

United Nations' Beijing Declaration for Women on Political Representation and Nigeria's Implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action, 1999-2015

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Abstract: Gender inequality in political representation has been generating national and international debates especially with respect to the causes and effects in different parts of the world. In attempt to reduce the existing inequality, the 189 United Nations Member States unanimously made the Beijing declaration for women's political empowerment in 1995 to the tune of 35%; and required governments, international organisations and civil society groups to take a range of actions to enhance women's political representation. In view of this, the Nigerian government adopted the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria. This policy implies that the 35% of political offices would be reserved for and occupied by, women in order to enhance their opportunities in political representation. But ever since the Nigerian government adopted the policy, the 35% target appears very elusive. Among the factors alleged to have hindered the attainment of the set 35% target, socio-economic variables seem predominant. Hence, the questions under investigation are: To what extent has the 35% Affirmative Action been achieved in Nigeria? To what extent have socio-economic variables affected the implementation of the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria? This study is significant to the extent that, first, it will contribute to the global debate on "Politics in a World of Inequality" in terms of gender within the context of Nigerian government and politics; second, it will reveal the extent to which the wave of feminist agitations expressed in the Beijing Declaration can hold sway in Nigeria. The study will adopt documentary research design and descriptive statistical tools in the analysis while conclusion and recommendations shall accordingly derive from the findings.

Key words: Gender • Inequality • Political representation • National policy • Affirmative action • Socio-economic • Feminist

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on the inequalities in power and decision-making with bias for gender political representations in Nigeria. The study is a contribution to the various 5-year reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration in which states are assessed on the extent to which women have been empowered. The various reviews were in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. Each period of the review was marked by Member States reaffirming their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action, bearing in mind the challenges affecting governments' efforts towards implementation [1].

This study is therefore an attempt to examine the extent to which Nigeria has implemented the 35% Affirmative Action and how socio-economic variables affected the implementation. This investigation was

carried out with focus on the national policy of 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria which was introduced in the year 2000. In essence, the critical questions which this study sought to address are:

- To what extent has the 35% Affirmative Action been achieved in Nigeria?
- To what extent have socio-economic variables affected the implementation of the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria?

In attempt to address these questions, the study thematically reviewed some existing literature on the Beijing Declaration, socio-economic analysis of gender inequality, gender inequality in political representation and strategies for gender balancing in political representation [2]. The review was done with a view to establishing a gap in existing literature which necessitated this study. In line with the purpose of this study, the

national policy on 35% Affirmative Action was critically examined in the light of the essence of the policy initiative, policy contents and policy implementation, taking due cognizance of the socio-economic variables that affected it. The conclusion and recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study.

The Beijing Declaration: The history of the Beijing Declaration began with the founding United Nations charter (1945) which included a provision for equality between men and women (chapter III, article 8). Subsequently, from 1945 to 1975 various female officials within the United Nations and leaders of women's movements on the global stage attempted to turn these principles into action. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution (resolution 3010) that 1975 should be International Women's Year. In December 1975, the UN General Assembly passed a further resolution (resolution 31/136) that 1976-1985 should be the "Decade of Women". The first world conference on women was held in Mexico City in 1975. It resulted in the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace. The second world conference on women was held in Copenhagen in 1980. The conference agreed that the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an important milestone. The Copenhagen conference also acknowledged the gap between rights being secured for women and women's ability to exercise those rights. The third world conference on women was held in Nairobi in 1985. The Nairobi conference set out areas by which progress in women's equality could be measured: constitutional and legal measures; equality in social participation; equality in political participation; and decision-making. The fourth world conference on women was in 1995 in Beijing, China where the Declaration was made [3].

Hence, the Beijing Declaration was as a result of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China (1995). This was the largest conference that the United Nations had ever organised. Over 189 governments, 17000 participants including 6000 government delegates, more than 4000 representatives of NGOs, 4000 journalists and all the United Nations organizations attended the Conference. The 189 UN Member States adopted unanimously the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) to ensure the improvement of all women without any exceptions. The BPFA outlined 12 critical issues, which constitute barriers for the advancement of women and identified a range of actions

that governments, the United Nations and civil society groups should take to make women's human rights a reality [4].

The twelve critical concerns identified in the BPFA include: poverty of women, unequal access to education, lack and unequal access to health care systems, violence against women, vulnerabilities of women in armed conflict, inequality in economic structures, inequalities in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms to improve the advancement of women, lack of respects and inadequate protection in human rights, under-representation of women in the media, inequalities in natural resource management and in the safeguarding of the environment and the discrimination and violation of the girl child. It was expected that the full implementation of the twelve issues would see the enhanced empowerment of women *economically, socially and politically* [5-9]. But as noted in the Nairobi Conference, the concern here is to measure the progress of women's equality in the area of political participation and decision-making as will be captured in the extent of political representation in Nigeria [10].

Socio-Economic Analysis of Gender Inequality: The concept of "Gender" has often been misinterpreted as a synonym for "women" or a derogatory stigma for the male opposite sex [11]. But it is simply "an anatomical distinction between being a male and a female [12]. There are two contending ideologies embedded in the concept of "Gender": Patriarchism and Feminism. These ideologies have critical implications for the social, economic and political lives of the people especially in terms of gender. On one hand, Patriarchism is system of male authority which oppresses women through the social, economic and political institutions [13]. Hence, Patriarchism accepts gender inequality that favours men. On the other hand Feminism as an intellectual commitment and political movement is a belief system which preaches equal rights for women and their emancipation from all forms of domination exerted by men; in other words, feminism agitates for the social reconstruction of the society that made women permanently subservient to men domination socio-culturally, economically and politically. Thus, feminism rejects gender inequality and opposes discrimination policies against women in both public and private spheres. Feminists seek equality of women with men in all ramifications: social, cultural, economic and political spheres of human endeavours [14]. In essence, the question of gender in any society is more or less an issue of ideological dispositions and relational comparisons as

