

**WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY IN ODEDA
LOCAL GOVERNEMENT (2015-2025)**

BAMIGBOYE Comfort Olawunmi¹

ABSTRACT

This study examined women political participation and its impact on grassroots democracy in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State between 2015 and 2024. The research was motivated by the persistent underrepresentation of women in political offices and decision-making processes despite their significant contribution to social and economic development. The study aimed to assess the level of women's involvement in political activities, identify the factors influencing their participation, and evaluate the implications of their participation for grassroots democratic governance in Odeda Local Government. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaires and interviews with political stakeholders, community leaders, and women involved in politics within the local government area. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, government publications, and relevant scholarly materials. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed to determine the extent of women's political participation and its influence on democratic development at the grassroots level. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to existing knowledge on women's political involvement and provide recommendations for enhancing female participation in local governance and democratic processes in Nigeria. Findings revealed that women's participation in grassroots politics in Odeda Local Government remained relatively low during the period under review due to socio-cultural barriers, inadequate financial resources, political violence, gender discrimination, and patriarchal norms. The study concluded that increased women's political participation is essential for strengthening grassroots democracy and promoting inclusive governance.

Keywords: Democracy, Gender, Grass-root politics, Political Participation, Political Representation and Women

¹ Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, democracy is conceived as a government by the majority where all gender alike are to take part in the process of decision making and execution. Men and women are not to be differentiated when it comes to democratic participation in any given state of the world. Women constitutes more than half of the entire world's population today (Afolabi, 2022), contributing in different aspects to the growth and development of their various states and the world as a whole in areas such as: motherhood, farming, business, media, medical, education, sociocultural and political activities among others. Out of the numerous roles, women have not been well represented in the political aspect especially when it comes to political elective positions (Oduntan, *et al.*, 2023)

In the past, women in sub-Saharan African nations were confined to the roles of mothers and housewives who handled household chores. The people's cultural beliefs are primarily to blame for this. However, the issue of gender equality arose with the establishment of modern governance, which followed colonial authority and later democratic administration on the continent (Akinade, 2025). In keeping with global trend, Nigerian women form approximately half of the population of the country (Oluyemi, n.d; NBS, 2022) and a part of the voting population, with 6.2 million out of 12.2 million newly registered voters ahead of the 2023 elections (Afolabi, 2022). Even with the population advantage, women roles in the political sphere are yet to be given needed

attention (Oyeboode *et al.*, 2024) This is largely due to primordial factors in this part of the world as against international standards, such as the recognition of rights to participation of both gender as stipulated in article 25 adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on 16 December 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Bashir, 2018) and the International Conference on women in Beijing in 1995 which enhanced the effective participation of women in politics in states of the world (Nigeria inclusive).

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, more than 50 percent of the women folks have been involved in voting during elections but yet to have good representations in both elective and non-elective political positions in the country. Women overall political representation in Nigeria's government before 2011 general election was less than 7 percent (Agbalajobi, 2010), recent statistics shows improvement from 7 percent to 11 percent by 2022 (Afolabi, 2022) yet, Nigeria has not attained the 30 percent affirmative as stipulated by the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action (Oluyemi, n.d), and 35 per cent affirmative action for women enshrined in Nigeria's National Gender Policy (NGP) (Oyeboode *et al.*, Afolabi, 2022)

Political participation is "the active engagement by individuals and groups with the governmental processes that affect their lives" (Khadar, 2013). This includes, involving in decision making and acts of

opposition. Acts of active engagement includes conventional political participation (such as voting, standing for office and companioning for political party) and unconventional (acts, which may be legitimate such as signing a petition and attending a peaceful demonstration), or illegal (such as violent protest and refusing to pay tax) (Charles & Tayo 2009). Hence, political participation is those voluntary actions through which citizens seek to influence the decision-making of public policy.

The emphasis on women's involvement in politics is as important as their effectiveness in political positions and their impact on decision making. Although, having women in political positions is not enough, as most of these women still encounter different obstacles from their male counterparts when trying to promote women's interest (Gurr, 2014). On the surface, equal political representation in numbers indicates a sense of gender equality, but women in Nigeria, as in the rest of sub-Saharan African, still face many struggles in this male dominated sphere, such as discrimination both in contesting for political positions and in allocations of political offices, lack of adequate finance to effectively participate and views that stigmatise female politicians as being loose. Over time, few women have maintained a prominent role in Nigerian politics, and so the place of women in Nigeria's political and social firmament has always been a strong one (Ake, *et al.*, 2019). Though, women have been relegated to the background on issues of national development especially in developing nations

like Nigeria (Funmilayo, 2019). This is likely borne out of the sentimental attachments of feminine gender. Political participation is an essential part of every Human, both men and women.

