

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA:
A STUDY OF SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN LOCAL COUNCIL AREAS IN
EBONYI NORTH ZONE OF EBONYI STATE**

BY

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Abstract

Controversies surrounding the position of women and their level of participation in political and social activities is as old as the history of mankind. Without much doubt, women have and will continue to play significant, but complimentary roles in national development both in the ancient and modern societies. Natural potentials endowed on women added to their numerical strength had positioned them to occupy a pride of place in the society. Over 160 million Nigeria's population, women contribute to many facets of national development ranging from politics, entrepreneurship, human resource development, home management and peace building. Despite these enormous contributions by the female folk to nation-building, women in most parts of the world still suffer neglect, relegation and discrimination of all sorts. Nigeria government in many occasions have put forward policies as measure to ameliorate the problem of women neglect and relegation to the background on critical national issues and to restore the dignity of women and their pride of place in nation building. Affirmative Action Policy was introduced to raise the level of women participation in politics and other national affairs, yet agitation for inclusion of more women had continued to be a matter of concern in the contemporary society. This research covers: Background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, review of related literature, research methodology, data presentation and analysis, discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

Key Words: Affirmative Action, Political participation.

Introduction

Background to the Study

Womenfolk globally occupy strategic position and perform enormous functions in all spheres of human life. By way of endowment, women have been identified to possess special talent and potentialities needed for socio-economic, cultural and political development, apart from their numerical status in any society. In Nigeria, women have played leading roles as home managers,

bankers, politicians, foreign envoys, local and international sports legends. Nigeria women like their counterpart spread across the globe have in great measures contributed and are still contributing to the development of most strategic sectors of the economy, even when most of their potentials are yet to be tapped. Nigeria women have made appreciable landmarks in the annals of the country's political development. Awe (1990), saw women as the great builders of peace and stability and strong instrument for coordinating both material and human resources for the overall benefits of their families and mankind in general. Collective strength of Nigeria women have made them form associations to help them develop strong political consciousness. The Aba women group kicked against the imperial imposition of taxes on female adults of Eastern Nigeria. The "Egbelyaloja" a market women organization in the western region of Nigeria had great influence on the decision-making of Yoruba ethnic nation. In the Northern Nigeria, Nwori (2011:65) asserts that the story of Queen Amina of Zauzau (Zaria) is very memorable in the political development of Hausa ancient empire as Queen Amina was known for her prowess in waging wars in Hausa kingdom such as Kastina, Kano and Bauchi.

In Lagos, west region of Nigeria, Late Madam Tinubu was a great activist whose influence threaten European interests as she encouraged resistance to colonial occupation of Nigeria prior to independence of Nigeria. Late Mrs. Margret Ekpo was a notable woman politician from Calabar. Other great women with noble political records include: Fumilayo Ransom Kutu (politician), Flora Nwapa (Novelist/politician), Major Gen. Adorenke Kate (Military), Kudirat Abiola (Pro-democracy Activist), Christy Anyanwu (journalist/politician), Prof. Grace Alele Williams (First female Vice-Chancellor), Sarah Jubril (Politician/one time female presidential aspirant under PDP), Dr. Ngozi OkonjoIwuala (former minister/first woman and First African Director General, World Trade Organisation), Prof. Dora Aknyili (former minister/Director-Genral, NAFDAC), Janet Mokelu (politician/teacher), Chief Mrs. Oyibo Odinamadu (Politician/Vice president candidate under UPN during the second Republic), Hon. (Mrs) Margret Ichen (first female speaker House of Assembly in Nigeria, 1999 Benue State), Kema Chikwe (former minister of Aviation), Prof. Joy Ogwu (former Minister and Nigeria Permanent Representative to the United Nations), Joy Emodi (politician), Mrs. Titilayo Ajanaku (Politician), Justice FatiLami Abubakar (Jurist), Dame Pauline Tallen (Politician/Former Minister), Laila Dogonyaro (Activist and former president, National Council of Women

