

# Assessment of Women's Participation in Nigerian Politics: A Study of Oyun Local Government Area, Kwara State

By

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## Abstract

**W**omen's participation in political leadership has become a major discourse globally, but the level of their involvement still varies significantly from one country to another. In Africa, countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique have made considerable progress in women's political representation. This study assesses the level of women's participation in politics within Oyun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Despite constitutional guarantees and the adoption of affirmative action policies such as the 35% gender representation benchmark, women's involvement in

*political processes remains critically low. The study sets out to examine the extent to which the 35% affirmative action has been implemented to enhance women's political participation in Oyun Local Government Area. Along with evaluating the effect of low educational attainment on women's political participation, it also seeks to investigate how religious elitism influences women's engagement in public and political life. Furthermore, the study aims to examine how socioeconomic factors affect women's political participation in the local context. Along with evaluating the effect of low educational attainment on women's political participation, it also seeks to investigate how religious elitism*

*influences women's engagement in public and political life. Furthermore, the study aims to examine how socioeconomic factors affect women's political participation in the local context. The study identifies important impediments, such as socioeconomic barriers, low educational attainment, religious elitism, and cultural prejudices that endure in the study area, by reviewing the body of existing literature and making empirical observations. It draws attention to the ways that structural injustices and systemic marginalisation still prevent women from fully integrating into positions of political leadership. The results highlight the pressing need for more political education, economic empowerment, targeted policy interventions, and tactical changes to political party structures. The study comes to the conclusion that women's equitable and active participation in political decision-making at all levels is crucial to Nigeria's inclusive development and sustainable democratic governance.*

**Keywords:** Women Participation, Political Representation, Affirmative Action, Religious Elitism

## **Introduction**

Women's participation in political leadership has become a global discourse but the level of their involvement varies greatly from one country to another. In Africa, countries like Rwanda,

Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique have made significant progress in women's political representation. Townley (2019) says Rwanda leads globally with 61.3% women in its lower house. South Africa has also recorded a high increase in female parliamentary membership, 46.58% in its upper house. According to Wineinger and Nugent (2020) Namibia, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Uganda have also shown upward trend in women's political engagement.

Despite being referred to as the giant of Africa, Nigeria is far behind. According to Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014), Nigerian women have occupied very few elective positions since independence, making them invisible in the political narrative. In Nigeria, no woman has ever been elected governor, president, or vice president. Only eight female senators were elected during the peak period of 2007 (Adekoya, Akintayo, and Adegoke, 2015), making it extremely rare for women to hold elected office even at the legislative level. A long-standing gender disparity in Nigeria's political system is reflected in this low participation rate.

According to Arowolo and Abe (2008, cited in Oyesomi, 2015), political participation refers to the actions that citizens take in order to have an impact on public decisions. Voting is only one aspect of it; other activities include

running for office, taking part in political debates, and standing for office. Hans Klein (2005, cited in Adekoya et al., 2015) goes on to stress that the freedom of expression, association formation, and election-related activities are the main sources of political participation. Nigerian women do not fully enjoy the constitutional protections found in Chapter Four, Sections 30 and 40 of the 1999 Constitution. The exclusion of women from Nigerian politics has a long history. Women like Moremi of Ife, Madam Tinubu of Lagos, and Queen Amina of Zaria occupied influential political and social roles prior to colonisation. But with the advent of colonial rule, political structures were redesigned to sideline women's leadership roles (Aligwe, 2011, in Folarin, 2019). Adekoya, Akintayo and Adegoke (2015) say colonial administration emphasized male superiority and eroded the traditional political influence women had in precolonial times.

The fight for women's political inclusion has been a long and difficult one, even in Nigeria after independence. Social structures continue to favour male dominance despite the 1999 Constitution's advocacy for gender equality. According to Olufunmi (2006, cited in Adekoya et al., 2015), a directive to have at least one woman in each state's cabinet was issued during the Buhari/Idiagbon administration, but the policies

had little effect on altering the ingrained patriarchal political culture.

The same problems are also pervasive in Kwara State's Oyun Local Government Area. One major barrier to women's participation in politics is religious elitism, or more specifically, the way in which women are perceived in some religious and traditional contexts. According to Ige (2010), religious teachings are sometimes misunderstood to dissuade women from taking part in politics. Additionally, Suleiman (2009, as cited in Ige, 2010) contends that lack of political funding, male chauvinism, and violence are powerful disincentives for women to run for office.

