Information Behaviour and Political Participation of Women in Ijebuland of Ogun State, Nigeria

Fagbe, AbimbolaOyindamola[1], OgbuiyiSussan Udoaku[2], OgbuiyiDarlina Chima[3], OrioguChuks Daniel[4]

Babcock UniversityLibrary, Illisan-Remeo, Ogun State, Nigeria[1], Babcock UniversityLibrary, Illisan-Remeo, Ogun State, Nigeria[2], Lead City University Library, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria[3], Nigerian Turkish Nile University Library, Abuja, Nigeria[4]

Abstract

The paper investigated information behaviour and political participation of women in ijebuland of Ogun state, Nigeria.Six research questions guided thestudy and the data collection instrument used was the questionnaire, the study adopted survey research method.The findings of the study revealed that 70% of the respondents participated actively in politics and belong to a political party known as CAN (Action Congress of Nigeria). The study shows that information sources like Radio/Television, Books/Library, Newspaper/Magazine etc are readily available and often consulted by the respondents. Also the respondents indicated that they actively participates in the party meetings, women orientation and empowerment programmes and their information needs are basically on political issues, economic issues, marital responsibilities and empowerment programs. However, majority of the respondents indicated that education, economic factors, gender issues etcare the major hindrances to their information behaviour and political participation. Therefore, the study recommends that special emphasis should be laid on mandatory and free education of the girl child, making it the corporate responsibility of all parties involved in nation building from immediate family, the community, the society and the governments at all levels.

Keywords: *Information behaviour, Political participation, women, Ijebuland, Ogun state*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, women encounter diverse challenges in their quest for political participation irrespective of their large number that fails to be translated to political strength. Political participation is good for democracy, but all democracies are plagued by systematic inequalities in participation (Lijphart, 1997; Galston, 2001). One of the most persistentbarrier has been gender inequality, which ensure that women are relegated to the background from communal level up to the federal level. Despite the number of women getting involved in politics, the percentages of successes is low pale in comparison to those experienced by their male counterparts as seen in the last concluded Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) primaries, where the only female presidential candidate could only secure a single vote (her own vote).

Even though women politicians are making efforts to actively participate in their various parties, the fact still remains that there are two major inching barriers like socio-cultural, and procedural factors which they must surmount in order to achieve their dreams. However, the socio-cultural factors comprise of religious, patriarchal culture, lack of experience, family responsibilities, while procedural factors comprises of unfair party nominee systems, electoral and campaign systems which can be associated violence in terms of rape and killing, discrimination, bribery, lobbying, carting away of ballot paper as well as rigging of election. These socio-cultural factors are more fundamental, while the procedural factors tend to be derived or constructed. Therefore, this study adopts the effective short-term method of reducing barriers that focuses on the procedural factors rather than attacking the socio-cultural factors was explored.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Information society expresses a society formation in which the information flows in a rapid pace at a global scale in every aspect of life and the trained individuals make a difference; that is ruled by the concepts as flexibility, diversity, creativity and innovation and a network comprised of sophisticated influences (Gultan, 2003).The information society is where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life (Olorunda, 2004). The main objective of information in the society is to empower people through access to and use of information, but there is concern that people, including

women, are more distant than others from the opportunities presented in the information society.

The concept of 'how people need, seek, manage, give and use information in different contexts both actively and passively is regarded as their information behaviour. Wilson (2000) asserts that information behavior is the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use. Thus, it includes face to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information as in, for example, watching TV advertisements, without any intention to act on the information given. Information behaviour of people differs depending on the reasons for which they intend to exploit information and their perturbing information needs. Thus access should be provided to accurate, timely and relevant information which will aid people meet their socio-economic; political needs and also enable them to meaningfully play a part in national developmental process of the society.