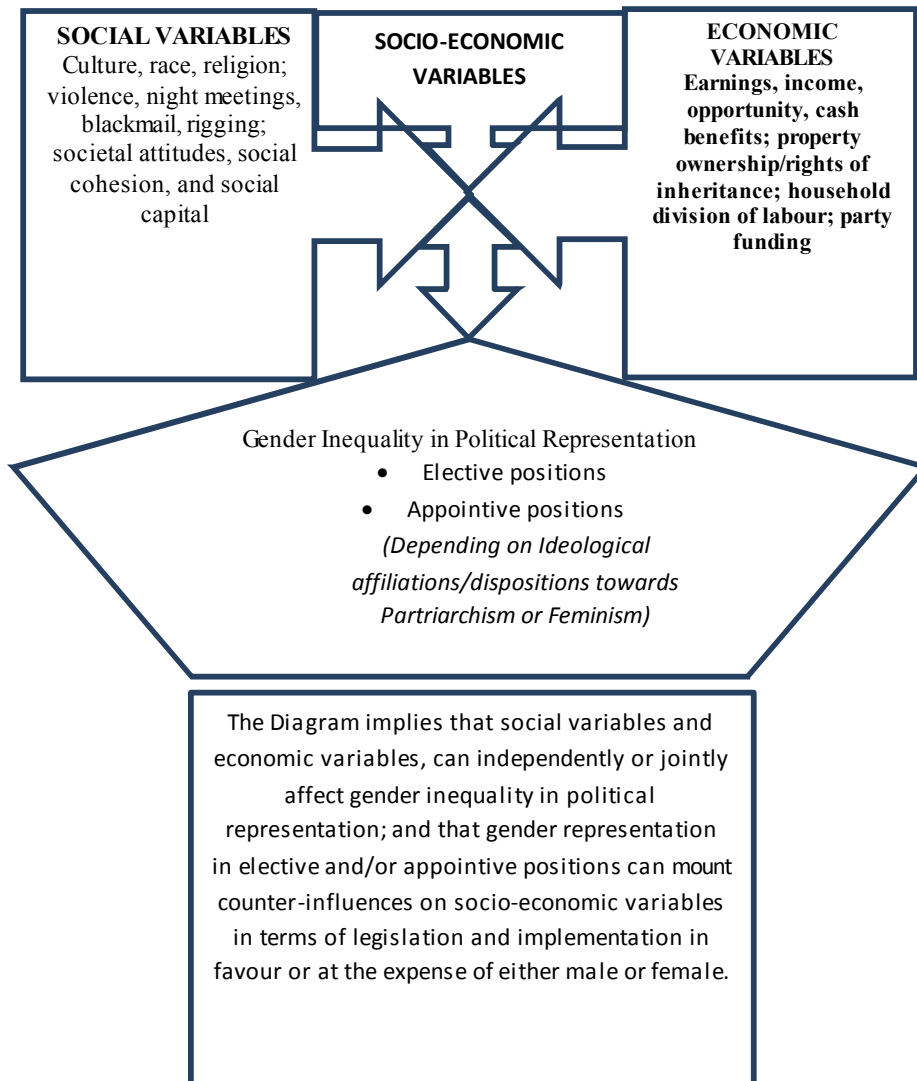
each system creates a set of beliefs and practices for men and for women that define the relationship between them. As a result, gender analysis requires that the situation of men and women must be analyzed in relation to each other and not in isolation [15].

Gender inequality in itself refers to the socially constructed disparities between men and women in any given society especially in terms of social, economic and political resources. Gender inequality is multi-faceted:

- Social inequality
- Economic inequality
- Political inequality

Whereas social inequality describes the differences and disparities of access to certain cultural practices, educational facilities, healthcare services and media

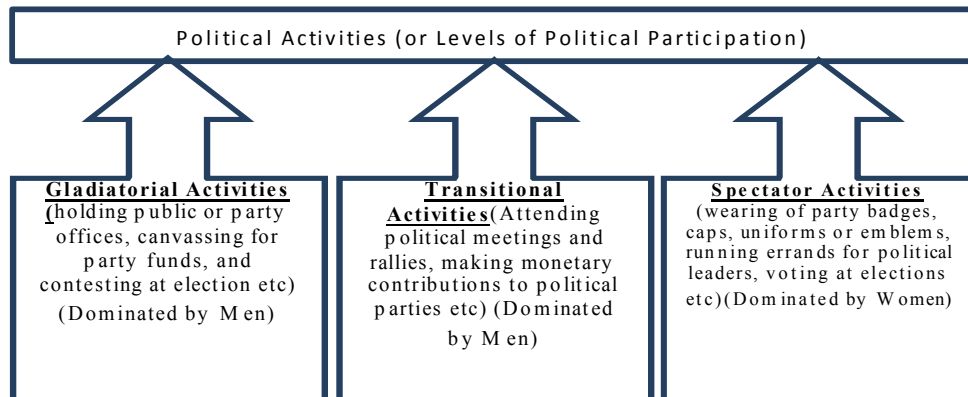
networks; economic inequality means primarily differences in earnings, incomes and opportunities; while political inequality entails disparities in the distribution of power resources like political positions. The issue of concern here is how to clarify the correlations among social, economic and political inequalities. But it is difficult to specifically point out the direction of the cause-effect analysis due to influences and counter-influences associated with social, economic and political variables. Be that as it may [6-11] strongly shared the opinion that political inequality is primarily a function of socio-economic variables. Put differently, gender inequality in political representation is as a result of prevailing socio-economic inequalities that characterize a society. This argument may be better captured in the diagram below:



Blakely, Kennedy and Kawachi [5] while writing on “Socio-economic inequality in Voting Participation and Self-Rated Health” strongly posited that a wide gap between the assets of the rich and the poor leads to corresponding polarisation of the political interests of groups in society, which is reflected in diminishing levels of social trusts and reduced spending on social goods that benefit all. Hence, Blakely *et al.* [5] averred that there is a direct relationship between growing inequality and disparities in political participation across socio-economic groups which translates into policies that are detrimental to health. Besides, socio-economic inequalities in political participation lead to state policies that harm the poor which are mostly women most often than not. In other words, socio-economic inequality no doubt affects the formulation and implementation of public policy like the 35% Affirmative Action in Nigeria. This submission found expression in the opinion of Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) that the following political activities may vary according to socio-economic status: volunteering in political campaigns, contacting officials, organising protests, running for office (contesting elections) and donating money (funding of political activities). This is because the identified political activities require social recognition and economic resources to accomplish which women lack most at times. The position of [6] on socio-

economic status as a determinant of levels of political participation and extent of political representation largely depends on investments on social capital as captured by Blakely *et al* [5]. Kawachi and Kennedy [10] maintained that there is strong relationship between social capital and voters turnout at election and as such, it is a vital force in political participation. Investments on social capital entails committing resources to enhance (a) density of membership in associations; (b) levels of interpersonal trusts; (c) strength of norms of mutual aid and reciprocity. In essence, it is not just enough to have the economic resources for political mobilization; there is need to “stay-connected” with associations that have political relevance, build trusts and confidence among supporters and “stake-holders” and be able to attract needed political assistance with the capacity of reciprocating the political gestures offered.

Importantly, Milbrath [12] identified three categories of political activities largely affected by socio-economic variables as: gladiatorial activities, transitional activities and spectator activities. These various political activities otherwise recognized as levels of political participation as categorized by Milbrath [12] are better detailed in the diagram below with gender dominance as Awofeso and Odeyemi [4] observed in Nigeria’s political environment:



Awofeso and Odeyemi [4] maintained that the involvement of men and women in the identified levels of political participation largely depend on their socio-economic status. In their opinion, Awofeso and Odeyemi [4] contended that the gladiatorial and transitional political activities are mostly dominated by the men while women participate more at the spectator level for some socio-economic reasons. These socio-economic reasons include:

- Societal attitudes discourage women political participation at the gladiatorial and transitional levels. The general belief in Nigeria is that “no decent woman can play politics at the identified levels without compromising their virtues; hence, all women that go into it are considered women of easy virtues even when they are married. Meanwhile, it is very difficult for a married woman or single ladies to get involved in gladiatorial and transitional political

activities without people casting aspersions on them as being promiscuous and sleeping with all the party stalwarts to win.