Moreover, low levels of education among women in Oyun Local Government limit their political engagement and awareness. The majority of women lack the educational qualifications and political exposure that would allow them to compete on equal terms in politics. Adekoya et al. (2015) point out that even though women have always been vehicles for political mobilization, their access to education remains disproportionately lower compared to men, thereby inhibiting their opportunities for leadership.

The socio-economic factor also aggravates the challenge. Economic constraints make women incapable

of financing political campaigns or establishing the networks that lead to electoral success. Okafor (2010) argues that there is a common erroneous assumption that women are biologically inappropriate for intense political activity, an impression that discourages qualified women from joining politics. Ige (2010) also observes that gender inequality in politics is fostered by societal norms that promote male dominance in leadership roles.

Even as Kwara State has just enacted the Political Offices (Gender Composition) Bill 2021, making 35% women representation in executive appointments mandatory, the reality on the ground suggests snail-like movement. Despite the constitutional guarantees and policy interventions, women's participation in politics remains more symbolic rather than substantive.

In this context, this study seeks to critically explore the extent of women's participation in politics in Oyun Local Government Area, Kwara State and aims to discuss the structural obstacles they face, understand the implications of affirmative action policies, and recommend feasible solutions for strengthening women's political participation at the local level.

## **Problem of the study**

The research highlighted major issues that are still actively acting against women's involvement in politics in Oyun Local Government Area, Kwara State.

Firstly, the 35% affirmative action policy remains poorly implemented. Even though there are policies promoting gender inclusion, they are not strictly adhered to. Women's appointments into political positions are usually symbolic instead of substantive, as women are given positions that do not carry much actual political influence.

Second, religious elitism is another significant challenge. Religious doctrines in the majority of Oyun Local Government communities are interpreted to strengthen the patriarchal values. The religious teachings are routinely used to legitimise the exclusion of women from leadership positions, and they dissuade women from active engagement in political processes.

Thirdly, low levels of education among women in the region are a reason for their political exclusion. The majority of the women lack the formal education necessary to comprehend complex political processes, campaign, and engage in public debates. Disadvantage in education limits exposure to political rights and processes, rendering them less competitive during elections and appointments.

Fourth, socio-economic factors significantly jeopardize women's political fortunes. The exorbitant cost of political campaigns, such as purchasing nomination forms, mobilizing supporters, and running electoral campaigns, is beyond most women's capabilities in Oyun Local Government. Financial incapacitation thus excludes a number of capable women from contesting for political positions.

Fifth, party internal politics are also male-dominated and frequently discriminatory. Women seeking political office are faced with institutional biases within the party machinery in favor of male aspirants. Party nominations are usually stacked against female aspirants, and women are generally limited to supportive rather than leadership positions in party hierarchies.

Furthermore, cultural beliefs ingrained in social norms continue to discourage women from taking part in politics. There is a general attitude that politics is a male domain, and women who engage in politics are stigmatized, given derogatory titles, or discouraged by community pressures.

Lastly, the political environment is characterized by violence and intimidation that is disproportionately against women. Political violence discourages many women from active participation as they are likely to be more vulnerable to harassment and violence,

especially during political campaigns and elections.

## **Objective of the Study**

- i. To examine the extent to which the 35% affirmative action has been implemented to enhance women's political participation in Oyun Local Government Area.
- ii. To investigate how religious elitism affects women's participation in political and public life in Oyun Local Government Area.
- iii. To assess the impact of low educational attainment on women's participation in politics in Oyun Local Government Area.
- iv. To analyze how socio-economic factors influence women's political participation in Oyun Local Government Area.

## **Research Questions**

- i. To what extent does the 35% affirmative action been implemented in enhancing women's political participation in Oyun Local Government Area?
- ii. How does religious elitism affect women's participation in political and public life in Oyun Local Government Area?
- iii. What impact does low educational attainment have on women's participation in politics in Oyun

Local Government Area?

- iv. How do socio-economic factors influence women's political participation in Oyo Local Government Area?

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Political Participation**

Political participation typically means all of the activities by citizens of a society to select their leaders and also influence public opinions and laws. Maclosky (1968) defines it as the civic engagement of individuals either directly or indirectly in governance processes. Weiner also explained that political participation derives from freedoms of speech, association, and assembly, enabling citizens to express their political will. Political participation can range from activities such as voting in elections, contesting elections, attending rallies, and making political. Milbrath (1965) also categorizes participation into different kinds. They are; gladiatorial, transitional, and spectator activities. Gladiatorial participation includes being largely involved in political activities like contesting elections; transitional involves moderate engagement like attending political rallies, while spectator participation is limited to voting and supporting political parties. In Nigeria,

specifically among women, participation tends to remain at the spectator level, reflecting that there is a major structural limitations with the system. It is very important for any society that wants to have a vibrant democratic system to make sure that there is an active and meaningful level of political participation. Despite this, so many limitations and barriers are actively discouraging women from fully participating in politics. Some of the barriers include; society biases, unsupportive political structures, and also economic differences. All of these barriers reinforces male dominance and discourages inclusive governance.

