

# The Role of Nigerian Women in Politics and Governance: A Study of the Jonathan's Administration

Uduma, D. O.

Uduma, U. E.

## ABSTRACT

*This work is a review of the role of women in politics and governance in Nigeria. It is viewed from many perspectives, the participatory orientation of women in politics and governance in Nigeria has been very low. Despite the phenomena not being a prerogative of any particular gender. With the world becoming a global village achieved through science and technology, the consciousness and awareness of women towards politics and governance been raised. In this study therefore, we shall use the dominance theory as the framework of our analysis.*

**Keywords:** Role women, Nigerian women, politics, governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Politics involves struggles by groups to achieve power, and to use the power in the authoritative distribution of resources of the state (Easton, 1965). In every democratic society politics and governance is supposed to be the right of all (Ogunna, 1996). Reasoning along this perspective, that in democracies, the right to vote and be voted is for every citizen (Nnoli, 1999). However, in Nigeria, women have been isolated in politics and governance. Although, most recently women have increased their consciousness, not only in politics, but in other areas of vocations, yet, they have not been adequately fixed into the executive posts (Adeyemo, 2004). Since independence, Nigeria has not gotten a female president. There have not been opportunities for them in the Governorship positions. Nigeria still perceives women as not fit to occupy executive positions (Adenuga, 2000).

Adimorah (2002) observes that certain issues of restraining the average Nigerian women, for instance, economic depression political instability, moral decadence, religious intolerance, social and cultural disorientation, spiritual emptiness, educational inadequacies and bankruptcy in values. Yet Amazons like Margaret Ekpo, Fumilayo Ransome Kuto still existed (Adimorah, 2002). In the first, second and third, up till Jonathan era, women have been alienated. But some women have been exceptional, however, in so many areas. This study, therefore, sets out to investigate the role of women in politics and governance in Nigeria, with particular reference to the Jonathan administration. In doing this, effort will be made to take the performances of woman from the pre-colonial time till date; focus on Goodluck Jonathan's administration will be made on the most significant contributions of women in politics and governance.

---

---

*Uduma D. O., Ph.D is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria. E-mail: dickudumao@gmail.com. Uduma, U. E. is a Ph.D Candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State and a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria*

When situated within the context of women participation in governance and politics, a theory provides the guideline upon which the topic is understood. Several theories have been used to explain the role of women in their participation in politics. This paper will therefore focus on the dominance theory of Ernestine. This theory explains the subordinate status of women, which affects their political life. Ernestine (2003) provides a general explanation for the dominance of women by men in politics. According to the dominance theory, some acts are exclusive for men that make them dominant. Ernestine sees men dominance as a situation in which men, have highly preferential access, although not always exclusive rights to those activities which society accords the greatest value and the exercise permits a measure or control over others. The dominance theory argues that the subordination of women to men is because men control the exchange of valued food beyond the family group. This yields prestige and power for men over women which lead to their apathy in politics.

Also the genetically bases of men makes them more aggressive and dominant over women. This aggressiveness is also imported by men into political vocations. The dominance theory argues that women are closer to nature than men and therefore are inferior to men this could be because their bodies and psychological functions are more concerned with the natural process. The natural processes for which the female body is naturally equipped affects the physical activities. Thus, politics is seen as more removed from nature, as superior to domestic task and therefore as the province of men. In politics, men are believed to have a wide range of contracts and less personal and particular in relationship, thus men are said to be more objective and less emotional (Adeyemo, 2004).

The dominance theory also discusses that women's second class positioning in the society is as a result of male ideology. This ideology defines a woman's position, how she should act, think and feel. Women have certain ascribed attributes, such as irresponsible, inconsistent, emotionally unstable and work compared to men. Their position is seen as reflection of these attributes (Adeney, 2001).