Data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in April, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 general elections show the high level of women marginalisation in Nigerian politics. For instance, of the 7160 candidates that contested in April 2007 election, only 628 were women, 25 people out of these candidates vied for the office of the president and only one was a woman, while 5 women contested for the office of the vice president (Modupe, 2019; Oduntan, *et al.*, 2023). Out of estimated 7,535,007 in 2021 population projection by NBS for Ogun State, females accounted for 3,788,932 (about 50.28 per cent) (Alli, 2022; NBS, 2022). However, just like the case at the national level, women political representation has remained abysmal when compared with some states in the country. Since 1999, only two (2) women- Mrs Iyabo Anisulowo and Mrs Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello have been elected to represent the state in the Senate and handful of them representing the state in House of Representatives (Akinade, 2025). This berates the issue of gender equality as espoused by National Gender Policy (NGP) and the Beijing Platform of Action. Low political representation of women in the process of decision-making in Ogun State have no small measure affected the female folks in the state in both political and non-political activities across the twenty (20) local government areas and this negates the principle of participatory-

democracy as seen in other states of the world. Though Governor Dapo Abiodun in April, 2022 signed an Executive Order affirming 35% inclusion of women in politics and government (Olorunlome, 2022), the act is yet to be met with reality as the 2023 elections still shows relatively low political participation of women from the list of candidates vying for different elective positions in Ogun State. The main objective of this study is to examine the roles of women in political participation in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The vital importance of women's participation in politics and governance is attested to by Daramola and Oniovokukor (2016) who found that intra-state conflict is likely to occur in States where gender equality in political representation, has not been achieved. The reason for this is that ethnic mobilisation is more likely to readily develop where there are severe gender inequalities since gender relations contribute crucially to the shaping of group identities, in ways that influence the dynamics of inter-group conflict. In other words, ethnic nationalism is essentially patriarchal and it promoted more effectively where gender inequality is relatively high and Daudu (2017) has shown that ethnic identity is particularly important for Nigerians. A retrospective glance at the political history of Nigeria suggests that adequate mechanisms to promote women involvement in the current democratic experiment have not been established. There are published literatures on Nigeria, which establish the pattern of

women's participation in politics; (e.g Igbalajobi, 2015) some analyse various processes and institutions that shape women's pattern of representation (Dauda, 2017) while some have stated the implication for women's empowerment (GNR, 2012).

The Concept of Politics

The concept of politics on the other hand, has been viewed in different perspectives by scholars who have written on the subject. To the Greeks, the polis was the most relevant community beyond the family level. It was argued that any community larger than the family contains some political elements (Idahosa & Idisi 2005 in Ikelegbe). Politics has been defined in many ways, amongst which are that of Aristotle, that it is a master science. He considered the state as the most inclusive association formed by man where he can fully develop. Therefore, politics deal with the state of the state. Aristotle's main reason for criticising these definitions is that he neglected the aspect of politics which discuss the interaction of state (Ekpekurede & Umokoro 2010, cited in Efanodor, 2017). It is however observed that the various definitions above consider the concept of politics from the viewpoint of the normative function of politics which is the resolution of conflict of interests. However, it is necessary that its ascriptive value be also put to bear. In doing so, the concept of politics will not just be limited to the view of the developed countries but will also be relevant to the context of the developing countries particularly Africa. The holistic approach to the concept of politics is however

observed by Williams (2019) in his view of politics from two perspectives. First, that politics is a discreditable activity whose virtue is the competitive pursuit of private interests and secondly, that politics is concerned with the administration of the common affairs of the public, a matter of universal rather than particular concern, whose aim is defining and promoting the common goods.

Modebadze (2015) posit is that politics in its meaning varies from time to time and from place to place. In other words, politics is a loaded term. It has various meanings when used on a daily basis. Politics is defined in various ways such as: the study of conflict resolution, art of government, the conduct and management of public affairs, etc. Scholars like Akubor (2018) have stated that there exists such a connection between politics, politicians and nation building. This is due to the fact that the concept of politics describes a process by which individuals ("politicians" on one hand and the people on the other) debate on matters concerning the 'polis' – that is the political society and make moves with regards to the public interest or the benefit of everyone. The public interest remains the main criterion for measuring nation building. Thus, politics is linked to activities of governance by political actors, with the intention of setting up institutions, structures, and infrastructures focused towards public interest and nation building.

Political specialist commonly utilises the term position to depict out of choice of a sovereign government that all residents should acknowledge or follow. The issue with

this view is that it isn't inside political settings that qualities are or might be distributed. Qualities are ordinarily designated in other social units and associations, which their individuals are needed to agree to on the off chance that they most dodge censure or even discipline, for example, removal. This implies that allotment with this unit may not be less definitive than that of by and large perceived political association, for example, Government and ideological groups (Akeke, 2008).