Societies), Mrs. Laila Dogonyaro was also founder member of Jamiyar Matan Arewa, First women's group in the Northern Nigeria. Others include Senator Florence ItaGiwa (Politician), Hon. Patricia Etteh (Politician/First Female Speaker, 10th House of Representative), Virginia Etiaba (Politician/First Female Governor in Nigeria, precisely Anambra State; Chioma Ajunwa (Police/Olympic Gold Medalist in 1996), Ndidi Okereke Onyuke (First Female Stockbroker in Nigeria/Former DG, Nigerian Stock Exchange), Ama Pepple (Technocrat/Former Minister), Josephine Anenih (Politician/Former Minister), Diezani Alison Madueke (Politician, Minister and First Female President of OPEC), Oby Ezekwesili (Former Minister/Economic policy expert and former Vice-President, World Bank, African Region), Zainab Ahmed (Former Minister), Actress Onyeka Onwenu (Musician, actress, Social Activist and Politician), Rukiyatu Ahmed Rufai (Former Minister/Education) and others too numerous to mention.

The formation of Nigeria Women Party in 1944 by Lady Ranson Kuti, Lady Flora Nwapa and Lady Oyinkan Abayomi later gave impetus to the coming on board the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) in 1958 as an umbrella body of Women Societies in Nigeria to promote gender-related issues. However, women political activism seemed to have dwindled soon after Nigeria independence but the scenario changed during the military era through creation of office of First lady and Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and National Commission for Women. The first ladies who were also the wives of the Heads of State instituted Pet projects such as Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW) by Maryam Babangida, Family Support Programme (FSP) and Family Economics Advancement Programme (FEAP) by Maryam Abacha; Women Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) by FatiLami Abubakar; Child Care Trust (CCT) by Stella Obasanjo; Women and Youth Empowerment Foundation (WYEF) and International Cancer Centre by TuraiYar'adua; Women for Change Development Initiative (NCDI) by Dame Patience Goodluck Jonathan and Women's Health Initiative (WHI) by Aisha Buhari. In Ebonyi State Nigeria, wife of the state Governors at different administrative arrangement have initiated Pet Projects Primarily to carter for the women, children, the disabled and the less privileged. Suchpet projects include: Widow Care Foundation (WCF) by Eunice Ukamaka Egwu; Mother and Child Care Initiative (MCCI) by Mrs. Josephine Elechi and Family Succor and Upliftment Foundation (FSUP) by Mrs. Rachel Ogonnia Umahi.

Though, many women in Nigeria have been offered opportunities in elective and appointive positions at various levels of public and private sectors of the economy, yet women across the globe suffer one form of deprivation and discrimination or the other, hence the clamour for proper application of principle of Affirmation Action so as to have fair representation in the political and decision-making architecture of the society.

Statement of the Problem

Women all over the world are great assets for the nation-building. Women occupy special and prime place in the annals of human history. In the ancient societies Menfolk were accorded superior status, because culturally they welded enormous authority over societal issues. In Nigeria traditional societies, women were treated as mere instrument for child-bearing, help mate in farm yards and cooks for the household. Though, it is believed that women possessed certain potentials, yet they were not allowed to participate in many public issues, including the ones that affect them. Indeed, politics and public speaking were solely under the spheres of men. In some societies in the past, only taxable male adults were allowed to be alive to political activities and to exercise their franchise.

However, owing to global changes and the growing level of political consciousness, women's political activism and quest for political and social freedom have increased tremendously. Against the backdrop of gross political relegation and discrimination, Nigeria women under the aegis of various organized women platforms and offices of first ladies in Nigeria have been agitating for some level of recognition and inclusion in the political main stream of the country. Further to this, early women activists and social crusaders in Nigeria formed National Council of Women Societies far back 1958 as an umbrella body to bring Nigeria women together to fight their common course. In the same vein, the National Gender Policy (NGP) formulated a 35% Affirmative Action in Nigeria since 2006 which provides that 35% of women be involved in all governance processes. Though, the NGP is recognized, but is not practiced as the structures and processes to use are not in place.

The researcher intends to find out why women in Nigeria had continued to suffer from one form of political discrimination or the other. The researcher has also undertaken to carry out

a study on practicability of Affirmative Action Policy in selected communities in Ebonyi North Senatorial Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Ebonyi North Senatorial Zone comprised of four local area councils to include: Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Ohaukwu and Izzi local government areas. Four communities with three categories of population were drawn from the selected council area for the study.