- Nocturnal Political meetings to map out political strategies deter women from effectively following electioneering processes.
- Women's access to economic resources and opportunities are also limited in such a way that they cannot fund political activities in their favour. Besides the fact that the rights of inheritance traditionally favours men in Nigeria, women scarcely own and control the means of production as to raise money for funding political activities without overbearing interference by men.
- Women's greater involvement at the spectator level of political participation is a function of the fact that first, the activities do not attract negative societal attitudes and public scrutiny against women; second, the political activities are not capital intensive as to scare women from getting actively involved.

Essentially, the foregoing expositions indicated that the socio-economic factors which encourage gender inequality in political representations include funding, women's perception of politics in Nigeria, political violence during elections, lack of self-confidence on the part of women, women's marginalization in party leadership, illiteracy and low educational status of women, as well as cultural and religious discriminations [4].

Gender Inequality in Political Representation: In any relationship or system of political representation, there are three essential factors that largely play out in determining the extent of gender inequality:

- Representatives (or the representers)
- Representees (or the represented)
- Representation (relationship between the representatives and the representees).

It is the extent that gender consciousness permeates the representatives, the representees and the representation process that determines the extent of gender inequality that may exist. For instance, where the representatives are not gender sensitive, issues of gender-related policies, debates and discussions will most often than not face difficulties and challenges because they do not constitute part of their "agenda" in political representation; similarly, if the representees that constitute the bulk of the electorate do not have adequate

orientations in terms of gender consciousness, it will also reflect in their voting during elections. In the same vein, the pattern of relationship between the representatives and the representees especially on gender issues depends on the "intentionality of representation"; if the intentionality of representation is to bridge "gender inequality", then, gender issues will dominate the processes of political representation; but where the intentionality is not gender-related, then, gender-inequality scarcely becomes an issue for debate. In order to effectively analyze gender inequality in political representation, there is need to further explore in details, the concepts of representatives, the representees and representation.

Political Representatives: Political representatives refer to agents sent to give or withhold consents of their constituents on a legislation proposed by the executives. Political representatives may be classified as follows: Individual Political Representatives (e.g. Member of legislature) and Group Political Representatives (Legislature or Executive as a whole). Within the group political representatives, the actors may be cooperative or non-cooperative; then, the cooperative group may be corporate or non-corporate.

Political Representees: This refers to the electorates or voters who are represented by the representatives. In other words, they are the constituents who through their votes send representatives or delegates give or withhold their consent on policy proposals. On any policy issues such as gender inequality, the representees may express their views, opinions and positions to their representatives who will articulate their ideas for advocacy in a larger political society. Political representees may be categorized as follows: Individual (A constituent for whom a representative takes up a cause); Group (Caste, tribe or electors in a constituency); the political representees may be cooperative and non-cooperative as well. The cooperative group refer to States as represented in the Senate) While the non-cooperative group are (lose pressure group or minority ethnic group; the members are united around just single issue).

Political Representation: Political representation is a process of relationship between the citizens and the state; hence, as posited by Ankersmit [3], political representation begins where the citizens' ends and ends where the state begins. Political representation is

therefore “The Trajectory between the citizens and the state”. For some time now, the perception of political representation seemed one-sided as it only talked about advancing the interests of the representees by the representatives at a higher level of political participation where the citizens cannot directly reach either as individual citizens or as group of citizens. However, there is another dimension of political representation observed by Thomassen which has been deficient in political discussions. This other dimension is what Ankersmit called the “**representation of politics**”. In essence, there are two dimensions in political representation: “**representation of citizens**” and “**representation of politics**”. By logical extension, it means that both the “**citizens**” and “**politics**” all constitute “political representees” in the process of political representation. In this regard, the representation of politics entails how the citizens as individuals and groups represent the politics of their area as may be reflected in their opinions, attitudes, behaviours and political culture in general. Political representation is therefore not only how the representatives represent the citizens or voters; but also how each of the citizens or individual voter represents the political system of which he or she is part. Hence, in this

discourse on gender inequality in political representation, attention will not only be given to how women are represented in politics but also how politics is represented by women in Nigeria’s political system.

There are three main models of political representation:

- Delegate Model
- Party Model
- Consensus Model

These three models of political representation all work towards establishing or conceptualizing the roles of representatives in terms of the **focus**, **style** and **intentionality** of representation. Hence, for each model of political representation, there are focus, style and intentionality around which the roles of the political representatives revolve. While the **focus** refers to “*the interests that representatives must defend*”, the **style** refers to “*how the representatives take instructions in pursuit of the interests*”; whereas the **intentionality** refers to “*the purpose or essence of the representation*”. These issues may be better captured as follows:

Model of Rep.	Focus of Rep.	Style of Rep.	Intentionality of Rep.
Delegate	Constituency interests or national interests	Constituency instructions or Reps’ sense of mature-judgment	Enhance: the welfare of constituents, the selfish interests of the representative, or patriotism for the nation.
Party	Party interests or national interest	Party instructions or Reps’ sense of mature judgment	Enhance: political party’s strength, representative’s political fortunes and opportunities, or the nation’s power
Consensus	Any agreed interests: constituency, party, or national.	Any agreed style: constituency, party, or sense of mature judgment	Social cohesion among the constituents, party members, or generality of the citizens at large.

In the light of the above information, it is evident that political representation focuses on either constituency interests or national interests through constituency instructions or the representative’s sense of mature judgment for the welfare of the constituents or patriotism for the nation. Nevertheless, intellectual opinions have varied on what should actually constitute the roles of political representatives especially in terms of focus, style and intentionality according to the various models of political representation.

Delegate Model of Political Representation: Eulau conceptualized the roles of political representatives as follows:

Style		Style	
Delegate		Trustee	
Focus	District	A: Representatives defend the interests of their constituencies according to the views and instructions from their constituents.	B: Representatives defend the interests of their constituencies according to their sense of mature judgment.
	Nation	C: Representatives defend the general interests according to the views and instruction from their constituents.	D: Representatives defend the interest of the nation according to their sense of mature judgment.

Edmund Burke chose option “D” in which political representatives defend national interests according to their sense of mature judgment and opposes option “A” in which a political representative defends local interests according to the views and instructions of their constituents. Edmund Burke made his position clear in his famous speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774 that:

Parliament is not a congress of Ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain as an agent and advocate against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole – where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole.

