

**ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF WOMEN
LEGISLATORS IN LAW MAKING IN HOUSES OF
ASSEMBLY, SOUTHWEST NIGERIA (2003-2015)**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated first and foremost to the Almighty God who has been my source of inspiration right before this research began and throughout the course of this study. Indeed He is my God that neither sleeps nor slumber. Thank you Lord

I also dedicate this thesis to my parents, siblings and fiancé for their financial, spiritual and mental support and to all women politicians in my country, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study appraised the participatory role of women in law making process at the Nigeria's Southwest Houses of Assembly and ascertained the impact of women in legislative functions of State Houses of Assembly in Southwest Nigeria. It also examined women legislators' challenges and experiences in democratic field. These were with a view to providing information on the output and impact of women in decision making body that could enhance democratic stability, unity, peace and governance in State Houses of Assembly in Southwest, Nigeria.

The study made use of primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary data was sourced through structured interview of key respondents consisting of purposively selected women legislators, women leaders of political parties and members of Houses of Assembly in Lagos, Ekiti and Oyo States based on the presence of fairly large number of women in their State Houses of Assembly. The criterion for their selection was based on their expert knowledge of politics. A total number of 24 respondents were interviewed in the three states. This number is due to the fact that there is less women in politics in proportion to men, hence the sample size. In each state, eight respondents: 2 women legislators, 3 women leaders of political parties and 3 members of the Houses of Assembly were interviewed using purposive sampling method. The rationale for their selection was based on their practical knowledge and active involvement in partisan politics as card-carrying members of various political parties. Secondary data were sourced from books, articles, journals, newspapers and other published and unpublished materials. Data collected were analysed using content analysis.

The results showed that women legislators have been very participatory in legislative debates especially as relating to law making functions despite their low representation. The

results also showed Private Member Bills are not a common activity in the Southwest Houses of Assembly in Nigeria due to its rigor and lack of support from NGOs or organisations but that women legislators have sponsored diverse motions and bills which have been of social benefit especially for women and children. Finally, the results affirmed that, factors such as shunning of ideas and motions, lack of equal knowledge of partisan politics, lack of adequate education, lack of trust accompanied by gossips and political competition, discrimination and marriage, late night meetings and sitting are the challenges women legislators in Southwest Nigeria are faced with.

The study concluded that the women legislators have been participatory in the law making process and have positively performed legislative functions in Houses of Assembly, Southwest Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, there has been a steady but slow progress in the role played by women in politics because of men's nature and domination, thereby systematically outnumbering the women folk, especially in developing nations like Nigeria (Esiene, 2009). This is particularly so because of patriarchal nature of most African societies where women are forced to play the second-fiddle through certain cultural sentiments. As a result, there has been a persistent call by women, scholars, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various international organizations to take action and remove obstacles limiting women's entry into politics as women's participation in the political field is imperative for a lasting development in any human society (EU 2011: 100).

There have been agitations from various international and national organizations for government of several countries to implement international instruments aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of women. Key amongst the most the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Emakhu, 2013: 776). Nigeria has ratified one international instrument, the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (2004), signed and ratified two regional instruments, the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration of Gender Equality in Africa (Esiene, 2012). Moreover, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the provision of the Convention on the Elimination of Discriminatory practices Against Women (CEDAW), provide that 30% of all positions in government be given to women (Ogbogu, 2012: 182), but in spite of this, undertone of gender and ethnicity has hindered Nigerian women.

Women's involvement and participation in politics and the electoral process throughout Africa, have received so much academic attention (Okome, 1996). This constitutes an integral part of contemporary discourse on democracy and governance. Since the return to democratic path in 1999, the role of women in democratic affairs has assumed a center stage in public debates in Nigeria. However, opinions are still divided on whether the role of women is best suited in home fronts or in economic and political activities like their male counterparts (Luka, 2012).

In support of women's active involvement in democratic and political processes in society, it has been argued that a gender-blind politics cannot be said to be democratic neither can it be credible because equality is an essential part of a democratic government (Alah-Mensah, 2004). Hence, it has been noted that a state which embodies the culture of democracy is a state that embraces political participation, vibrant civil society, integration of women and minorities in all levels of government, protection and promotion of human rights (Buwey, 1998). Women's legal status is closely linked to their political participation and ability to contribute to societal progress. Akiyode-Afolabi and Arogundade (2003), confirmed this by asserting that equality, development and peace across all spheres of life cannot be achieved without the active involvement and integration of the women in decision-making process.

Representation of women in politics has been an object of discussion in seminars, conferences and academic gatherings in Nigeria since independence. Regrettably, one institution that has witnessed the glaring under-representation of women and dominance of men in the past and current Nigerian politics is the legislature. The National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly are vital institutions and pivotal structures within developed democrats charged primarily with the basic role of enacting, repealing and reviewing existing laws for the

development and wellbeing of citizens. Considering the nature and importance of the legislature in formulation of policies through legislations, the election and participation of women into various parliaments can help address feminist agitations and other related social problems.

Historically, in Nigeria's First Republic, only 4 female legislators were produced in the whole country (Ngara & Ayabam 2013) and before 1999, the proportion of seats occupied by women in National parliament never exceeded 3.1% and 5% in the Federal Executive Council (Luka, 2012). Since the return of civil rule in the country in 1999, statistics reveal that women's overall political representation in Nigeria's government is less than 7 percent (Agbalajobi, 2010). Considering the 2011 elections in the Southwest Houses of Assembly in Nigeria, 7 women out of 41 members were at the Lagos State House of Assembly; in Oyo State, there was only 1 woman who was the Speaker of the House out of 32 members; Ekiti State had 4 women out of 26 members; Ondo state had 1 woman out of 26 members; Ogun State House had 2 women while Osun State House of Assembly had no woman legislator (Ngara & Ayabam 2013).

Despite the fact that there is considerable increase in the representation ratio of women to men in Nigeria since 1999, it is no longer news that representation of women is still low in comparison to the men in the politics of Nigeria especially in the Southwest region. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to highlight the achievements of women legislators, focusing on their contribution to democratic growth and development. Also, the study intends to analyse the roles of the few elected women in the legislative arm of government. Historically, Nigerian women during the colonial era, were known to have been actively involved in the struggles against oppressive and exploitative colonial powers. A good example is the Aba women riot of 1929, a product of violence against colonial excessive tax. An understanding of the history of women

achievements in Nigerian politics is therefore crucial in order to emphasize their participation in contemporary Nigerian politics.

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