Kate (1970) defines politics as power structure relationship, which means, an arrangement whereby a group of people are controlled by another. Politics is focused on the institution and the process of acquiring power. It is also an activity through which people strive to acquire power in the society. Equally, Ball (1971) sees politics as those public issues that gave rise to conflict in many human societies or groups, there are always differences in opinion or clash of interest which inheritably lead to conflict. In all organised human societies, primitive or modern, past or present there is bound to be agreement and disagreement, for instance, election is a public issue and all political parties in the country agreed in its principles and practice, that is the process that legally give public office seekers the control of such power could lead to disagreement and thus generate conflict. Sodaro (2001:27) proposed that politics is a cycle, which implies its continuing sequence of activities and interactions among different actors (people, organisations and government) which mostly

occur within a structure of rules, procedures and institutions instead of erratically.

The essentialness of politics to the existence of statehood makes Appadurai (1974:4) conclude that politics is 'the science which examines the state and the condition required for its existence and development'. Following this view, Dahl (1963) defines politics as any steady example of human relationships that includes power and supremacy. So far, the conceptual definitions of politics depict the perspective of these scholars as it identifies with the topic of discussion, one could find the core value of politics from their various views.

Therefore, politics involves issues like; exercising power or authority, collective decision-making, distributing scarce resources among contending factors, the making and preserving of rules and the act of deceit and control. The permeation of politics in all aspects of life owes to Aristotle's conclusion that it is just within a political society 'that individuals can enjoy a good life.' It is crucial to come to the realisation that all social issues are in one way or the other connected to political choices of the power that exist, a participation in this basic element of a political framework is consequently a lot of a need (Kumari & Kidwai, 1994).

Meaning of Political Participation

Political participation as a concept discusses and explores the level at which each citizen of a given country participates in the nation's political affairs by making decisions on who to elect into power, how resources should be allocated and distributed Odetola &

Ademola (1985). In other words, every citizen (adult) of a nation has the civil and political right to participate actively in the country's political affairs. Momodu (2003) suggests that the issues of women's political participation, representation and governance should be viewed from four perspectives. Access, Participation, Representation and Transformation. Access to political organisations, participation (which encompasses control of power within such organisations), quantitative and subjective representation and the outcome will be social and political change in the nation. The fulfilment of these four conditions can enhance the chances of women being politically empowered. The idea that women's involvement in politics is important, is supported by three reasons.

Firstly, politics is a significant arena for decision making. Government officials tend to decide how to distribute scarce resources, for example, tax incomes. People holding governmental positions make political choices that may favour a few people to the detriment of others. Politician's decisions are most likely to affect individual choices by encouraging some behaviours and outlawing others.

Secondly, political power is a valuable good. Those in political power preside over other social organisations, such as the family. Thirdly, holding a political position is to hold a position of power (Paxton, 2010). Women in positions of authority can make an informed decision on issues that concern women in general and positively impact the lives of the female

gender. Political participation is the degree and types of the people's contribution in governance and related organisations of society, for instance, the economy and culture. In active sense, it includes participating in political missions and discussions, being present in political gatherings or strategy meetings, casting votes during elections, indicating interest in political positions, holding a government and party posts (Igwe 2002, cited in Osimen *et al.*, 2018). Okolie's (2004) also defines political participation as the freedom of expression, association, right to communicate freely, influence decision processes, and right to social equity. According to him; it further expresses such rights to demand for better health and social services, better working conditions, and increase in wages, among others. Thus, in this case, this will be used in a restricted sense of not just participating in electoral politics, but to also stand as a contender for elections.

The importance of political participation in any society, either developed or undeveloped, is to seek control of power, allocation of resources and making decisions in accordance with collective or individual interest (Arowolo & Abe, 2008). All groups (women inclusive) aspire to influence the dispensation of power in accordance with their personal interests as the main purpose of participating in politics. In recent times, women in their subconsciousness, progressively seek for power equations, distribution and allocation of resources in their favour. Albeit, cautious observations have shown that the inclusion of women in

Nigerian political space is generally noticeable at the voting stage and dormant support. Adeniyi (2003) suggests that violence and other forms of political conflicts caused and sustained by the men (mostly youths) is the major barrier that hinders Nigerian women from actively participating in politics. There are ongoing arguments with regards to specific roles women should play in society, whether they should mainly focus on household affairs or also participate in other socio-political and economic activities like their male counterparts (Dare & Folorunso, 2012).

For instance, Onyenwere (2017) argues that women not having equal opportunity as their male counterparts to participate in political positions is a form of oppression and discrimination against them, while Ejumudo (2013), on the contrary, argues that political gender inequality in Nigeria is not an oppression against the women or marginalisation in the Nigerian political space, rather it is simply and evidently a natural phenomenon as the women, right from inception were created as subordinates to men, while the men are structured to "lord" over them. In other words, women are naturally predisposed towards socio-political activities. While it is assumed that the natural relationship between a mother and her child may compel and restrict her to lose interest in some social and political activities, it is also essential that such mother contributes her quota to the advancement of her family and that of the society at large (Dare & Folorunso, 2012). The consistent marginalisation of Nigerian

women denies them the chances of participating in these functions. It is intriguing to note that society only acknowledges the relevance of women in politics as voters in a democratic process, still they are perceived as being incompetent to hold political position, hence hindering them from participating in the power structures and pursuing their political goals.