The delegate model may not adequately advance the course of women in political representation because the various options advance either constituency interests or national interests based on the instructions from the constituents or sense of mature judgment. In this context, it may be difficult for a constituency to prioritize the enhancement of women’s political representation because that may not be the constituency’s pressing need.

Party Model of Political Representation: Political party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power (Schumpeter (1976). Initially, political parties were considered inimical to democracy and political representation for two reasons: (a) they were seen as threatening the common interest of one nation; (b) party discipline was hard to reconcile with the prevailing theories of political representation (Thomassen). It was Edmund Burke who recognized the function of political parties not as evil factions that threatened national unity, but as instrument to model modern government where traditional concepts were no longer satisfying. Hence, Edmund Burke defined political party as a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours, the national interests upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. The Burkean definition revealed not only that political party is an essential platform for political representation, but also indicated that “principle” which implied “ideology” ought to be the basis for party formation. Meanwhile, the recognition of political party in the political process of the 20th Century as an institution that enhance effective representation was necessitated by the extension of

suffrage beyond the carrying capacity of direct democracy which compelled members of parliament to compete for electoral votes. The party model may not sufficiently advance the course of women’s political representation because the *focus* and *intentionality* may not prioritize feminist agitations. The party model is mostly concerned with party interests or national interests to be pursued through party instructions or representatives’ sense of mature judgment to enhance political party’s strength, representative’s political fortunes and opportunities, or the nation’s power. Hence the enhancement of women’s political representation is not the primary focus and intentionality of the party model. This does not however imply that the enhancement of women’s political participation cannot be part of the political objectives of a political party.

Consensus Model of Political Representation: The consensus model emphasizes that political representation is based on “any agreed interests”; this could be constituency interests, party interests, or national interests. On the other hand, the style of political representation has to do with *how the representatives take instructions in pursuit of the interests*; this implies that instructions might be coming from constituency, political party, or sense of mature judgment. In terms of social cohesion, political representation is concerned with the degree of solidarity and unity of purpose or “social togetherness” existing among the constituents, party members, or generality of the citizens at large in defence of the agreed interests. This consensus model seems to stand better chances of enhancing women’s political representation because it gives room for negotiations in either political parties or constituencies for feminist agitations to be accommodated as basis for political mobilization and supports.

In essence, when we talk about the political representation of women based on the Beijing Declaration, it is worthy of note that attention should be given to the delegate model, party model and consensus model. This is because the representation of women using these models largely defines the extents of their representation in any political system. Very importantly, in a political system where party politics is prevalent, the extent to which women are represented either as delegates or based on consensus is largely dependent on how the political parties practice “internal democracy” in relation to gender. If women are underrepresented within party structures, there is the tendency that it will have negative effects on the political representation of women at the

level of national politics. It does not however suggest that once women have a desired percentage of representation in political parties, they must be adequately represented in national politics. This is because the focus and intentionality of the women representatives in political parties may not necessarily be to enhance women's political representation at State level. Besides, the style (*how the representatives take instructions in pursuit of the interests*) may also vary in line with party interests which may also not primarily be to enhance women's political representation. Thus, the enhancement of women's political representation in national politics may not necessarily be guaranteed in the delegate or party models of political representation, but in the Consensus model in which "any agreed interests" stand as a major determinant. In the context of the Consensus model of political representation, "the enhancement of women's political representation" can be the "agreed interests" to be pursued through an "agreed style" of taking instructions to ensure cohesion among the political participants.

Nigeria's Implementation of the National Policy on 35% Affirmative Action, 1999-2015: Visible Gender Based 'AA' was introduced in Nigeria only in the year 2000 following the transfer of political power from the military to civilian democratic regime. Hence, the Federal Government of Nigeria under General Olusegun Obasanjo formulated a National Policy on women sequel to the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 1995. The 2006 National Gender Policy was an improvement of the 2000 National Policy on Women by the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo democratic regime. Noteworthy is the fact that the national gender policy is premised on some principles aimed at entrenching affirmative action by promoting gender equality as a globally accepted development factor with particular tilt to political empowerment for sustainable development. The concern of the Beijing Declaration of 1995 from which Nigeria derived the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action was to build on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits on women in Nairobi in 1985 with the objective of achieving equality, development and peace. This was based on the conviction that Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, especially participation in politics (decision-making process and access to power) are fundamental for achieving socio-economic development. It is against this backdrop that this attempt

is made to assess the implementation of the 35% Affirmative Action and ascertain how women have been represented in politics.

Central Thesis: Nigeria has not achieved the 35% Affirmative Action because the implementation was largely impaired by Socio-economic variables.

Methodology: The study adopted qualitative method in carrying out its investigation. Data were gathered from secondary sources basically from libraries, internet sources, relevant articles and periodicals etc. Both content and trend analytical techniques were utilized in the study for the analysis of data. To that extent the information employed for analysis in the study were carefully extracted from logical chains of documentary evidence among others.

Data Presentation and Analysis: The questions under investigations are:

- To what extent has the 35% Affirmative Action been achieved in Nigeria?
- To what extent have socio-economic variables affected the implementation of the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria?

Answers to these questions will confirm the desperate need for affirmative action with reference to the Nigerian women. Various data presented in the tables below stand to clarify the issues:

Table 1 and Figure 1 presented the statistics of women that actually won and occupied various elective positions in Nigerian government and politics in different periods. It is observed that some of the positions of chief executives (president and governors) have been exclusive preserves for men; only the positions of deputy governors and local government chairpersons have been occupied by women but not to the extent of achieving the 35% affirmative action. The statistics for deputy governors showed that no woman occupied the position in 1999; but 2(5.6%) women occupied it in 2003; then in 2007, the number increased as it was occupied by 6 (16.7%) women; but in 2011, the number reduced to 1 woman (2.8%); in 2015, the number appreciated to 4 women (11.1%) as deputy governors. On the other hand, legislative positions had higher electoral opportunities for women in Nigeria: the senatorial positions occupied by women ranged from 3(2.8%) in 1999; 4(3.7%) in 2003; 8(7.3%) in 2007; 7(6.4%) in 2011; and 8(7.3%) in 2015.