Objectives of the Study

This research on Affirmative action and women political participation in Nigeria covering four selected communities spread across four council areas in Ebonyi North Senatorial Zone of Ebonyi State has certain objectives. The major objective of the study is to discover how best to apply the policy of Affirmative Action to address the issue of women relegation and discrimination in the political activities of Nigeria, thereby increasing the opportunities of women to contribute to the collective efforts of nation-building. In specific terms, the objectives of the research include:

- To find out why women are relegated and discriminated against in the mainstream of political activities.
- To find out the roles of women and their impacts on national development.
- To find out the impact of Affirmative Action policy on women inclusion in the societal political participation.
- To find out problem faced by women themselves in taking active part on political activities.
- To find out effective strategies of addressing the issue of Affirmative Action to enhance sustainable nation-building in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The research of this nature stands to be beneficial to some categories of persons and institutions. The typical nature of this research and the strategic place of women in national development has made it imperative for wide range of individuals and organized bodies to share in the outcome of the research. Indeed the research will be useful as a body to the government, particularly the class responsible for policy formulation as the outcome will serve as guide on how best to apply Affirmative Action principle to women agitation for inclusion in national

politics and administration. Again, the organized women groups and other relevant stakeholders concerned with Affirmative Action also stand to gain from this research. Moreover, Academic institutions within and outside the shores of Nigeria will not only benefit from the research, but the outcome would form part of curriculum content of relevant course of study. No doubt, the research will equally be of reference purpose to international organizations, civil society organization, non-government organization, Human Rights Activists, the Judiciary, the media, office of first ladies in Nigeria, student researchers, religious bodies and the people championing the defense of justice, democracy and fair play in the business of governance and general administration.

Scope of the Study

Scope of this study is on Affirmative Action and women political participation in Nigeria narrowed down to the study of selected communities in the four local government areas making up Ebonyi North Zone of Ebonyi State. In this study, categories of respondents ranging from women groups, civil servants and politicians were drawn from each of the four local council areas in the zone under study as shown in Table A of this research. The selection was based on the premise that the study cannot comprehensively carry out a research on the Affirmative Action level of women in Nigeria politics in all the local council areas of Ebonyi State possibly due to paucity of fund, time limit and other exigent factors.

Research Questions

This research study on the Affirmative Action and women political participation in Nigeria with focus on selected communities in four local government areas that make up Ebonyi North Senatorial districts is guided by specific questions.

- What are the causes of women relegation and discrimination suffered by women in the mainstream of political activities in Nigeria
- What roles have women played on national development.
- What impact has Affirmative Action policy made on women inclusion in national politics.
- What are the problems faced by women in the course of taking part in political activities in Nigeria.

- What possible strategies should be adopted to ensure sustainable Affirmation Action for national development.

The research will try to elicit information from the respondents using these research questions. Responses will enable the research come up with possible findings, leading to recommendations on the best practices for women inclusion in political activities and decision-making of the country.

Research Methodology

The research on Affirmative Action policy and women political participation in Nigeria adopt methodology to be used in carrying out the study in the following arrangement.

Research Design

The research study on Affirmative Acton and women political participation in Nigeria has adopted survey research design. Survey research refers to a particular type of research design where the primary method of data collection is by survey. Surveys are used as tool by researchers to gain greater understanding about individual or group perspective, relative to a particular concept or topic of interest. Survey research is a quantitative research method used for collecting data from a set of respondents (www.supersurvey.com>research).Ezeh (2005), defined survey design as a reliable technique which enables the researcher to collect data systematically from selected segments of the sampled population for the purpose of determiningthe attributes of the population.

Area of the Study

The area of the study include selected communities in local council areas in EbonyiNorth district zone of Ebonyi State. In each selected community from the four council areas in the zone, categories of respondents selected for the research include: Women groups, Civil Servants and Politicians from four communities of Idah (Abakaliki L.G.A), Mbeke (Ebonyi L.G.A), Umuagara (Ohaukwu L.G.A, and Igbeagu (Izzi L.G.A). These communities will stand as the area of the study.