Women access to positions of power, when they are in a minority, is not certainly a guarantee for greater coordination of women's interest in general, and it also clarifies why they risk having their basic needs subsumed in their interests with regards to their involvement in a specific class, cultural or ethnic groups cited in (Guzman 2004, cited in Osimen et al., 2018). The representation of women in politics can add to "the feminisation of the political plan" that is the articulation of women's interests and views in a public argument as much as "the feminization of legislation" that is the effect of public policies on women needs are needed to be considered (Dovi, 2006). In most cases, gender related issues in a male dominated parliament are either neglected or are mostly addressed from the male perspectives. In another instance, the female lawmaker(s) may need to persuade or convince their male counterparts to see reasons why a particular gender bill should be passed. Financial instability is one of the fundamental factors that hinders female participation in politics. More so, she noted that individuals who do not support the idea of women involvement in politics are strongly against the idea of women going out of their way to encourage

or convince others to participate in politics (Asase 2003, cited in Osimen *et al.*, 2018).

According to Suleiman (2009), "The minister of women Affairs and social Development" in her response to the issue of women emancipation, denounced low participation and marginalization of women in the Nigerian political space, ascribing it to the hostile political atmosphere in Nigeria. She also attributed the low percentage of women in politics to the prevalence of violence and patriarchy in the political space, coupled with financial issues. Money, politics and power are some of the major requirements needed to participate, contest and possibly win elections in the Nigerian political system, and these factors indirectly relegates women to the political background because they are not financially empowered to challenge their male counterparts. Moreover, there have consistently been instances of much violence and killings, and most women are not psychologically fit to withstand these conflicts (Ogbonna 2009, cited in Osimen *et al.*, 2018). Conventional Nigerian society considers women's education to be in the home front. Therefore, the girl child is informally trained to be domesticated and well behaved. The girls were socialized into domestic chores of cooking, domestic chores, food crop production, child bearing, managing the home and also fulfilling their wifely duties, while the boys on the other hand are trained to get formal education with parental and societal support, and also encouraged to participate in some leadership positions in their communities, these privileges indirectly gave

them the sense of superiority over the girls. Consequently, the society unconsciously contributed to the challenges women encounter in the contemporary Nigerian political system due to leadership and education privilege given to the boy child (Ozigbo 1998; Osimen *et al.*, 2018).

Women are mostly identified with the transmission of societal culture and moral values. However, a well-educated population has the tendency to produce an adult population who are well informed and active politically. Educational negligence of a significant population of the society (women) could be dangerous and retrogressive (Okeke 2000, cited in Osimen *et al.*, 2018). Women marginalisation has been in existence for decades. Discrimination against women comes in various forms, such as economic, socio-cultural, religious, traditional and political, these and many more hinders women from actualising their desired dreams, especially in politics. These cultures and traditions accord lots of respect to the men while the women are seen as the weaker gender (Ilo & Mike, 2009).

AFRICAN FEMINIST THEORY

According to (Archer, 2009), there are different feminist theories, various feminist perspectives and definitions. Some African scholars like Nkomo and Ngambi, suggested utilising the African version theory as a theoretical framework to facilitate the subject of African women in insolvent leadership positions. They argued that more research is required in order to understand African women experiences and statuses with

regards to leadership positions Nkomo and Ngambi (2009). As this research is based on gender study in Nigeria society, discussing African feminist theory is fundamental, to give a better understanding on the realities of African culture, traditions, and beliefs. Okafor & Akokuwebe (2015), affirm that traditional and cultural practices perceive and treat women as being inferior to men which result in women subjugation, while giving room for men to continue dominating women in the political, economic, social and religious realm.

A research in Georgia claims that traditional values is one of the factors hindering women from political participation, considering that fact that women have the greatest responsibilities in domestic works, some cultural and stereotypical roles have been assigned to the women in the society (Nodia & Scholtbach, 2006, cited in Blomgren 2010, p.6). Women subjugation has been in practice right from the colonial period, generally, their participation and political representation in Nigeria has a very long history of marginalisation and domination by men. Perhaps, man has always been characterized by discrimination: racial, class and of course, gender or sex discrimination from antiquity (Abubakar & Ahmed, 2014).

Consequently, the majority of the research works written about Nigerian women contribution to political participation and decision-making shows that, women are poorly represented in politics, and the existing research works also reveals that the factors militating these women from assuming

leadership positions are centred on gender inequality, culture, women oppression, patriarchy and religion. In other words, most of these existing works are focused on pinpointing the major issues that have been preventing women from having rights and access to political positions like their male counterparts in Nigeria.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Globally, the UN is committed to tackle gender imbalance in political space. Thus, to increase women's participation in politics the UN has adopted several measures in recognising the women's right to equitably participate in politics as their male counterparts. Most remarkable one was the universal declaration of human rights (UDHR), which in its Article 21 recognised the right of everyone, including both women and men, to participate in the governmental activities in their country, directly or through freely elected representatives. In other to ensure these rights are implemented the UN adapted the convention on civil and political rights, which obliged the state parties to legally ensure that women are effectively involved in political and public affairs without discrimination on gender basis. The UN also adopted a notable convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination of women (CEDAW), which focuses on women's political rights and the steps needed to promote equality between women and men in the political area.