### **Evolution of Women Active Participation in Politics and Governance in Nigeria**

Essentially the aim of this paper is to evaluate the role of women in politics and governance in Nigeria, with emphasis on the Jonathan Administration. According to Kant (2001), men have always called on women as assistants in order to further their ambitions. Women are the companion of men at work. Thus, Men are the organizers of life, while women are their organ for carrying out plans (Kant, 2001). Ezekiel seems to support Kant when he adumbrates those women biological role is to bear children. Their romantic rule is having their husband and their vocational role is to be second, and if possible be in control (Ezekiel, 2006). Omotoyin (2002) observes that in the past, women in some countries were not allowed to participate in politics, but things have taken another shape as we have seen women these days being by involved actively in politics and governance. Ogwumike (2006) stated that in many traditional Igbo Societies as well, the power of women is reflected in the dual political participation equivalent or parallel to those of men existed, for women whereby women's voices were heard and their participation guaranteed from the familiar

households to the criminals in the larger society. He continues that in these societies; political power is diffused and leadership was fluid and informal community decision were made and disputes settled in variety of gathering, village Assemblies women's meeting age grades secret and title societies. According to Omotola (2003), stated that women in politics and governance have a greater sense of purpose and are by far less corrupt (tentative) this goes a long way to support the impression in society that women are both pacifiers. However, in recent times, women have shown more interest in politics and governance. They have created so much awareness and have proved that they are not mere spectators in politics. In addition to Fumilayo Kuti, among the more prominent and influential of the leaders are or have been, Mabel Dere, Oveza and Margaret Ekpo, Who have increasingly played roles in political affairs and governance sometime on their own. Okebuqwu account that in the late 1920's Igbo and Ibibio Women reacted when it was rumored that the government proposed to tax them. Following the sending around of palm leaves- as a sign of distress, the women gathered together from all over Aba and Umuahia province to demonstrate against imposition of taxation.

### **Women and Political Role in the First Republic**

During the first republic, evidence of Nigerian women participation in politics, was between 1960 and 1964, when Esen was the only women member of the federal parliament. Later in 1964 a year after the creation of mid-western region, a second woman, Beranice Terry was a member of the senate by the government of the new mid- western region. These few women then, campaigned vigorously on behalf of Nigerian Women. They also succeeded in getting better living conditions for women. Margret Ekpo and Mokelu won seats in the then eastern house; the joined them in 1963 after winning the bye - election in Calabar West. Prior to this period, previously in 1959, after the federal elections, Dr. Azikwe had appointed Ekpo and Mokelu as special members of the House of Assembly (Adekogbe, 2000). Women were both appointed and elected to the local councils either as party candidates or as independents. A.M. Nwogu, one of the first National Council of Nigeria Citizens members in Port Harcourt was elected to the Port - Harcourt Municipal Council (Adimora, 2002).

### **Women Role in Politics and Governance in the Second Republic**

According to Adeyeye (2000), the military regime handed over to the democratic administration at its thirteenth year; with Shagari and Ekwueme of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) being elected as the president and Vice President respectively. In the constitutional drafting committee for the second Republic, no women were appointed. Again at the constituent Assembly, only one elected and four nominated women served, out of the total membership of two hundred and thirty. The only elected members and nominated ones were Mrs. Toyin Olakuri Mrs. Faustin Akamba Brinder, Mrs, Zurarna Jarnna and Mrs. Abigail (Omotayin, 2002). Then, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba was the deputy chairperson of the Great Nigerian people's party, Lalia Dogonyaro, the treasurer of National party of Nigeria and Mrs. T. Ndulue (NPP) Vice Chairperson for Anambra State. It is for

this that Okeke (2006) observes that women were solely to serve the interest of the men which they work with. Most of the nominated women did not win because the parties reserved for them a seat where there were no men to occupy such position in other not to leave it vacant. Only four women were members in the Shagari men dominated cabinet. Among them is Mrs. Janet Akinrinade, who left halfway through the breaking down of the NPN-NPP coalition. Of the remaining three, only one Mrs. Egun Oyagbola of National planning was a Minister of full rank (Okangba, 2006). The other two, Mrs. Elizabeth Iyase of Education Ministry and Mrs. K. Asinobi were junior Ministers.