Population of the Study

The study population is the sub set of the target population available for the study (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov). Study population available is a subset of the target population from which the sample is actually selected. In this research, the population of the study cover 300 people spread across four communities in four local council areas of Ebonyi North Senatorial district of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Categories of the population of the study include: Women groups = 99, Civil Servants = 93 and Politicians = 68.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sample refers to a small part or quantity intended to show what the whole is like. It is a subset containing the characteristics of a large population. Sampling technique is a statistical approach used for selecting a representative sample from a population. In this research, sample of respondents were selected from categories of population such as women groups, civil servants and politicians and their responses thereof constituted the data used in analyzing the research findings. In the same vein, this research study adopts simple random sampling technique as a sampling method. A simple random sample is a subset of statistical population in which each member of the subset has an equal probability of being chosen (www.investopedia.com>corporate finance). In Idah community of Abakaliki L.G.A, a total of 77 (29.6%) respondents were selected, Mbeke Community of Ebonyi L.G.A, a total of 55 (21.2%) respondents were selected for the research, in Umuegara community of Ohaukwu L.G.A, a total of 43 (16.5%) respondents were drawn for the study while in Igbeagu community of Izzi L.G.A, a total of 85 (32.7%) respondents were sampled for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

A research instrument is a tool used to collect, measure and analyze data related to your research interests. In this research, the research instrument used for data collection is structured questionnaire reflecting on Affirmative Action policy and women political participation in Nigeria. Structured questionnaire is a document used to collect data from respondents and consists of a set of standardized questions with a predetermined framework (www.questionpro.com>blog). Twenty item questionnaire was structured to reflect the research

questions. Each item has four point rating scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D).

Validation of Instrument

Validation is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and performs as it is designed to perform. Validation involves collecting and analyzing data to assess the accuracy of an instrument. In line with research standard, draft copy of the questionnaire passed through the face and content validation and scrutiny of experts in research and measurement and evaluation. Necessary corrections and professional inputs were subsequently reflected before the administration of the instrument on the target respondents.

Reliability of Instrument

Reliability refers to the extent that the instrument yields the same results over multiple trials. Instrument reliability is a way of ensuring that any instrument used for measuring experimental variable gives the same results everytime. In this regard, the questionnaire was considered reliable through the adoption of test and re-test reliability process. Test-re-test reliability method allows for the same instrument to be tested on respondents at different periods and interval of not less than two weeks.

Procedure for Data Collection

This is the process of gathering and analyzing accurate data from various sources to find answers to research problems, trends and probabilities (www.simplelearn.com). In this research, the researcher gathered data through the help of research assistants who administered questionnaires on the respondents drawn from four communities in each local government area council which make up Ebonyi North Senatorial district of Ebonyi State. The researcher and the assistants at the end of the distribution of the questionnaire on the respondents waited to retrieve the filled copies of the instrument which revealed that out of 260 copies of questionnaires distributed to respondents, 250 (96.2%) copies were duly completed and returned for analysis while 10 (3.8%) copies for obvious reasons were not returned.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of collecting, modelling and analyzing data using various statistical and logical methods and techniques (www.datapine.com>blog). In this regard, the researcher will assemble all the data and arrange them in tabular form using simple frequency and percentage analysis. Items in the tables of analysis were structured to reflect the research questions. In this case, raw data were collected from the filled questionnaires and thereafter tabulated and the percentage value of the corresponding figures calculated using the statistical formula hereunder

$$\frac{100}{1} \times \frac{\text{Number of Responses}}{\text{Total Number of Respondents}}$$

Data Presentation Analysis and Summary

The Affirmative Action Policy and women political participation in Nigeria is a study conducted in selected communities in four local council areas in Ebonyi North zone of Ebonyi state. The data obtained in the course of the research are presented and analyzed in the tables hereunder. However, all responses of strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) were pulled together, while responses on strongly disagree (SD) and disagree (D) were added together and their percentage values calculated for the analysis.

Table A: Showing the distribution and analysis of research questionnaires in the selected four communities across the local council area that constitutes the Ebonyi North senatorial zone of Ebonyi state, Nigeria. Other tables contain the analysis based on the research questions.

Table A: Distribution and analysis of questionnaires in the selected communities from the four local government areas that make up the zone.