Table 1: Comparative Data on Women Representation after the 1999, 2003, 2011 and 2015 General Elections

Position	No. of Available Seats	Number of Women Elected									
		1999	%	2003	%	2007	%	2011	%	2015	%
Presidency	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senate	109	3	2.8	4	3.7	8	7.3	7	6.4	8	7.3
House of Rep.	360	12	3.3	21	5.8	23	6.4	26	7.2	14	3.9
Governors	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deputy Governors	36	0	0	2	5.6	6	16.7	1	2.8	4	11.1
Houses of Assembly	990	12	1.2	38	3.8	54	5.5	68	6.9	N/A	N/A
Chairperson, LGA	774	13	1.8	15	1.9	27	3.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ward Councilors	6368	69	1.1	267	4.2	235	3.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	8,674	109	1.3	347	4.0	353	4.1	102+	1.2+	N/A	26+

Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

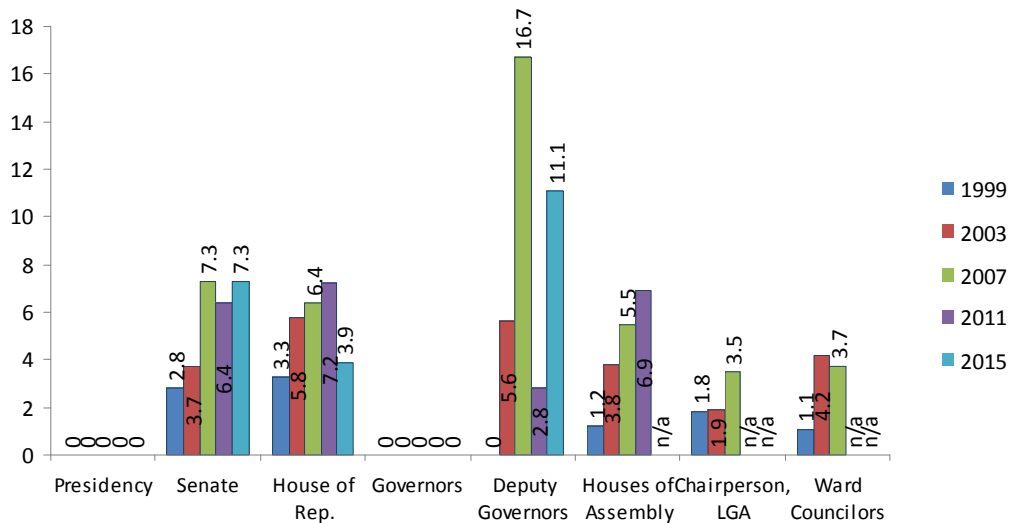


Fig. 1: Comparative Data on Women Representation after the 1999, 2003, 2011 and 2015 General Elections

*n/a: not available

Data Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

In the House of Representatives the number of women was on the arithmetic increase thus: 12 women (3.3%) in 1999; 21 women (5.8%) in 2003; 23 women (6.4%) in 2007; 26 women (7.2%) in 2011; but reduced to 14 women (3.9%) in 2015. In terms of the State Houses of Assembly, the number of women were constantly on the increase from 12(1.2%) in 1999; 38(3.8%) in 2003; 54(5.5%) in 2007; to 68(6.9%) in 2011 while the data for 2015 were not available. Similarly, the number of women that occupied legislative positions as ward councilors was 6(1.1%) in 1999; 267(4.2%) in 2003; but reduced to 235(3.7%) in 2007; while the data for 2011 and 2015 were not available. In all, the number of women that occupied elective positions had positive trend from 109(1.3%) in 1999; 347(4.0%) in 2003; to 353(4.1%) in 2007; while those of 2011 and 2015 could not be computed due to unavailability of data.

Nevertheless, the national policy of 35% Affirmative Action for Women in Nigeria was not met in any of the election years for any of the identified positions.

What these figures and percentages confirm is that women are still a very long way from achieving 35% political recognition in the electoral space of Nigeria. This situation is even made more critical by the fact that 2011 was the year when gender advocacy and affirmative action attained its most prominent visibility profile when the Presidency took it up as a campaign initiative. The statistics over the years have not been very encouraging. It is important to note that the election outcomes are determined by the level of women's participations in elections especially as aspirants or contestants. But at the contest level of political participation, available evidences suggest that women

Table 2: Participation in Elections in Nigeria by Gender in April 2011

Office Contested	Female	Percentage	Male	Percentage	Total
President	1	5%	19	95%	20
Vice President	3	15%	17	85%	20
Governor	13	3.7%	340	96.3%	353
Deputy Governor	58	16.7%	289	83.3%	347
House of Reps	220	9.1%	2,188	90.9%	2,408
Senatorial	90	10.1%	800	89.9%	890
Total	385	9.5%	3653	90.5%	4,038

Source: British Council (2012); *percentage calculation is mine*

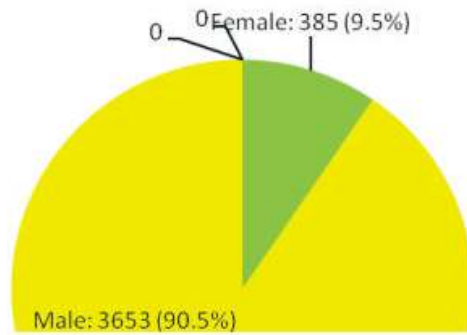


Fig. 2: Participation in Elections in Nigeria by Gender in April 2011
Data Source: British Council (2012)

have performed abysmally; as such, the data in Table 1 and Figure 1 are reflections of how women have performed during elections. This contention is shown in Tables 2-9 and Figures 2-8.

Evidently, the percentage calculation in Table 2 and Figure 2 shows that the participation of women in contestable positions is still very far from the 35% Affirmative action. The implication is that where their participation in contested positions was not up to the required percentage of the Affirmative Action, the percentage of their political representation will certainly be lower.

In Table 3 and Fig.3, a comparative gender data of contestants in the 2011 and 2015 general elections was presented. The data revealed that for executive (presidential and governorship) positions, the number of women that contested reduced by -83.0% and -63.0% percent respectively while that of deputy governorship increased by 6.9%. Similarly, female contestants for legislative positions increased within the two election years: whereas female senatorial contestants increased by 34.8%; House of Representatives increased by 18.8%; while State Houses of Assembly increased by 43.8%. The data indicates that women have higher opportunities to participate in elections as deputies and legislators than as chief executives. Hence, the second class roles or status ascribed to women still exists. Notably, although

the number of male contestants decreased by various percentages for the different positions except in deputy governorship, it was always higher than the number for women even in the elective positions where the number of men dropped and that of women increased.

In Table 4 and Fig. 4 which contain the data for men and women that contested the 2011 and 2015 elections, the national policy on 35% Affirmative Actions for women were not met in any of the elective positions at the contest level of electoral participation. The highest was for Senatorial position in 2015 with 22.2%; followed by that of deputy governorship for 2011 with 16.7%; and then, that of deputy governorship for 2015 with 16.3%. Hence, the 35% affirmative action was not met at the contest level.