Although these initiatives yielded results in some areas, however women are still not given enough space to fully

participate in politics. This is the reality in many countries in Asia, Latin America, Europe and Africa as UN Human Right Committee discovered that "the right to participate in the conduct of political affairs is not fully implemented everywhere on an equal basis..." (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights & International Bar Association, 2003, p.508).

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 National Population (Igbalajobi, 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 (GNR, 2012). 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 a serious contender in United States politics argues that "if half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal, and social marginalisation, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy. We still have a long way to go and the United State must remain an ambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women's right in every country, every region, or 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”. However, Anifowose (2014) 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 inequality. Democracy will not bring development to a country where there is no active involvement and participation of the two sexes; male and female (Anifowose, 2014).

When discussing women’s participation in governance and politics in a country like Nigeria, various variables of participation such as voting in an election, and contesting for public offices, come readily to mind. It is therefore, important to note that participation could also be used to discuss women’s representation in the public offices. For instance, if the number of votes cast by women in an election increase from 10 to 40% of the total votes cast, there is a form of increase in participation. But when the number of women holding public offices is relatively low, compared to men, there is an under-representation, yet women’s number of vote increases (Agbalajobi, 2015). Cramer (2015) argues that men and women allocate resources differently and that women tend to favour a redistribution agenda and to spend more on children’s education, social services and health. These are the basic needs of the

people, which can bring about tremendous development to any nation. But women who have the tendency to carry out these programmes of development are under-represented in the democratically elected parliaments around the world and this is an undisputable fact (Karp & Banducci, 2018).

CALLS FOR THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN ACTIVE POLITICAL PROCESS

Nigerian government have continued to extend its interest in the involvement of women in governance long before the period of 1999-2007. Appeals by prominent and respectable members of the society have continued to compel each successive government to include women in leadership positions of the country. As Onoyima (2016) stated given women the chance to participate in politics is like recognising their existence and place in the society. Women do not like to lose their place and they can make sacrifices to get what they cherish most because of their number.

Women are intelligent he continued patient, clever and they remain vital negotiators and love dialogue. Maryam Babangida (2016) former first lady stated in her address that the demand of women for a greater and meaningful participation in politics is basically due to democratic principle of equality of persons. Appeals for the inclusion of women in politics were further made by Mustapha (2010) to various state governments to recognise the activities of women when it comes to politics and that this will enable the polity to be balanced without prejudice. The case for women to be

actively involved in politics is a major task to be realized by African states and Nigeria have proved to be ahead of them all. Ogundile (2019) in his article, women backbone of society, enumerated the various activities Nigerian women have involved itself to make sure they fit into the Nigerian political system. He made mention of the various feminist organisations and programmes formed by women such as National Council for Women Societies, Women in Nigeria , Federation of Muslim Women Association the Better Life Programme, Family Support Programme, and the Economic Advancement Programme to mention a few.

Ene (2017) gave a brief insight into the activities and line up programmes of the Better Life for Rural Women (BLP). The aim of the programme according to Ene was to adequately create a purposive awareness on the essence of women in programmes of national development especially the rural dwellers. There has been call for every government in power to amend their existing constitution to redress the gender imbalance inherent in it. The amendment will pave way for implementation of affirmative action on women's participation in the country's political process. Nigerian women are therefore, advised to regard their active participation in Nigerian politics as relevant and crucial at this particular time.

Women adequate involvement in all spheres of development is increasingly being recognised as precondition for and as an indicator of the level of success in the attainment of sustainable human

development. For this reason, UNICEF (2013) affirmed that women's involvement in all levels of development should be addressed at the level of basic welfare services, access to resources, conscientise and participation and control of power. And as Oji (2002) observed, that the danger of social exclusion of women in political and other activities involving a nation or community is that they will not be able to contribute their own quota towards the development of that society.

Supporting the observation and further call on the powers to be to help reduce the constraints that affect women in advancement to the same status as men in Nigeria, was the comment by Dibia (2004) that even though history have continued to play its major role on women's involvement in politics, it is for the better if Africans ignore such history and tradition and move their women folk alongside the male in all developmental activities. He described the attitude of government to gender inequality as "Gender Typing" that will not help the country attain its industrialisation goals. Given Nigeria's critical economic and political problems, it appears increasingly obvious that suppressing the talents and skills of women in order to protect men's privileges is an enormous waste of human resources that the country can no longer afford. The belief that women are less interested and have no adequate knowledge of politics than men is wrong and this assumption does not portray the true state of minds of majority of the women that are very much interested in the political events of the country.