Availability of information and information sources with regards to their roles in society and the subsequent use of this information are of paramount importance to any group of people. However, the creation, manipulation, and distribution of information have become one of the most important activities in today's world. Although, in the domain of economics, culture and politics, efforts towards attaining their goals depend highly on effective communication of information. Okwilagwe (1993) identified three categories of communication media available for people. They are:

a. Interpersonal or people-based/face to face media which includes, the news or press conference, interviewing, speech making, public meetings, group discussions, drama, home visit, role playing etc.
b. Mass media, which includes radio, Television, Newspapers, cinema, folk theatre, billboards, magazines etc.
c. Other media (not confined to mass media) which includes, publications and loose leaflets, video (forum), film strips, slides, exhibition etc.

Access to technology remains an imperative that only the privileged enjoy. Previously, the statement "Information is power" was almost a cliché. Today, and in the coming century, access to technology is at the basis of global power relations, and therefore, also a determinant feature of gender relations and women's empowerment. Therein, some factors have been identified as constraints to accessing or utilizing information. Such include; illiteracy or lack of knowledge, poverty, lack of infra-structural facilities and lack of interest. (Matthacidesona, 1997 as cited by Adelani, 2002).

According to Afolabi (2009) politics is "a system of administration that ensures that there is orderliness and development in a society". He went further to analyze politics as 'Representative democracy, as practiced in Nigeria currently, which entails conferring responsibilities on a few on behalf of the general community or at least the majority to represent their interests. In order to ensure this; in the true sense of it, there should be proportionality of the two genders in the representative body. However as it stands in the case of Nigeria, one gender (men) dominate, thus relegating the other (women) to the background, thereby defeating the main idea of a representative democracy. Participation in politics generally refers to the ways the citizen of a community exercise their rights over the government process. Milbrath(1955) and Afolabi, (2009), presented this to include, "voting, taking part in decision making, holding party and public offices, being a candidate for office, soliciting social funds, attending caucus meeting, attending political rallies, contributing time to political campaigns" etc. This therefore indicated that every legal citizen regardless of gender or class has a right to be part of the decision making process that would affect their lives and that of their community (Afolabi, 2009).Political participation, as one of the tenets of democracy, is found to be liberal and unrestrictive. Subscribing to this, Okolie (2004) perceived political participation as "freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision process and the right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise". Political participation is one of the key ingredients of democracy in its real sense.

Nevertheless, gender inequalities in political participation remain an important part of "democracy's unresolved dilemma" of unequal participation (Lijphart, 1997). Although, when proper political enlightenment is created, women information behaviour will actively change to project and increase their interest in political participation. EtengandOpeke (2015) assert that women occupy very scanty leadership positions and are grossly underrepresented in the strategic height of politics. Moreover, gender gaps persist in most other types of political participation, and men are significantly more involved than women in a number of outlets such as strikes, demonstrations, contacting political officials, and political party membership (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Marien et al. 2010; Inglehart and Norris,2003). Gender inequalities is a critical issue that has pose a great obstacle to women in participating actively in the

politics of the day.Lawless and Fox (2008) observerd that:

> We link this persistent gender gap in political ambition to several factors. Women are less likely than men to be willing to endure the rigours of a political campaign. They are less likely than men to be recrcruited to run for office. They are more likey than men to have the freedoom to reconcile work and family obligation with a political career. They are less likely than men to think they are "qualified" to run for office. And they are less likely than men to perceive a fair political environment.

It is pertinent to note that, women constitute majority of voters but score very minimal success in political offices. This was true in the 2011 Nigerian elections as well, only 9% of candidates were female (Denney, 2011).This why this studyinvestigatedinformation behaviour and political participation of women in Ijebuland of Ogun State, Nigeria.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women in Nigeria are yet to take up their rightful position in the Nigerian political system. Even though women were given a quota allocation of 30% into elected positions, the numbers so far have not been anywhere near the 30% allocation. Many reasons responsible for this range from socio-cultural to economic and to religious reasons. A major reason could also be that women neither had, nor used relevant information that aid them in making decisions that would help them in participating well in the political processes. Women information behaviour with regard to political decision making has thus become an important issue worthy of investigation. Therefore, the study sought to find out how women searched for and used political information that gives them the needed recognition in political activities.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to investigate information behaviour and political participation of women in Ijebuland of Ogun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this studyare to:

1. ascertain the nature of women participation in the political process in Ijebuland of Ogun State;
2. ascertain the levels of women's participation in politicsinIjebuland of Ogun State;
3. determine the information needs of women for political participation in Ijebuland of Ogun State;
4. ascertain the source consulted by women in the seek of political information in Ijebuland of Ogun State;
5. determine the relationship between women information behaviour and political participation;
6. find out factors that constitute hindrances to women information behaviour and political participation in Ijebuland, Ogun State.

V. METHODOLOGY

Survey research method was adopted for the study and structured questionnaire was used to collect data.Two hundred and twenty five (225) womenpoliticianswere sampledand completed for analysis using frequency counts, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation, to answer the research questions.

VI. FINDINGS

Table 4.1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Distribution of Respondents by Age		Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21-30 yrs	69	30.7	30.7
	31-41 yrs	57	25.3	56.0
	41-50 yrs	77	34.2	90.2
	51-60 yrs	11	4.9	95.1
	61-70 yrs	11	4.9	100.0
	Total	225	100.0	
Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status				
		Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	70	31.1	31.1
	Married	155	68.9	100.0
	Total	225	100.0	

Distribution of Respondents by Religious Affiliation				
		Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Christian,	169	75.1	75.1
	Muslim	56	24.9	100.0
	Total	225	100.0	
		Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ph.D	12	5.3	5.3
	M.A	11	4.9	10.2
	MSc	57	25.3	35.6
	BSc.	122	54.2	89.8
	Any other	23	10.2	100.0
	Total	225	100.0	
Group Distribution of Respondents by Ethnic Group				
		Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yoruba	179	79.6	79.6
	Hausa	11	4.9	84.4
	Igbo	24	10.7	95.1
	Others	11	4.9	100.0
	Total	225	100.0	
Distribution of Respondents by Constituencies				
		Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IJEBU WEST	103	45.7	45.8
	IJEBU EAST	75	33.3	79.1
	IJEBU CENTRAL	47	20.9	100.0
	Total	225	100.0	100.0

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Table 1 above indicates that most of the women politicians fall within the age range of 41- 50 years a range which can be described as the active years, with highest frequency value of 77(34.2%). In actual fact, the vast majority of respondents were90%between ages 21 – 50 years. Based on the marital statusof the respondents, almost 70% of respondents were married, thus marriage was not a barrier to women political participation inIjebuland, Ogun State. It is also indicated above that 169 (75.1%) of the respondents were Christians and a meager 56 (24.9%) were of the Islamic faith. Being a predominantly Yoruba speaking geographical region, it was not surprising that 179(79.6%) of the respondents were Yoruba. It was, however, very interesting to get levels as high as almost one-fourth of the total sample population being of the Igbo speaking tribes. Political participation in these Local Government Areas within Ijebuland, Ogun State was not affected by tribal origins especially amongst women.

The distribution further indicates that 45% of the respondents were residents of Ijebu West which could be the most influential among the coverage area, alsohas a metropolitan city; this could be a reason why the respondents here were more predisposed to political involvement.

Table 2: Nature of Women Politicalparticipation

Distribution of Respondents by Political Participation		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	164	72.9	72.9
	No	61	27.1	100.0
	Total	225	100.0	

Distribution of Respondents by Political party?		Frequency	Percentages	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CAN	80	35.5	35.5
	PDP	56	24.9	60.4
	CPC	22	9.8	70.2
	PPN	45	20.0	90.2
	No Response	22	9.8	
	Total	225	100.0	100.0

Table 2 indicates that over 70% of the respondents participate actively in politics. Also the table shows that 80 (35.6%), of the respondents were members of the Action Congress of Nigeria. The high percentage of the respondents belonging to the Action Congress of Nigeria party could be adduced to the fact that at the time of these surveys, the Action Congress of Nigeria Party was the current ruling party in Ogun State and may have been a very strong contributing factor to choice of party membership amongst the respondents.