Similarly, Table 5 which captured the number of female candidates that contested in the 2015 general elections suggests that in comparative terms, Northern Geopolitical zones have lower percentage of the women that contested for senatorial seats: North East (6.6%), North West (7.4%), North Central (16.5%); South-South geopolitical zone performed better with 17.4% in the senate; followed by South East with 24.0% while South West had the highest performance with 28.1%. For the House of Representatives, South East had the highest (31.2%), followed by South West (24.5%); North Central (16.1%); South-South (13.4%); North West (8.9%); and

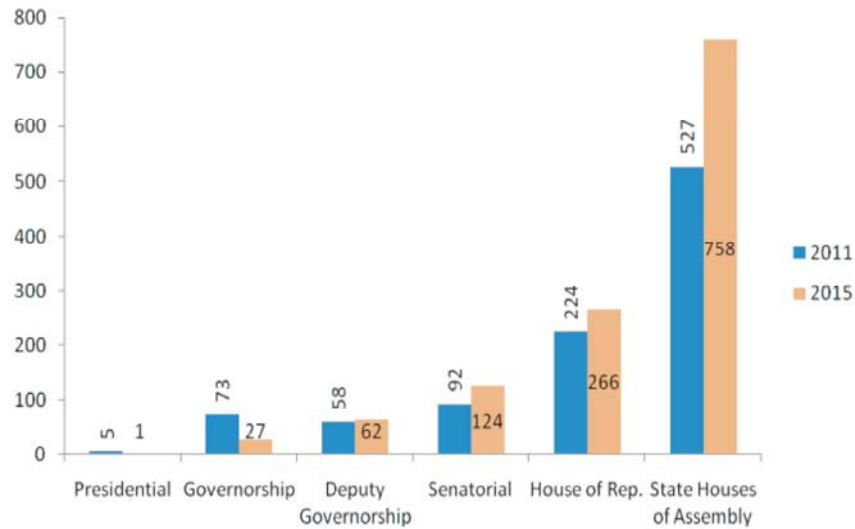


Fig. 3: Comparative Gender Data of Contestants in the 2011 and 2015 General Elections in Nigeria
Data Source: Idowu *et al* (2015)

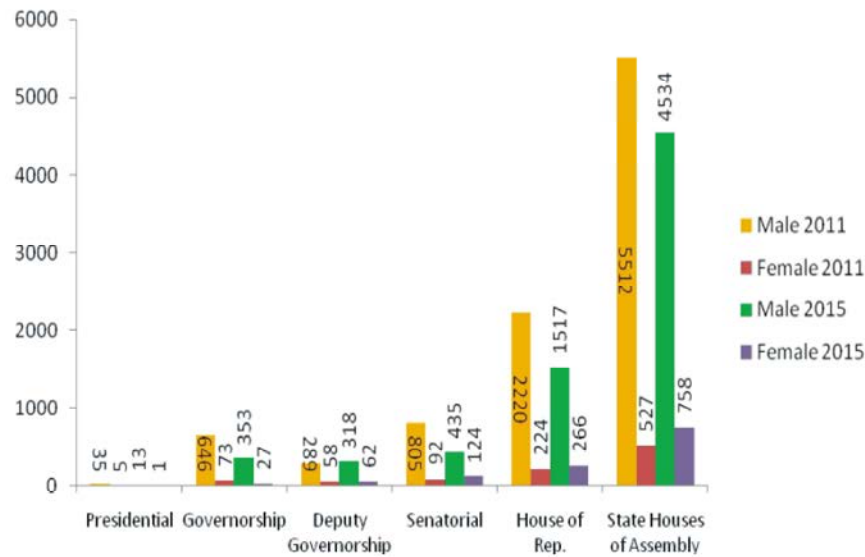


Fig. 4: Comparative Gender Percentage Analysis of Contestants in the 2011 and 2015 General Elections
Data Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

Table 3: Comparative Gender Data of Contestants in the 2011 and 2015 General Elections

S/N	Type of Election	Male			Female			Total	
		2011	2015	%	2011	2015	%	2011	2015
1	Presidential	35	13	-62.9	5	1	-80.0	40	14
2	Governorship	646	353	-45.4	73	27	-63.0	719	380
3	Deputy Governorship	289	318	10.0	58	62	6.9	347	380
4	Senatorial	805	435	-46	92	124	34.8	897	559
5	House of Rep.	2220	1517	-31.7	224	266	18.8	2444	1783
6	State Houses of Assembly	5512	4534	-17.7	527	758	43.8	6039	5292
Total	9218	6852	-25.7	921	1176	27.7	10139	8028	

Source: Idowu *et al* (2015)

Table 4: Comparative Gender Percentage Analysis of Contestants in the 2011 and 2015 General Elections

Type of Election	2011				2015			
	Male	Female	Total	%Female	Male	Female	Total	%Female
Presidential	35	5	40	12.5	13	1	14	7.1
Governorship	646	73	719	10.2	353	27	380	7.1
Deputy Governorship	289	58	347	16.7	318	62	380	16.3
Senatorial	805	92	897	10.3	435	124	559	22.2
House of Rep.	2220	224	2444	9.2	1517	266	1783	14.9
State Houses of Assembly	5512	527	6039	8.7	4534	758	5292	14.3
Total	9218	921	10139	9.1	6852	1176	8028	14.6

Data Source: Nwogbaga (2016)

Table 5: Comparison of Female Candidates that Contested in the 2015 General Elections for the National Assembly Seats in Geopolitical Zones

Geopolitical Zone	Senate	Percentage	House of Representatives	Percentage	Total	Percentage
North Central	20	16.5%	43	16.1%	63	16.1%
North East	8	6.6%	16	5.9%	24	6.1%
North West	9	7.4%	24	8.9%	33	8.5%
South East	29	24.0%	84	31.2%	113	29.1%
South West	34	28.1%	66	24.5%	100	25.6%
South-South	21	17.4%	36	13.4%	57	14.6%
Total	121	100%	269	100%	390	100%

Source: Awofeso and Odeyemi [4]; *percentage calculation is mine*

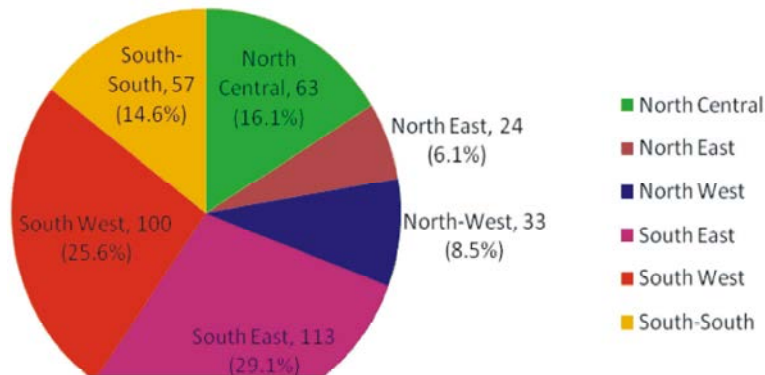


Fig. 5: Comparison of Female Candidates that Contested in the 2015 General Elections for the National Assembly Seats in Geopolitical Zones

Data Source: Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014)

Table 6: Women that Contested in the 2015 General Elections for National Assembly Seats in some selected States of Nigeria

State	Number
Enugu	34
Edo	1
Katsina	1
Taraba	1
Kano	1
Total	38

Source: INECnigeria.org

North East (5.9%). In the overall contests for the legislative seats as shown in Figure 5, South East participated most with 29.1%; followed by South West

(25.6%); North Central (16.1%); South-South (14.6%); North West (8.5%); and North East (6.1%) took last.

