expected to have the following Analytical Framework: The empirical study should explore how women participate on the following dimensions: Dimension, Key indicator

## **DISCUSSION**

The main theme that has been gleaned from the literature is that it is not only the number of votes that should determine women's political participation in Nigeria. Protestant women can be seen very clearly during election campaigns, but not in the decision-making process. This is the participation-representation paradox. The issue is seen at the national level with the evidence from the 2023 election. Women were under-represented at the candidate level, and involved in the electoral process. The findings of Adebayo and Olutayo (2024) are especially pertinent since their micro-level study revealed the significant gains that women can make if they are not given the same opportunities as men to run for office. The take-home message for Ogbomoso North is that counting the number of female voters may not be sufficient to gauge the level of engagement of women.

The study should also establish if women were: Participated in the party decision making process, selected as candidates, supported financially, the campaign leadership-which is included in, shown in the political institutions and Suitable for making policy decisions.

## **CONCLUSION**

Political inclusion is incomplete without political participation of women. Political participation of women is key to inclusive democracy but participation without representation is not political inclusion. Nigeria's 2019 and 2023 elections leave ample evidence that women remain underrepresented in formal political institutions, while also being active in electoral politics. The problem is, however, not just a political one of women's apathy. It is also a question of political access. Voting to political representation is impacted by party organization, money, political connections, cultural norms, gender norms, and violence and institutional practices. The case of Ogbomoso North is thus important as a means of studying the functioning of gender inequalities at the national level in the particular political context of the study area. The study proposes that the role of women be seen beyond that of just a voter and a political mobiliser. They should also be given meaningful opportunities to become candidates, party leaders, elected representatives and policy-makers. Finally, women's political participation needs to be translated into effective political representation and influence.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the literature and analytical framework, the study suggests that the following should be considered:

1. The first step towards resolving the issues surrounding political nominations is to reform the nomination procedures themselves. Political parties must have clear nomination processes that affords women a real chance to run for elective offices.
2. Women's participation in party leadership roles. Women's role in party leadership.

Women need to be at the mainstream of the leadership of the parties and not confined mainly to the women wings.

3. More funding for politics should be made available. Gender-sensitive and transparent financing mechanisms should be used to lower the financial obstacles for female aspirants.

4. Mentor programs should be enhanced. Having experienced women politicians who can mentor younger women who are interested in leadership.

5. The political education should be expanded (5). There should be training of women in political leadership, election process, public speaking, campaign organisation and policy development.

6. If political violence is an issue, it should be taken up. Electoral and security institutions should facilitate women to participate in elections without intimidation, harassment or violence.

7. Gender stereotypes need to be broken. Community education should include beliefs that political leadership is solely the responsibility of the male.

8. There is a need to reinforce women's political networks. Networks of women across all political parties, civil society organisations, professional associations and community groups should be encouraged.

9. Electoral data should be improved and expanded to include gender disaggregation. INEC and institutions should keep on reporting reliable gender disaggregated data on voters, candidates and elected officials.

10. Support local-level studies and research to be promoted. Future research should look at

women's political involvement at the local-government level as the local political context can differ markedly from national patterns.

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