Table 3: Levels of Women's Participation in Politics

Items	VO	O	NO	NA	MEAN
How often do you attend party meetings?	80(35.6%)	78(34.6%)	56(24.9%)	11(4.9%)	3.01
How often do you take part in party rallies?	66(29.3%)	59(26.2%)	44(19.6%)	56(24.9%)	2.60
How often do you organize women oriented programs to encourage them on the importance of participating actively in politics	79(35.1%)	79(35.1%)	23(10.2%)	44(19.6%)	2.86
How often do you provide empowerment programs for women in your party?	102(45.3%)	45(20%)	34(15.1%)	44(19.6%)	2.91
How often are women elected into positions of responsibilities in your party?	68(30.2%)	67(29.8%)	46(20.4%)	44(19.6%)	2.71
How often do you make women see the need to vote for the women leaders or politicians?	68(30.2%)	57(25.3%)	45(20%)	55(24.4%)	2.61
How often do you network with other women to achieve the quota allocation of 35%	90(40%)	56(24.9%)	24(10.7%)	55(24.4%)	2.80

Note: VO = Very Often, O= Often, NO = Not Often, NA = Not Available

The rating of the items on the levels of women's participation in politics is revealed on table 3 as follows: How often do you attend party meetings (Mean=3.01) ranked highest in the mean score rating and was followed by How often do you provide empowerment programs for women in your party (Mean=2.91), How often do you organize women oriented programs to encourage them on the importance of participating actively in politics(Mean=2.86), How often do you network with other women to achieve the quota allocation of 35% (Mean=2.80),How often are women elected into positions of responsibilities in your party (Mean=2.71), How often do you make women see the need to vote for the women leaders or politicians party (Mean=2.61).

Table 4: Source Consulted by Women in the Seek of Political Information

S/N	Items	VO	O	N O	NA	MEAN
1.	**What are the information sources consulted and how often do you use each of the following medium to seek information?**					
	- Party/Campaign Meetings	80(35.6%)	44(19.6%)	23(10.2%)	78(34.6%)	2.56
	- Party Rallies	68(30.2%)	102(45.3%)	11(4.9%)	44(19.6%)	2.81
	- Radio/Television	57(25.3%)	112(49.8%)	45(20%)	11(4.9%)	2.95
	- Books/Library	101(44.9%)	80(35.5%)	33(14.7%)	11(4.9%)	3.20
	- Newspapers/Maga zines	103(45.8%)	100(44.4%)	11(4.9%)	11(4.9%)	3.31
2.	**How often are political information made available**	90(40%)	79(35.1%)	33(14.7%)	23(10.2%)	3.05
3.	**How often do you use the following form/types of political information?**					
	Oral -	89(39.6%)	102(45.3%)	23(10.2%)	11(4.9%)	3.20
	Pictorial/Pictures -	89(39.6%)	46(20.4%)	34(15.1%)	56(24.9%)	2.75
	Internet -	66(29.3%)	103(45.8%)	34(15.1%)	22(9.8%)	2.95
	Audio-Visual/Sign language	33(14.7%)	124(55.1%)	46(20.4%)	22(9.8%)	2.75

The rating of the items on the sources consulted by women in the seek of political informationis revealed on Table 4 as follows: Newspapers/Magazines (Mean=3.31) ranked highest in the mean score rating and was followed by Books/Library (Mean=3.20), Radio/Television(Mean=2.95), Party Rallies(Mean=2.81),Party/Campaign Meetings(Mean=2.56), How often are political information made available (Mean= 3.05). Other form/types of political information use by women are Oral (Mean=3.20), Internet (Mean=2.95), Pictorial/Pictures(Mean=2.75), Audio-Visual/Sign language(Mean=2.75).