The data in Table 6 tends to support the findings in Table 5 which suggests that South East recorded the highest number of women that contested elections in 2015. This is because among the selected states, Enugu State recorded 34 women whereas other states like Edo, Katsina, Taraba and Kano had only 1 woman each that featured in the contests.

The data in Table 7 and Figure 6 showed that among the selected political parties that contested the 2015 general elections, MPPP with 46 (36.2%) female contestants was most accommodating to women;

Table 7: Women that contested in the 2015 General Elections for National Assembly Seats in Some Selected Political Parties

Political Party	Senate	House of Representatives	Total	Percentage
MPPP	16	30	46	36.2%
Labour	7	15	22	17.3%
PDP	7	19	26	20.5%
APC	7	26	33	26.0%
Total	37	90	127	100%

Source: INECnigeria.org; *percentage calculation is mine*
 Data Source: INECnigeria.org (2016)

Table 8: Distribution of the total number of female candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections against the number of male candidates according to the thirty-six states of the federation

State	Female		Male		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
ABIA	27	17.6	126	82.4	153
ADAMAWA	10	6.2	152	93.8	162
AKWA-IBOM	9	7.6	110	92.4	119
ANAMBRA	65	26.5	180	73.5	245
BAUCHI	7	5.9	111	94.1	118
BAYELSA	9	6.3	135	93.7	144
BENUE	11	12.1	80	87.9	91
BORNO	2	1.8	112	98.2	114
CROSS RIVER	10	13.9	62	86.1	72
DELTA	37	19.0	158	81.0	195
EBONYI	14	13.3	91	86.7	105
EDO	13	11.8	97	88.2	110
EKITI	37	28.0	95	72	132
ENUGU	67	40.6	98	59.4	165
GOMBE	7	6.9	94	93.1	101
IMO	30	12.1	218	87.9	248
JIGAWA	3	3.5	83	96.5	86
KADUNA	8	6.9	108	93.1	116
KANO	19	7.9	220	92.1	239
KATSINA	1	0.6	163	99.4	164
KEBBI	18	16.5	91	83.5	109
KOGI	22	19.1	93	80.9	115
KWARA	32	24.4	99	75.6	131
LAGOS	43	19.5	178	80.5	221
NASARAWA	2	1.6	123	98.4	125
NIGER	13	11.2	103	88.8	116
OGUN	42	21.1	157	78.9	199
ONDO	30	17.5	141	82.5	171
OSUN	72	38.1	117	61.9	189
OYO	28	10.7	234	89.3	262
PLATEAU	28	31.1	62	68.9	90
RIVERS	18	10.8	149	89.2	167
SOKOTO	3	1.7	172	98.3	175
TARABA	15	13.6	95	86.4	110
YOBE	1	0.6	168	99.4	169
ZAMFARA	5	3.3	145	96.7	150
	755	14.3	4,520	85.7	5,275

Source: Akpan (2015); *percentage calculation is mine*

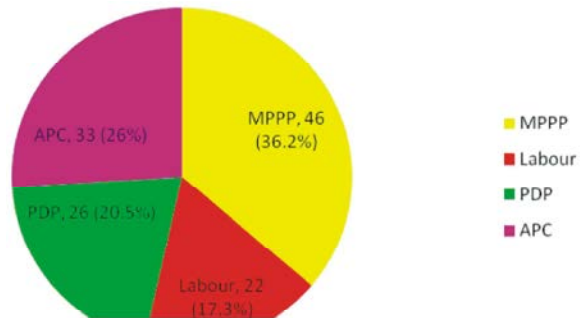


Fig. 6: Women that contested in the 2015 General Elections for National Assembly Seats in Some Selected Political Parties
 Data Source: INECnigeria.org (2016)

followed by APC with 33 (26.0%); then PDP 26 (20.5%); and Labour Party 22(17.3%). Although MPPP recorded 36.2%, it is not in relation to all the contested positions, but in relation to the number of women that contested the elections under the platform of the selected political parties; hence, it cannot stand as the realization in part, of the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action for Women in Nigeria. However, it shows that MPPP was most women-friendly.

Looking at Table 8 and Figure 7, it is observed that among the 36 states of the Federation, only Enugu and Osun States with 40.6% and 38.1% respectively beat the margin of 35% affirmative action at the contest level of electoral participation while the other 34 states were all below bench mark. But there was no guarantee that the 40.6% female contestants in Enugu and 38.1% female contestants in Osun won the positions they contested for as to constitute the 35% or more affirmative action. It is however discouraging that states like Yobe (0.6%) and Katsina (0.6%) were below 1% at the contest level of electoral participation with high tendency of complete non-inclusion in the elective positions. In all, out of the total number of 5,275 candidates cleared for the 2015 elections into the State Houses of Assembly, the women only represented 755 (14.3%) while men were 4,520 (85.7%) as captured in Figure 8 thus:

According to geopolitical zones as represented in Table 9 and Figure 9, the national policy of 35% Affirmative Action was not met by any at the contest level of electoral participation; the highest was South-West with 33.4%; followed by South-East with 26.9%; North-Central with 14.3%, South-South with 12.7%; North-West with 7.5%; and lastly North-East with the lowest percentage of 5.2%.

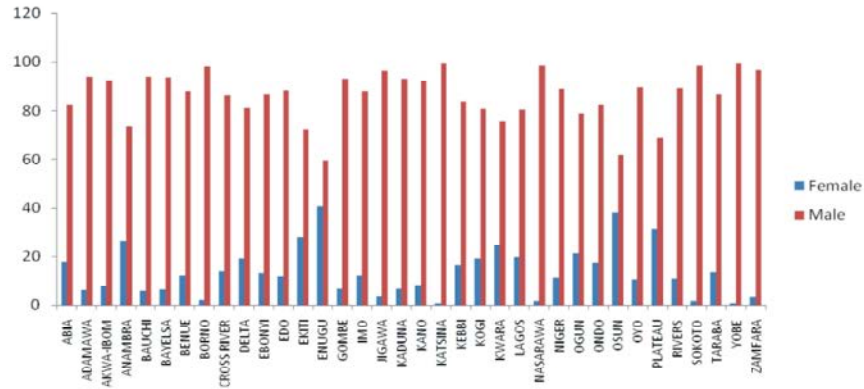


Fig. 7: Percentage Representation of candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections based on Gender in the 36 States of the Federation
Data Source: Akpan (2015)