#### **Women's Participation**

Women's participation is not just voting in election and holding uninfluential public offices, it also means being in the capacity to influence public policies and also make political decisions at all levels (IPU 2024). The concept of women participation has been positively developing around the world and even some parts of Africa has positively aligned with this change. Examples of this countries are, Rwanda and South Africa (International IDEA, 2024). Despite all of this, representation is still very low in countries like Nigeria. There is evidence that women hold less than 5% of elected offices in Nigeria (Bello & Osaghae, 2023). Study has shown that

Cultural stereotypes, patriarchal norms, religious elitism are very big barriers that are negating the development of women participation (Ette & Akpang-Obong, 2023). The adoption of the affirmative framework, especially the 35% benchmark that has been set for women participation is very much lacking in Nigeria (Afolayan & Adesina, 2022). Violence, vote buying and gender discrimination are not the only proven barriers to women's involvement in the political process, there is also the fact that Political activities frequently try to relegate women when choosing candidates (Nabudere & Musa, 2023).

The "3Rs" formula is very important in relation to solving the problem of women being marginalized in Political participation. The "3Rs", representation, resources, and rights are tools for combating the problems of Women's voices being restricted in the lack or limited access to political platforms, funding and education.

Social media is becoming an increasing useful tool for opening up new avenues for advocacy and mobilisation, however, it is still not a strong enough tool to get past institutional obstacles (International IDEA, 2024). According to this literature, we can pinpoint that there is a need for meaningful participation of women, just giving women a little percentage inclusion is not enough. Also, policy changes societal awareness and gender

equal sensitive party structures are need to adress these issues and change how society views female leadership.

### **Women's Political Participation in Nigeria**

Women's political participation in Nigeria has experienced fluctuating fortunes from pre-colonial to contemporary times. Historically, women played active roles in governance, especially in Yoruba societies where titles such as Iyalode and Erelu symbolized female political power (Ikpe, 2004). However, colonial rule marginalized women by restructuring political systems to favor male dominance, notably through constitutions like the Clifford Constitution of 1922 which excluded women from political engagement. Post-independence Nigeria witnessed limited improvement despite constitutional guarantees of equality. Although women have mobilized significantly during elections, their representation in elective and appointive positions remains abysmally low. No woman has been elected president, vice-president, or governor since Nigeria's independence. Initiatives like the 35% affirmative action policy aim to bridge this gap, but enforcement remains weak. Cultural barriers, religious elitism, economic challenges, and patriarchal party structures continue to limit women's political opportunities. Despite isolated successes, the political landscape largely reflects deep-rooted gender inequalities,

making women's political participation an urgent area for reform to achieve inclusive democracy.

### **Concept of Politics**

Politics is fundamentally about the distribution of power, governance, and the resolution of societal conflicts. The term originates from the Greek word polis, meaning city-state, reflecting the organization of communal life. Lasswell and Kaplan define politics as the study of shaping and sharing power, emphasizing both the competition for and the management of power in society. Okuosa (1996), quoting Etzioni (1970), describes politics as the contest for control of the public policy-making process within government structures. In theory, democratic systems should offer equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of gender, to participate in politics. However, in Nigeria, entrenched patriarchal values, colonial legacies, and socio-economic inequalities have historically skewed political participation in favor of men. The Marxist view sees politics as a struggle between dominant and subordinate classes, a perspective that aligns with the systemic exclusion of women from political power in Nigeria. Understanding politics through these lenses highlights the structural barriers women face and underscores the need for deliberate efforts to dismantle gendered political inequalities.

### **Empirical review**

The participation of Women in politics has drawn so much academic interest globally, there has been major emphasis on what really is the determinant of political participation and representation. Nigeria as a case study has shown that, historical, socio cultural, religious and economic determinants have majorly been barriers to the participation of women in politics. Historically in Nigeria, before the colonial government area, women played important political roles in so many of the Nigerian societies. Ikpe (2004) states that women in pre-colonial yoruba society occupied very important position such as the Iyalode, Erelu, and they were even cases of women being in kingship positions. The introduction of colonialism brought in marginalization of women in the large sense that they were not included as a sect in the new political structures that the colonial government established; this became the root cause for future political participation.