In the words of the World Bank (2017) “when women are not offered equal opportunity with their male counterpart, there is the danger that some skills in a nation will be wasted”; and to avoid this dastardly situation, Dibia (2004) suggested further political pressure on multinational corporations, governments, to ensure that women’s interest are not neglected. And that Nigeria will not achieve its development goals if women’s full humanity and citizenship is not acknowledged and vigorously protected.

GOVERNMENT’S ENCOURAGEMENT AND CONCERN FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Akirinade (2018) observed that women participation in politics in Nigeria dates back to 1929, Aba women riot. Since then Nigerian women have delved into different aspects of partisan politics first by campaigning for men as husbands or as candidate of their choice. It is quite easy to use women as campaign tools because they can pull crowd. The 14th century story of Queen Amina of Zaria, a new role was defined for women, through her bravery and exemplary leadership Nigerian women became aware of the roles they could play assisting the men in politics. Dibia (2004) confirming the above assertion stated that Nigerian women have continued to contribute significantly to the well being of the human race and they constitute up to 60% of the total population and as a consequence, women have for long not being recognised in politics even though they have made several efforts to the progress of the nation.

Nevertheless, the efforts of the Nigerian government to improve the lot of women was pointed out by Buchanan (1993) that Nigerian government has started operating scholarship scheme for interested female candidates that do exceptionally well in science and other related subjects realising the need of education in supporting women’s active participation in all spheres of life. For this reason, two technical colleges have been devoted to the enhancement of women development in the country this is an indication of government policy in the use of mass media to propagate women education. Both the federal education ministry and state governments seek to encourage parents to send their female children to school.

In support of the above a prominent monarch in Ashiru (2019) in Kaduna state, advised parents to see the girl child education as a task to be achieved and a vital issue to the development of society. In his words “If you educate a man, you educate a person, but if educate a woman, you educate a society. The various policy instruments for ensuring women are not exclusive of the government’s official policies. Legal aid and legal literacy according to Dibia (2004) are the most popular components of government effort to reduce family abuse, and he confirmed that to rectify the situation, the family law centre is a legal services advisory centre offering free legal advice on all family legal problems to low income people. Akande and Kuye (2016) there are free publications targeting school age children in the hope that they will read it to their mothers while also learning on their own. The legal aid process has made its

outstanding success in the case at the Court of Appeal in Muojekwu & Muojekwu (2010) on the age old Oliekpe and Nrachi Nnewi customs which was discriminatory against Nnewi women in the inheritance of the property of their husbands as repugnant to natural justice and the constitution.

This is step in the right direction confirming, the assertion that Nigerians have been setting the pace in involving women through adequate empowerment to the socioeconomic and political aspects of their lives. Nigeria during the period of 1999-2007, the then president Olusegun Obasanjo announced the establishment of a new ministry for women's affairs in his 2000 budget speech in continuation of General Sani Abacha's legacy of 1995. The rationale for women's ministry according to Dibia is that it will encourage women to enter the labour force and supply a wide range of talents and services demanded by the general public.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate for collecting quantitative data from a population to describe current conditions, opinions and attitudes of women regarding political participation in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State and it makes it easier for the generalisation of the study.

Population and Target population of the Study

The population of the study comprises all adults aged 18 years and above residing in

Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State who are eligible to participate in political activities. This includes voters, party members, political appointees, civil servants and community leaders. Numerically, an estimated 186,300 (National Population Commission NPC, 2022) is the population of people living in Odeda Local Government Area. However, for the target population 98,760 (NPC, 2022) is the estimated population.

Method of Data Collection

The data will be collected through primary and secondary sources. For the primary source, a structured questionnaire where the researcher first introduced herself and the task ahead, she then distributed the questionnaire to the respondents and it were retrieved back after filling for further data analysis. For the secondary data, information from relevant documents, textbooks, journals and publications were considered.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	178	47%
Female	202	53%
Total	380	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2026)

The table 1 shows that, 178 representing 47% of the respondents were male while 202 representing 53% of the respondents were female. This implies that the female gender are ready to discuss issues on female political participation in the Nigerian political process.

Table 4.1.5 Distribution of responses from Respondents

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that women significantly participate in political activities in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State. The rejection of the first null hypothesis indicates that women are increasingly involved in electoral processes, political party activities, political campaigns, voter mobilisation, and grassroots governance. This finding aligns with the position of scholars who argue that women's political participation is fundamental to democratic consolidation and inclusive governance (Afolabi, 2021; United Nations Women, 2023). Although women remain underrepresented in elective positions across Nigeria, their participation as voters, campaign coordinators, political mobilizers, and community leaders continues to shape political outcomes. For instance, women organizations and associations played critical roles during the 2023 general elections in Ogun State through voter education and political advocacy activities.