### **Women's Role in Politics and Governance in the Third Republic**

As at the year 1992 women constituted a total of 52.6% and they participated and competed effectively with their male counterparts. Women also engaged in business and education more than before (Okangba, 2006). During the gubernatorial election, there were women candidates in some States. In Lagos, two women contested for elections, but failed at the primaries (Ufomki, 2007). Mrs. Elizabeth Oluremi Adiuju, a Yoruba business woman from Ogun state campaigned under the platform of (NRC) and Chief Mrs. Tokunbo Awolowo-Dosunmu, for the governorship primaries in their state (Victor, 2006). In the same vein, Chief Zainah Duke from Rivers state was a strong contender for the seat under the (SDP), Lillian Okon also contested for the Governorship in Cross River State, a former Deputy Chairman Akamkpa Local Government Area in 1989. Factually, of all the women that contested in the gubernatorial election, none won the primaries but they succeeded in creating awareness.

### **The Role of Women in Politics and Governance in the Jonathan Administration**

Since the inception of the Jonathan presidency in 2010, it is evidenced that women have played quite significant roles. Some of these roles have its negative and positive dimensions, and has invariably inflected to an extent the opinion of some section of the Nigerian electorates about the roles of women in politics and governance in Nigeria. It has been established that most of the glaring cases of -abuse of power including reckless spending of tax payers' money have been carried out by the women in Jonathan's cabinet. Edozie (2006) observes that these women have proven to be more powerful than the number one citizens of Nigeria because despite public outcry about some of their decisions they were not touched. Those who fall in this seemingly untouchable category according to Edozie are the first lady, Mrs. Patience Jonathan, the coordinating minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo - Iweala, The minister of Petroleum resources, Mrs. Diezani Alisio – Madueke, the Director-General of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Ms. Arumah Oteh and the Minister of Aviation, Mrs. Stella Oduka Obike (2000) opines that these powerful women have some things in common. They are all from the south-East and South – south geopolitical zones. Four of them had their higher education in the United States and two of them are daughters of traditional rulers. Needless to say they occupy some of the most strategic and "lucrative positions in the Federal Government (Edozie, 2006).

### **Patience Jonathan**

In Nigeria's political history, Patience Jonathan is believed to be the most powerful first Lady in terms of the amount of influence she has over her husband and his cabinet. Ifeji (2003) observes that Mrs. Jonathan first gave a glimpse into the enormous power she wields in 2011 when she traversed the country, campaigning for her husband in a way that inked many Nigerians. According to him, several calls by individuals and groups to the president to restrain his wife yielded no result. Also, in June this year, an apparent violation of the electoral act Mrs. Jonathan reportedly started accompanying for her husband in a way that any ere many Nigerians. In Aso Rock, where she resides with her husband, the fear of Mrs. Jonathan is the beginning of wisdom as she leaves no one in doubt that she is in charge. There is always a routine of favour seekers waiting to see her daily (Okike, 2000).

### **Ngozi Okonji-Iweala**

Right from when the negotiation to bring her right from the World Bank started, it was obvious that Dr. Okonjo-Iweala was bound to wield so much power in Jonathan's government. Okike (2003) report that with her position as the coordinating minister, Okonjo-Iweala, who is currently 83rd on Forbes Global list of most powerful women, calls the short as far as Nigeria's economy is concerned.

### **Diazani Alison-Madueke**

Virtually all sections of the Nigerian society have called for the resignation of the petroleum Minister, Diezani Alison-Madueke, all to no avail. Most of those who sought her removal had cited several allegations of corrupt practices under her watch as reasons for their demand. After the revelation of massive fraud in the fuel subsidy administration to the tune of ₦1.7Trn. Many had thought that heads would roll including that of Alison-Madueke who supervised the rot (Adeyeye, 2000).

### **Stella Odua**

Not many are aware of the tremendous power of the aviation Minister, Stella Odua in Jonathan's government. For her role in Jonathan's 2011 campaign, she was reportedly rewarded with a ministerial appointment to the aviation ministry even though she had no prior training in the field of aviation many believe that the presidency feels indebted to her role as the Director of Finance and Administration of Jonathan/Sambo campaign organization and in the establishment of Neighbor- to - neighbor outfit, which reportedly spent billions of Naria on adverts and media propaganda in favour of Jonathan (Uwanna, 2012).