Furthermore, Adamu (2012), as cited in Michael, Bukola, and Owolabi (2015), strongly believed that colonialism was built on the idea of male supremacy and this breed room for gender discrimination and also caused lesser number of women to participate in political leadership. After independence, even though the constitution granted women political rights, the reality at the time was of persistent inclusion of

women. Omotola (2007) communicated that the marginalization of women from Nigeria's political landscape is not only a cultural thing but also due to the amount of violence that is present in the political process both of which women are structurally disadvantaged against.

The analysis conducted between 1999 and 2019 by Ohaja et al. (2022) show that the level of women's representation is still very low across the levels of government. This despite more women being registered and more voting by more in elections, there is still a standing scarcity of women in elective posts, showing that there is a disconnection between participation and representation. The study established that the pattern of women being mobilized as just voters for electing men into political office, with no existing corresponding of these women in leadership roles, this speaks to the underlying structural inequalities that the political party structure as the societal system at large.

Efforts at addressing the imbalance have been through the National Gender Policy that recommends 35% affirmative action for women in political appointments. However, according to Kolawole et al. (2012), the policy has been more symbolic in enforcement, with few states and political parties actually enforcing the gender quota. And where women have been appointed, they are often to

politically peripheral positions that do not have actual decision-making power.

When comparing the landscape in Nigeria with other nations like Rwanda and South Africa who have been able to achieve a more effective gender quotas that have led to higher level of women representation (Townley, 2019). Nigeria's delay in catching up highlights the importance of a restructure while also targeting the systems that political parties operate, also, a cultural reorientation is needed together with the economic empowerment of women. Guzman (2004) suggests that beyond just numbers, women inclusion in political activities must also mean that they have realtime influence on policies and laws that shape national development.

In all, the review of these scholarly literature shows that there has been a major advance in women's participation from a global standpoint, however, Nigeria still experiences face entrenched challenges that require complex and rigorous interventions to overcome.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study is heavily based on the Liberal Feminist Theory. The LF theory advocates that women's limited access to basic civil rights and socio-economica resources such as education and employment is what gives birth to the

term Gender Inequality. Giddens (2006) expresses that liberal feminism is a school of thought that demands removal of barriers and restrictions to women's full participation in the public service space. Samkange (2015), sees Liberal feminism as an ideology that advocates for gradual changes by preaching for equal rights for everyone and using policies and laws that promote equality.

The theory contends that women should not be hindered by biased education systems, cultural practices, or work environment obstacles from having full participation in societal affairs, including politics. It is its belief that men and women are equal and that both deserve equal opportunities without restriction or prejudice on the basis of gender.

In Nigeria, traditional beliefs in the inferiority of women have persisted in promoting gender disparities in political participation. Religious and cultural norms continue to position men as dominant actors in the social, political, economic, and religious spheres. Women's political engagements, societal achievements, and leadership opportunities are therefore often trivialized or ignored. Kasomo (quoted in Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015) is of the opinion that women's participation in decision-making is key to the effective articulation of women's needs and interests.

Furthermore, Azuh, Egharevba, and Azuh (2014, cited in Tama & Maiwuya, 2022) note that Nigerian women have fewer political engagements, income-generating activities, labor force participation, and parliamentary representation compared to men. The disparities highlight the need for greater focus on liberal feminist values to achieve actual gender equality in Nigeria.

Liberal feminist theory is therefore appropriate to the present research insofar as it highlights the importance of access to education, political rights, and economic empowerment in promoting the active participation of women in political leadership. It provides a lens through which to comprehend the structural barriers that face women and emphasizes the necessity of structural reforms in eliminating gendered disparities within political spheres.

### **Brief History of Women Involvement in Nigerian Politics**

The history of women involvement in politics in Nigeria started at the pre-colonial time, when women played key roles in the governance and management of communities. In the majority of the ethnic communities, particularly the Yoruba people, women played significant political positions such as the Iyalode, Erelu, and Iya-Oba, which gave them the right to influence their societies' decision-

making (Adeleke, 2014). Historical personalities like Queen Amina of Zaria, a renowned war warrior and politician, depict to what level women exercised power and control in pre-colonial Nigeria (Abubakar, 2015). Similarly, women like Moremi of Ile-Ife and Madam Tinubu of Lagos were crucial in combating colonial forces and struggling for the well-being of their people (Akinyemi, 2010; Adeleke, 2014).