The study further established that socio-cultural, economic, and political factors significantly influence women's political participation in Odeda Local Government Area. This finding corroborates earlier studies which identified patriarchal cultural norms, financial constraints, educational disparities, and male-dominated political structures as major barriers to women's political involvement in Nigeria (Aina, 2018; Nwankwo, 2020). In many communities within Ogun State, traditional gender roles continue to limit women's access to political opportunities and leadership positions. Furthermore, the high cost of political campaigns and party nominations disproportionately affects women aspirants, thereby reducing their competitiveness in electoral contests.

The findings also revealed that women significantly contribute to political decision-making processes. This result supports the argument that women bring unique perspectives to governance, particularly on issues relating to social welfare, education, healthcare, and community development (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024). In Ogun State, women serving as councillors, party executives, and political appointees have contributed substantially to local governance and policy implementation. This finding is consistent with democratic participation theories which emphasise inclusive representation as a prerequisite for effective governance.

Moreover, the study found that empowerment initiatives significantly influence women's political participation. Political education programmes, leadership training, economic empowerment schemes, and affirmative action policies have enhanced women's capacity to participate actively in politics. This finding is supported by the works of Ezeani (2019) and UN Women (2023), who argued that empowerment interventions improve women's political awareness, confidence, and leadership capabilities.

Finally, the study established that challenges encountered by women significantly affect their active participation in politics. Political violence, financial constraints, gender discrimination, and societal stereotypes remain major obstacles to women's political advancement in Nigeria. Similar findings were reported by the National Democratic Institute (2022), which observed that fear of intimidation, inadequate political financing, and institutional barriers continue to hinder women's political representation. Consequently, addressing these challenges through legislative reforms, political education, financial support mechanisms, and gender-sensitive policies is essential for strengthening women's political participation and democratic governance in Ogun State and Nigeria at large.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that women's participation in

politics constitutes a critical pillar for democratic consolidation, political development, and effective governance in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State. The study has demonstrated that women play significant roles in political mobilisation, electoral participation, community leadership, public policy advocacy, and democratic decision-making processes.

Despite these important contributions, women's political participation remains constrained by numerous socio-cultural, economic, institutional, and political barriers. Patriarchal norms, financial limitations, gender stereotypes, political intimidation, and unequal access to political opportunities continue to impede women's full participation and representation within political institutions.

The findings further suggest that empowerment initiatives serve as important mechanisms for improving women's political participation. Educational programmes, leadership training, economic empowerment, political mentoring, and affirmative action policies have the potential to increase women's political awareness, confidence, and leadership capabilities. Therefore, achieving sustainable democratic governance and inclusive political development requires deliberate efforts aimed at removing structural barriers and promoting gender equality in political participation.

The study concludes that enhancing women's participation in politics is not merely a matter of gender equity but a fundamental requirement for strengthening democratic institutions, improving governance outcomes, and promoting sustainable national development. Consequently, government institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, and community stakeholders must collaborate to create enabling environments that encourage and support women's active participation in political processes.

Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government at all levels should formulate and implement policies that promote women's political participation and representation. Such policies should include affirmative action measures, gender quotas, and legal frameworks designed to ensure equitable representation of women in elective and appointive political offices.
2. Political parties should establish internal mechanisms that encourage women's participation in party politics. This should involve reducing nomination fees for female aspirants, creating women's political wings with decision-making powers, and ensuring equitable access to political opportunities.
3. Comprehensive political education and awareness programmes should be organised

regularly for women. Government agencies, electoral bodies, civil society organisations, and educational institutions should collaborate to educate women on political rights, electoral processes, leadership skills, and democratic participation.

4. Economic empowerment programmes targeting women should be strengthened. Access to credit facilities, entrepreneurship support, vocational training, and financial assistance programmes should be expanded to reduce the economic barriers preventing women from participating actively in politics.
5. Government and security agencies should provide adequate protection against political violence, intimidation, and harassment. Creating a secure political environment will encourage more women to participate in political activities without fear of victimization.

REFERENCES

- Ajibade, O. A. Ademiluyi, I. A., & Adedamola, S. A. (2015). Gender analysis of political participation in Nigeria. *Journal of Law & Psychology*, 1(1), 55-60.
- Afolabi, O. O. (2022). Women and political participation in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 15(2), 45–59.
- Afolabi A. T. and Adrogba, K. A. (2013). Politics, 2011 polls and political

embriglo in Nigeria: For records and directions for sustainable democracy. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 415-450. Retrieved from <http://www.hrmars.com/admin/pics/536.pdf> (ISSN 2222-6990)

Islamic University Journal of Social Sciences, 12(1), 45–61.

Agbalajobi, D. (2010). Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 4(2), 75-82. Retrieved from <http://www.academicjournals.org/ajpsir> (ISSN 19960832)

Akinade, A. (2025). *Women in politics in Osun State, Nigeria: Challenges and pathways to inclusive governance*. *The Gender Truth Journal*, 2(2), 49–66.