### **Arunma Oteh**

Through her battles the Director- General of the Securities and Exchange Commission, (SEC) Arunmah Oteh has sufficiently earned the name "iron Lady" even beyond her official sphere of influence. When she clashed with the House of Representatives committee on the capital market, it was the chairman of the committee, Mr. Herman that gets hurt. Olayinka (2013) reports that the committee had accused Oteh of fraud and misappropriation of funds. She fights back, accusing Hembe of demanding bribe from SEC.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study espoused the role of women in politics and governance with emphasis on Jonathan's administration. The paper, tried to showcase how Nigerian women suffered political alienation especially in the early times before the present era. Gender inequality, economic advantage, certain cultural belief and illiteracy militated against women participation. It evident that Nigerian men have always used women as assistant, it was observed that they have never been major players especially in the early period. They have bee- constantly denied executive positions in spite of their advantage over men in numerical strength, Women live under this fate throughout the pre-colonial days, colonial days, first, second and third republic.

The role of women in Jonathan Administration was led on the very powerful women within the administration, this does not mean that other women never participated, here the various level of impunity, corruption, arrogant and political influence exhibited by these women was stressed, and these women were seen to be so powerful. Partly pointing to the fact that Nigerians have carried influence was such that the Jonathan administration granted them the 35% affirmative action for women to be active in politics and governance. Therefore, as a way of straitening women's role in politics the paper recommends that, there should be encouragement for women in education. This will facilitate their political socialization and participation. The culture of gender equality has to be rigorously pursued to forestall women feeling of inferiority complex. Women have to be economically empowered through loans and establishment of cooperatives society. Women organizations should be encouraged and such organizations should reflect holistic participation of all classes of women with complete liquidation of all form of alienation. A careful application of these recommendations will go a long way to facilitate women active participation in politics and governance.

## REFERENCES

- Adekogbe, A. O.** (2000). *The House wife*. London: Aillenlan Press.
- Adeney, O. P.** (2001). *Women and men: An Anthropolical Review*. New York: Holt Rinechart and Winston.
- Adenuga, S.** (2000). *Government and Politics*. New York: Evanston Northwest University Press.
- Adeyemo, E.** (2004). *Politics and women: A Review of Africa*. Lagos: Mamillian Publishers.
- Adeyeye, O.** (2000). *Governance and Worsen Organizations*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Baas, W.** (2002). *Governance: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: University Press.
- Edozie, A.** (2006). *Women in the pre- colonial days*. Owerri: Adugo Publishing Company.
- Elekwa, P.** (2002). *The Concept of Government*. Lagos: MacMillan publisher.
- Ernestine, F.** (2003). *The Empirical Animal*. London: Seeker a Warburg.
- Ezeikel A.** (2006). *Politics and Good Governance*. Lagos: Publishers.
- Nnoli, O.** (2003). *Introduction to politics*. Enugu, Pan African centre for research on peace and conflict resolution (PACERD).
- Olayinka, K.** (2013). *The Myth Elms. Arunmah Oteh*. Lagos: The Nick Publications.
- Ogunna, A. E. C.** (1996). *Introduction to Political Science*. Chierre: Unpublished lecture Module Alvan Ikoku College of Education.

- Ifeji, O. A.** (2003). *Political participation in Africa*. London: Allen and Union.
- Kant, U. W.** (2001). *Famous Political Trials*. Minneapolis: Leaner Publishing Company.
- Obike, M.** (2000). *Political Socialization*. Ibadan: Onighoneje and Wassons Publishing Company.
- Ogwumike, A.** (2006). *Pre-Colonial Administration in Nigeria*. Enugu: Enekwa Press.
- Okangba, I. O.** (2006). *Women and Political Alienation: A case of Nigeria Past republic*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company.
- Okeke, U.** (2006). *Women in politics*. New York Villy publication.
- Okike, S. O.** (2003). *African Plitical History*. Califirnis: Beckley.
- Omotola, E. P.** (2003). *The Place of Women the Society*. London: Speaker Press.
- Ufomki, N.** (2007). *Political Discrimination A case of African Women*. Lagos: Macmillan.
- Uwanna, O. A.** (2012). *The Emancipation of Africa Women in Politics*. Lagos: Macmillan.
- Victor, U.** (2006). *Village Affairs*. London: Cases and Co Ltd.