However, colonialism transformed the political existence of Nigerian women in a fundamental way. British colonial administrative structures excluded women, locking them out of formal politics and confining them to the space of the home. The 1922 Clifford Constitution, for instance, disfranchised women by confining the franchise to male property owners, thus gender discrimination became institutionalized in the new political system (Falola, 2008).

Despite such failures, Nigerian women remained actively involved in political protests and resistance movements. One such instance is the Aba Women's Riot of 1929, during which women in thousands protested colonial tax policy and administrative injustices (Ekechi, 1981). Other female activists such as Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, and Hajiya Gambo Sawaba carried on fighting for women's political rights under colonial and early post-colonial

rule. Their efforts culminated in modest gains, such as the election of women into houses of assembly and prioritization of women's concerns in national politics (Ajayi, 2013; Ekpo, 1990; Sawaba, 1995).

Women had few voices even in the era of post-independence. Women were largely absent from electoral processes and political appointments in the First Republic. Despite the fact that the 1979 Constitution recognized equal political rights of women and men to be in office, structural and cultural barriers continued to prevent women from being included in power (Ogunbiyi, 1991). The Second Republic also made limited gains with some women acquiring legislative representation as well as ministerial appointments, though representation remained deplorably inadequate (Falola, 2008).

Military rule between 1983 and 1999 further limited political participation for women because military governments gave prominence to security over democratic procedures. Nonetheless, some of the First Ladies, including Mrs. Mariam Babangida, through the introduction of programs like the Better Life Programme for Rural Women, sought to empower women during this time (Mamman, 1992).

The transition to civilian rule in 1999 offered a new opportunity for deepening

women's political engagement. Nevertheless, despite an increase in female voters and political appointees, women's representation in elected positions has remained at persistently low levels. The adoption of policies such as the National Gender Policy that advocates for at least 35% affirmative action in favor of women in political appointments has hitherto not yielded spectacular outcomes on the ground (National Gender Policy, 2006).

Kwara State set an historical precedent with the Political Offices (Gender Composition) Bill 2021, mandating at least 35% women in executive council appointments. It is a reflection of growing consciousness on the need for gender sensitivity in governance, although implementation poses a problem (Kwara State House of Assembly, 2021).

In general, though there has been an extensive history of political engagement and activism among Nigerian women, limiting systemic barriers based on colonial legacies, indigenous traditions, religious selectivity, and socio-economic inequalities continue to hinder their full participation in politics today (Ogunbiyi, 1991; Sawaba, 1995).

## **Research Methodology**

In order to give a thorough grasp of women's political participation in Kwara

State's Oyun Local Government Area, this study used a mixed-method research design that combined quantitative and qualitative techniques. This method's justification stems from its capacity to record participants' deeper contextual experiences as well as quantifiable patterns. A representative sample of residents of voting age was given structured questionnaires to complete in order to gather quantitative data. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gauge respondents' political engagement, perceptions of participation barriers, and knowledge of gender-related policies. In order to facilitate comparative analysis, demographic data was also collected, and responses were quantified using a five-point Likert scale.

Semi-structured interviews with important stakeholders, such as activists, community elders, and female political leaders, were used to gather qualitative data to supplement the survey. Rich insights into the socioeconomic, religious, and cultural factors affecting women's political roles were offered by these interviews. The target population was anyone living in Oyun Local Government who was at least 18 years old; the 2006 census estimated that there were 53,619 people of voting age. Stratified random sampling was used to guarantee inclusive representation across wards, age groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and the Taro Yamane formula was used to

calculate the right sample size with a 5% margin of error.

Experts in gender studies and political science examined the interview guide and questionnaire to guarantee its validity. A pilot study in a nearby local government area was used to test reliability, and internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. In order to increase the credibility of the data, the study also used triangulation, confirming findings by consulting several sources.

Simple frequency tables and percentages were used to analyse the questionnaire data, and thematic analysis was used to examine the interview transcripts. A nuanced investigation of the scope, obstacles, and motivators of women's political participation in the study region was made possible by this multi-layered approach.

## **Summary of Findings**

The study assessed the extent of women's political participation in Oyun Local Government Area, Kwara State, and identified factors influencing their participation in politics. Findings were that implementation of the 35% affirmative action policy in the research study area has largely been symbolic and of minimal substantial impact. Despite the fact that political parties and government agencies occasionally grant

women political seats, they are symbolic and oriented to symbolic representation and not to gender balance.