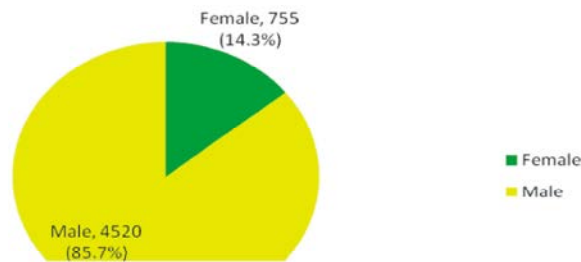


Fig. 8: Percentage Representation of the Total candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections based on Gender for the 36 States of the Federation
Data Source: Akpan (2015)

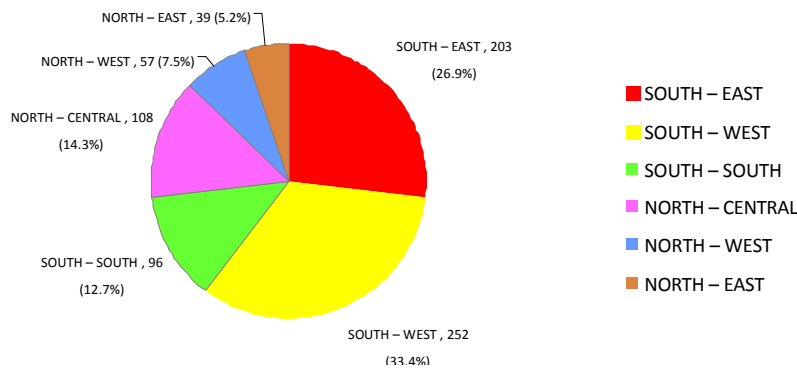


Fig. 9: Distribution of the total number of female candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections according to the six (6) Geo-political zones
Data Source: Akpan (2015)

Table 9: Distribution of the total number of female candidates cleared by INEC to contest the 2015 House of Assembly elections according to the six (6) Geo-political zones

Geopolitical Zone	Female Candidates	Percentage
SOUTH – EAST	203	26.9
SOUTH – WEST	252	33.4
SOUTH – SOUTH	96	12.7
NORTH – CENTRAL	108	14.3
NORTH – WEST	57	7.5
NORTH – EAST	39	5.2
Total	755	100

Source: Akpan (2015); percentage calculation is mine

Findings:

- The 35% Affirmative Action has not been achieved in Nigeria to a large extent.
- Socio-economic variables negatively affected the implementation of the national policy on 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria to a large extent.

DISCUSSION

The extent to which the 35% Affirmative Action has been achieved in Nigeria: The 35% Affirmative Action has not been achieved in Nigeria to a large extent. This submission is true to the extents that in all the elective positions examined for the various election years, women have never gone to the extent of winning up to 35% of the available positions. The highest that have ever been attained was for the Deputy Governors' position in which they had only 6 female representing 16.7% out of the 36 States of the Federation in 2007; after which the percentage dropped in the subsequent election years. Nevertheless, women have actually won and occupied various elective positions in Nigerian government and politics in different periods. But it is observed that some of the positions of chief executives (president and governors) have been exclusive preserves for men; only the positions of deputy governors and local government chairpersons have been occupied by women but not to the extent of achieving the 35% affirmative action. Appreciably, women have higher opportunities for political empowerment in legislative than executive positions. This claim is evident in the fact that women have been elected more into legislative positions than in executive positions in the various election years. It was only at the contest level that you would only observe that the number of women cleared to vie for elective positions were close or more than 35%; but still, that was obtainable only for legislative positions as shown in table 8 containing those cleared to contest for State Houses of Assembly.

The Socio-Economic Variables that negatively affected the Implementation of the National Policy on 35% Affirmative Action for Women in Nigeria: The 35% Affirmative Action for women in political representation has not been achieved in Nigeria due to the negative effects of socio-economic variables like education, culture, religion, violence and fund. The effects of these socio-economic variables on the enhancement of women's political representation manifested in the pattern of political participation shown in the various geopolitical

zones of the country where the identified variables are known to have had negative and discriminatory effects on women. For instance, the northern geopolitical zones of Nigeria are known to be educationally backward with cultural and religious restrictions on women especially in political participation. These variables virtually reflect in all their political activities such that in most election years, they constitute more or less voting population rather than contesting and winning elections. This has manifested in the level of political participation of the women in the area compared to women of the Southern Nigeria. The observations made in the data presented in various tables and figures suggest that women of Southern Nigeria outperformed women of Northern Nigeria in the various election years studied. For instance, in table 5 and figure 5, the number of women that contested the 2015 general elections were lowest in 2 northern geopolitical zones (North East-6.1% and North West-8.5%) but highest in 2 southern geopolitical zones (South East-29.1% and South West-25.6%); however, North Central (16.1%) was higher than South-South (14.6%) probably due to differences in population strength as well as level of political education and consciousness. Also, table 6 which showed women that contested in the 2015 general elections for National Assembly Seats in some selected states indicated that Enugu State had 34 female contestants while other states of Northern Geopolitical zones (Katsina, Taraba and Kano) had only 1 female candidate each. Furthermore, table 8 which showed the number of women cleared by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to contest House of Assembly Elections indicated that States of the South-East and South-West performed better than those of the Northern Geopolitical Zones. For instance, Enugu State had 40.6% while Osun had 38.1%. But the core Northern States where Islamic Culture, Religion and poor education for women prevail had the lowest records. This was captured in the summary of table 6 based on Geopolitical Zones: South-West (33.4%) was highest; followed by South-East (26.9%); North-Central (14.3%); South-South (12.7%); North-West (7.5%) and North-East (5.2%). Observably, the extent of women participation in politics at the contest level reflects in the election outcomes; for instance, in the 2015 general elections where women were known to have contested most in Enugu State and Osun State, they were able to produce Female Deputy Governors.

CONCLUSION

Women have not been sufficiently represented politically in terms of the 35% Affirmative Action because

the policy strategies adopted have not been effectively implemented as to largely reduce the socio-economic variables which negatively affect their political participation. In general terms, the 35% Affirmative Action for Women in elective positions have not been achieved in Nigeria due to the identified socio-economic variables that inhibited them. In the Northern Geopolitical Zones, the inhibiting factors are more or less culture, religion, poor education and funds. But in the Southern geopolitical zones, the inhibiting factors are more or less, fund, violence and partially poor political education than culture and religion.

Recommendations: In order to improve the level of women participation and representation in Nigerian politics so that the Beijing Declaration of 35% Affirmative Action can be attained with reduced influences of the identified socio-economic variables, the following recommendations need to be taken into serious considerations:

- Adequate Proper Positive political Education of women
- Confidence Building on the political potentials of Women
- Socio-Economic Re-orientation to enhance their political capacities
- Ideological Re-engineering to encourage Feminist thinking among women
- Forming “Association of Women Politicians” in different States and Localities.

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