

**DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN ACTIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
A FOCUS OF FAGGE LGA KANO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on the "discrimination against women in active politics" looking back from history women were regarded as not competent to hold political office in societies because they were considered too weak and emotional. This problem has led to the advancement of different theories such as the "feminist theory" which talked about giving credit to women in politics and also giving them a part to play also the "theory of equality" which states that human beings are responsible for the choices they make and should be given same rights in chosen fields, the paper revealed the poor encouragement from their fellow women counterpart and also because they believed their time should mostly be devoted to domestic chores. And it recommended that women should start seeing themselves as not just tools for chores but that they have the abilities to be hold political offices.

Keywords; women, discrimination, politics, and societies.

INTRODUCTION

Looking back to historical antecedent, women have been regarded as not been able to hold political office in traditional societies, because they were considered too weak and emotional to exercise respectable units, characteristic of part of Igbo land, Queen Amina of Zaria and Oba Orompo of old Oyo. Based on history it was totally unheard of for women to assume great political power or influence in more elaborate, centralised states. Today, the overwhelming majority of traditional rulers are men and as custodians of local culture, they tends to uphold traditions gender stereotype and biases against women (Myaryar 1992).

Women who have acquired western education began to have confidence to participate in politics in contemporary Nigeria. Some contested for the 2007 local government elections, the state house of representatives, and the senatorial seat: However, only few women contested for the above seat in Kano. Fagge local government area is located in the heart of Kano City, most of the women in Fagge are traders although allowed to go out of their homes, only a few are active members of political parties (Kabeer,1999). For women like Hajia Gambo, Sawaba and Ladi Shehu distinguished themselves as prominent of northern progressive union (NEPU), but they paid dearly for the struggle of Northern women political right (Shawuhu, 1990)

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The near absence of women in decision making and lack of economic power are issues of critical concern. In most countries of the world, the percentage of women in active politics is lower than that of men. The proportion of married women in politics is higher than that of single or divorce women (Ogunro, 2005). State government have also played a silent discriminatory role against women's participating in politics which can be observed in terms of the allocation of political office holders (Mba, 1993).

Miss Sarah Jibril, a Nigerian female politician from Niger State in 2007 People's Democratic Party (PDP) election, pleaded that, the condition of discrimination against women is unjust, going by the Nigeria constitution, which guarantees women freedom to political association and participation despite this, Nigerian women are still left behind when it comes to political participation (Darly Trust Newspaper, 2007).

Furthermore, women's political inferiority in Kano State is explainable by their roles as mothers and housewives. They do not have equal opportunities for educational attainment and skill acquisition with men. In Fagge Local Government Area, the former councilor who was a female, fixed many boreholes that

reduced water scarcity in Fagge. In spite of her success in providing infrastructures, Fagge women are still left behind and often victimised when it comes to allocation of political office, these and more negate the active participation of women in politics.

RADICAL FEMINIST THEORY

The theoretical thrust of this paper focuses on radical feminist theory of society. Historically feminist thought and activities are in two "waves. The first wave began in about 1800 and was largely concerned with acquisition of equal rights of women to men in all spheres of life. This was in response to the French revolution and American war of independence. The second waves evolved from socialist and civil rights movements in the 1980's starting from North and Central America to Europe and Australia. These waves laid more emphasis on the failing patterns of employment segregation based on gender differences (Bryson 1999).

According to Lovenduski (1986) feminism is a term of attention to the ideologies which cover the rights of women, their position in culture and society. Feminists are united by the term that women's position in the society is unequal to that of men at the expense of the women as regards to their individual wellbeing and financial security (Firestone 1972) for the purpose of this paper, the radical feminism is a philosophy emphasizing patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women or more especially social dominance of women by men. Radical feminists view patriarchy by gender as responsible for the plight of women, women are the oppressed class.

Bryson (1999), blames the exploitation of women on the men, the men are the ruling class while women are their subjects and further suggests a revolutionary process of change. Granville (2004) suggests that the domination of women by men in all sphere of life can only come to an end through the process of revolution. The basic assumptions of radical feminists are as follows; they see men as the cause of oppression rather than capitalism, custom or biological factor and they equally set as the politically oppressed class regardless of race or class.

FINDINGS

The respondents were male and female inhabitants from twenty-five (25) years and above in Fagge Local government Area, it was revealed that 52.8% of the respondents were females. It was found that majority of the respondents were within the age range of 30-34 years, and about 55.6% of the respondents were of the Islamic religion.

The study also discovered that majority (77.8%) of the respondents were of the belief that low level of education attainment is a factor influencing women's discrimination in active political participation. It was also found that majority (70%) of the respondents believed that traditional belief influences the discrimination women face.

The study reveals that majority of the respondents are of the view that there will be good governance if women were allowed to participate freely in active politics (27.8%). Study also revealed that 79.6% of the respondents would like to contest for political post if given the chance, meaning the majority would like to contest if given the chance.

Furthermore, it was found that there was no significant relationship between influence of religious beliefs and the discrimination of women in active politics..

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by gaining a greater understanding of the discrimination faced by women in active politics this study further revealed that women are not treated equally with their male counterparts in the work place. Hence, laws and politics should be made and enforced for equal level of services, positions and promotion as at when due for both males and females. In addition, with hope that democracy has come to stay, there is no reason why women cannot achieve at least 30% participation in national decision making by the next administration, if they plan purposefully.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the information derived from relevant literatures reviewed in the course of this study and the findings revealed by the study, the following recommendations were made.

- 1) Women should be encouraged to participate in politics so that they will take part in decision making especially with regards to what they can do to improve themselves socio-economically and nation building at large.
- 2) In order to improve the livelihood of these women, the Kano State Government should take into

consideration the welfare concern and provide mass awareness programs to erase the traditional belief of the people with this, changes could be accepted easily.

3) Education for women should be subsidized to a minimum rate in order to encourage more females towards educational attainment and also to encourage them to take up challenging professions so as to enable them compete, with their male counterparts, because most women are less educated that is the reason why women were not given equal chance or opportunity to contest elective positions in the area of study such as chairmanship position, councillorship and other political positions. Government should entrench a formal gender equality clause in the constitution that will also out law the discrimination of females, which accounts largely for women's poverty, because the study revealed that most women lack the capital to venture into politics and are also hampered by unfavourable government politics that are not in the best interest of women.

4) Government should create national councils for the status of women organisation in which they will be able to put their views, opinions and issues affecting them directly by government.

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