Religious elitism was a big setback to women's political involvement. Religious institutions in Oyun Local Government have a tendency to disseminate patriarchal values that discourage women from pursuing leadership at the pinnacle. Religion and culture position women in family spheres, inhibiting their public lives and curbing their participation in politics.

It was also discovered that education plays an important role in women's political participation. Most of the women in Oyun Local Government tend to have low levels of education, which affect their competitiveness, confidence, and political awareness. With inadequate education, women will not know about how political systems function, campaign, or access leadership roles.

Socio-economic circumstances further aggravate the disadvantage of women. Economic marginalization deprives women of access to means essential for political mobilization and power. Financial challenges seriously hinder the ability of women to fund political campaigns, cover nomination fees, and create the networks politically necessary for victory.

Secondly, internal party politics was a constraining factor. Political parties in Oyun Local Government, just like the majority of Nigeria, are male-dominated, and they have structures and practices that do not allow female candidates. Even when female politicians are interested in sitting in government seats, they are put in less competitive seats or utilized for mobilization without being included in decision-making processes.

Despite constitutional provisions and affirmative policies aimed at fostering gender equality, institutionalized social attitudes, religious doctrine, educational disadvantage, and economic resource constraints continue to constrain women's full participation in political life. The findings indicate the need for comprehensive solutions that target both structural and cultural barriers to political empowerment of women.

## **Conclusion**

The study aimed the participation of women in politics in Oyun Local Government Area, Kwara State, and identify some of the core factors militating against them full participating in politics. The findings had shown that even though they have been provisions in the constitution and affirmative action policies to ensure gender equality, there is still a low record of women participation in politics. The 35% affirmative action

presents the beginning of a symbolic, political woman recruitment tending to be to lower positions.

Religious elitism, cultural values, low education levels, and socio-economic constraints were also seen as major challenges to women's political engagement. Religious institutions and conservative cultural practices have also been major reinforcers of gender-stereotypic roles that confine women to home making roles that largely discourage political ambitions. Educational disadvantages also largely contributes as barrier to this scenario by constricting women's familiarity with political processes and decreasing their drive for politics. Also, economic losses deny women the resources required in successful political campaigns, with the male-dominant party machinery continuously sidelining women candidates.

The study concludes that low of representation women in political offices is not that women are not interested or unable, but due to societal and systemic structural obstacles inherent in social, religious, and political systems. Unless there is a conscious and consistent effort made to dismantle these barriers, the goal of creating gender equality in political representation will never be achieved. Real democratic governance and sustainable development require

the active and equitable participation of women in all facets of political life.

## **Recommendations**

Although Nigeria's has adopted the 35% affirmative action policy, the study's findings showed that implementation at the grassroots level, particularly in the Oyun Local Government Area of Kwara State, is still very much weak and mostly representative. There is a very small amount of women who hold elective or decision-making positions, and their political representation still falls short of the standard. This answers the first research question by showing that although the policy is in place a theory, it lacks consistency and it is largely unimplemented, which limits its ability to increase women's political participation in governance.

The study concluded that religious elitism largely influences public opinion and limits women's political participation in response to the second research question. Religious norms are frequently communicated and presented in local government communities in ways that discourage women from taking leadership roles, fostering an atmosphere in which women's political ambition is either repressed or seen as improper. The data also provided a clear answer to the third research question, which was about educational attainment. The

findings showed that there is a direct relationship between women's lower political participation and their lower educational attainment. Due in large part to their limited access to formal education, lots of women in Oyun LGA are either ignorant of their political rights or lack the self-assurance and abilities necessary to participate actively in political processes.

The results of the fourth question, which looked at the influence of socioeconomic factors, showed that poverty, a largely weak financial strength, and household duties greatly prevent women from pursuing political ambitions. These limitations frequently hinder women's ability to network, run campaigns, and maintain visibility within party structures.

In light of these results, the study suggests a different and more structured grassroots application of the 35% affirmative action policy, complete with legally binding quotas and accountability-ensuring monitoring systems. Also, in order to reinterpret cultural and religious doctrines in a way that enables more women's inclusion in governance, religious leaders and institutions should have gender-sensitive conversations. Furthermore, funding for women's formal and civic education ought to be given top priority in order to equip them with the skills and self-assurance required that allows them to engage well in politics. To break

down socioeconomic barriers and level the playing field for everyone, economic empowerment initiatives, focused funding, and assistance for aspiring female politicians would go a long way to tips. These suggestions support the call for diversely complex strategy to achieve gender equality in political participation and are in line with the goals of the study.

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