Table 5: Women Information Needs For Political Participation

Items	VO	O	N O	NA	MEAN
What are your information needs and how often do you need them?					
Political Issues	91(40.4%)	123(54.7%)	11(4.9%)	-	3.36
Economic Issues	67(29.8%)	124(55.1%)	22(9.8%)	12(5.3%)	3.09
Marital Responsibilities	101(44.9%)	90(40%)	23(10.2%)	11(4.9%)	3.25
Social-Cultural Issues	67(29.7%)	114(50.7%)	22(9.8%)	22(9.8%)	3.00
Stereotyping -	57(25.3%)	89(39.6%)	45(20%)	34(15.1%)	2.71
Empowerment programs	100(44.4%)	92(40.9%)	22(9.8%)	11(4.9%)	3.25
Moral and Ethical Issues	56(24.9%)	124(55.1%)	22(9.8%)	23(10.2%)	2.94

Table 5 indicates the rating of the items on women information needs for political participation. It shows that Political Issues (Mean =3.36) ranked highest in the mean score rating and was followed by Marital Responsibilities (Mean =3.25) and Empowerment programs(Mean =3.25), Economic Issues(Mean =3.09), Social-Cultural Issues (Mean =3.00), Moral and Ethical Issues (Mean =2.94), and lastly followed by Stereotyping (Mean =2.71).

Table 6: Relationship Between women Information Behaviour and Political Participation

Model		R	R Square	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	0.124a	0.015	102.316	1	102.316	3.497	0.063°
	Residual			6525.480	223	29.262		
	Total			6627.796	224			

The table above shows that no significant relationship exists between the independent variable (Women Information Behaviour) and dependent variable (Political Participation). $R^2 \leq 0\%$. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_o stated no significant relationship between women information behaviour and political participation is accepted. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis H_1 is rejected. The finding, therefore, implies that information behaviour did not exert any significant influence on political participation using the correlation coefficient for testing relationships between two variables to determination (R-Square change) as obtained from the model summary table of statistics; it arrived at (0.015). This implies that information behaviour was not responsible for the level of women's participation in politics but to other variables such as money, personal political gains, and political consciousness among many others.

Table7: Hindrances to Women Information Behaviour and Political Participation

Items	Frequency (%)
Education	203(90.2%)
Economic Factors	190(84.4%)
Gender issues	182(89.9%)
Politicking	179(79.6%)
Social Structure	174(77.3%)
Work Environment	174(77.3%)
Physical Ability	160(71.1%)
Psychology	146(64.9%)

Table 7 revealed that majority of the respondents highly indicatedthat education 203 (90.2%), economic factors 190 (84.4%), gender issues 190(84.4%), politicking 179(79.6%), social structure 174(77.3%), work environment 174(77.3%), physical ability 160(71.1%), and psychology 146(64.9%)are the major hindrances to women information behavior and political participation.

VII.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Information is needed in every works of life, the availability of this information enables the individuals or groups to make reasonable decision and reduce their level of uncertainty. This is also valid in the realms of politics as it is in other spheres of human endeavour. Haven stated that, this study however concludes that though women informationbehaviour can impact their participating in active politics inIjebuland and the whole of Ogun State, this effect could not be tied down as being responsible for the observable trend. In order to determine the main culprit, a holistic approach is required, where every factor under investigation is analyzed in interaction with the other factors. In view of the above findings, the following are recommended:

- The study identified that political rallies, party campaigns and meetings were the primary sources of information dissemination to women, thus, it may be necessary for Women Political Wing Leaders should organize more programs that will educate women on the importance of taking active partin the political processes of the party they belong.

- Finally, since education was identified as the main factor affecting political participation by women, thus, special emphasis should be laid on mandatory and free education of the girl child, making it the corporate responsibility of all parties involved in nation building from immediate family, the community, the society and the governments at all levels.

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