Akpabio, I. A. (2009). Women NGOs and rural women empowerment activities in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Environment, Development Sustainability*, 11(2), 307-317. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com> (AN edsgcl.154333791)

Agulanna, C. (2006). Democracy and the crisis of leadership in Africa. *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, 31(3), 255-264. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com> (AN edsgcl.231983458)

Akunyili, D. N., (2006) Women leadership in emerging democracy: My NAFDAC experience. *JENDA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, Issue 9. Retrieved from <http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/jenda/article/view/147>

Aina, O. I. (2018). Gender equality and political participation in Nigeria. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 7(1), 22–39.

Aladejana, F., & Aladejana T. (2005). Leadership in education: The place of Nigerian women. *Gender Issues in Leadership*, 33(2), 69-75. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com> (AN 19363505)

Ajede, S. A., & Agbolahan, A. S. (2025). *Gender inequality and the achievement of women's aspiration to top political leadership positions: A study of Ijebu Ode Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria*.

Mekgwe, P. (2010). Post Africa(n) feminism? *Third Text*, 24(2), 189-194. doi:10.1080/09528821003722116.

- National Democratic Institute. (2022). *Women's political participation and representation in Nigeria*. National Democratic Institute.
- Nebolisa, E. (2009). Women and Politics. *Peace & Conflict Monitor*, 13. <http://search.ebscohost.com> (AN 37584095)
- Oyebode, L. A., Thomas, K. A., & Oyegbile, S. A. (2024). Gender differentials of participation in political activities among farming households in Oke-Ogun region of Oyo State, Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Rural Extension and Development*, 8(1), 75–89.
- Para-Mallam, O. J. (2006). Faith, gender, and development agendas in Nigeria: Conflicts, challenges, and opportunities. *Gender and Development*, 14, 409-421. doi:10.1080/13552070600980898
- Pedwell, C., & Whitehead A. (2012). Affecting feminism: Questions of feeling in feminist theory. *Feminist Theory*, 13(2), 115- 129. doi:10.1177/1464700112442635.
- Pereira, C. (2005). Domesticating women? Gender, religion and the state in Nigeria under colonial and military rule. *African Identities*, 3(1), 69-94. doi:10.1080/14725840500065937.
- United Nations Women. (2023). *Progress on the sustainable development goals: The gender snapshot 2023*. UN Women.

S/N	ITEM	SA %	A %	SD %	D %
1.	Women are mostly identified with the transmission of societal culture and moral values in the Nigerian political space.	142 37	177 47	51 13	10 3
2.	Low percentage of Women in politics is the occurrence of violence and patriarch in the political space.	151 40	180 47	40 11	9 2
3.	Women contribution to political participation and decision-making are poorly represented in Nigerian political space.	148 39	192 51	25 7	15 4
4.	Women do not have right to political positions like their male counterparts in Nigerian political space.	119 31	204 54	41 11	16 4
5.	Women are seen as the weaker gender in the Nigerian political space.	144 38	196 52	27 7	13 3
6.	Women involvement in politics is as important as their effectiveness in political positions in Nigeria.	147 39	198 52	19 5	16 4
7.	Women encounter different obstacles from the male	136	211	25	8

JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (JPIR)

	counterparts when trying to promote women's interest in Nigeria politics.	36	56	7	2
8.	Women have been relegated to the background on issues of national development especially in developing nations like Nigeria.	154 41	200 53	15 4	11 2
9.	Few women have maintained a prominent role in Nigerian politics.	138 36	221 58	17 5	4 1
10.	Women's involvement in Nigerian politics could be linked to the gender discrimination that is deeply rooted in the society.	146 38	198 52	21 6	15 4
11.	Women should be given equal right to participate in politics as their male counterparts.	162 43	210 55	5 1	3 1
12.	Women should be effectively involved in political and public affairs without discrimination on gender basis.	160 42	208 55	5 1	7 2
13.	Women should be given the political right and the steps needed to promote equality between women and men in the political area.	155 41	214 56	8 2	3 1
14.	Women should be given enough space to fully participate in politics in Nigeria.	157 41	210 55	7 2	6 2
15.	Women should make themselves fit into the Nigerian political system.	162 43	206 54	6 2	6 2
16.	The participation of women effective in politics enhance women empowerment and also address the issue of gender disparity.	150 40	212 55	10 3	8 2
17.	Women should not be left out in the course of decision making in Nigeria politics.	160 42	209 55	5 1	6 2
18.	Women should not be left out in policy formulation and governance in Nigeria politics.	162 43	206 54	7 2	5 1
19.	Women in rural areas should be encouraged to start participating in the local politics because it is the grassroots.	154 41	211 56	8 2	7 2
20.	Political participation should be an essential part of every human, both men and women.	160 42	208 55	5 1	7 2

Table 4.1.5 Distribution of responses from Respondents

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2026)