ZONE	LGA	Community	Category of Respondents	Respondents	Total	Percentage	Remarks
Ebonyi North Zone	Abakaliki	Idah	Women groups	25	77	29.6	
			Civil servants	31			
			Politicians	21			

	Ebonyi	Mbeke	Women Groups	20		
			Civil Servants	18	55	21.2
			Politicians	17		
	Ohaukwu	Umuagara	Women Groups	18		
			Civil Servants	16	43	16.5
			Politicians	9		
	Izzi	Igbeagu	Women Group	36		
			Civil servants	28	85	32.7
			Politicians	21		
Total	4	4			260	100

Source: Field Survey

Analysis:

From the table above, the four Local Council areas of Ebonyi North Senatorial zone constitutes the area of research coverage with three categories of respondents (women groups, civil servants and politicians) selected from four communities, one from each local government area of the zone. In Idah community of Abakaliki LGA, a total of 77 respondents (29.6%) were selected for the purpose of this study. In Ebonyi LGA, 55 respondents were selected from Mbeke community which represents 21.2% of the sampled population. In Ohaukwu LGA, 43 respondents which represent 16.5% were selected from Umuagara community for the study. In Izzi LGA, a total of 85 respondents (32.7%) from Igbeagu autonomous community were selected for the research on Alternative Action Policy and women participation in Nigeria.

Research Question 1

What are the causes of relegation and discrimination suffered by women in the mainstream of political activities in Nigeria?

Table 1

S/N	Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total
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1	Age-long cultural and traditional practices instituted and traditional	202 (77.7%)	46 (17.7%)	7 (2.7%)	5 (1.9%)	260 (100%)
2	Gender stereotype that certain tasks are only performed by male folk	221 (85%)	20 (7.7%)	12 (4.6%)	7 (2.7%)	260 (100%)
3	Lack of self-esteem and courage by women in accepting to perform certain tasks	200 (76.9%)	28 (10.8%)	23 (8.8%)	9 (3.5%)	260 (100%)
4	Display of high level of apathy by women in open politics	213 (81.9%)	31 (11.9%)	10 (3.8%)	6 (2.3%)	260 (100%)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey

Analysis:

Table 1 above shows that 248 respondents which represent 95.4% of the sampled population were on agreement that age long cultural and traditional practices had resulted to series of discriminatory tendencies and relegation suffered by women which inhibit their opportunities to participate in the political activities in Nigeria, while only 12(4.6%) respondents disagreed to that statement. Item two indicates that 241 (92.7%) of the sampled population agreed that certain tasks are only reserved and should be performed by the male folk, while 19(7.3%) of the respondents disagreed to that assertion. In item three shows that 228(87.7%) of the respondents support the fact that lack of self-esteem and courage on the side of women to accept certain task is one of the major causes of discrimination and look down on women in political participation in Nigeria, just as 32(12.3%) respondents did not agree with the statement. In item four, 244(93.8%) respondents were in support that high level of apathy disposition result to women relegation and discrimination towards political participation in Nigeria, while 16 respondents which represent 6.1% of opinion of the sampled population on the subject matter disagreed.

Research Question ii

What roles have women played on national development in Nigeria.

Table 2

S/N	Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total
5	Domestic responsibilities	116 (44.6%)	65 (25%)	44 (16.9%)	35 (13.5%)	260 100%
6	Engaging in farm works/ Vocational activities	107 (41.2%)	63 (24.2%)	63 (24.2%)	27 (10.4%)	260 (100%)
7	Engaging in civil service duties only	33 (12.7%)	24 (9.2%)	171 (65.8)	32 (12.3%)	260 (100%)
8	Political activities both at local and national levels	45 (17.3%)	34 (13.1%)	112 43.1%)	69 (26.5%)	260 (100%)

Source: Researcher's field survey

Analysis:

Item five of table 2 indicates that 116(44.6%) of the respondents agree that Nigeria women have promoted national development through their specific roles in domestic responsibilities, 65(25%) disagreed that women domestic responsibilities had no serious impact on national development. Item six shows that 107(41.2%) of the respondents were of the view that women engaging in farm works and vocational activities had contributed to national development, while 63(24.2%) did not share the same opinion on that assertion. Item seven indicates that 33(12.7%) of the respondents agreed that engagement of women in civil service duties had impacted much on national development, whereas 171(65.8%) of the sampled population indicated that women in civil service position had not played much roles in national development of the country. Item eight indicate that 45(17.3%) of the respondents were of the opinion that political activities of Nigeria women had played certain roles on national development, while 112(43.1%) respondents, representing 43.1% of the sampled population were of the view that political activities of Nigeria women had not made much impact on national development

Research Question iii

What impact has affirmation action policy made on women inclusion in national politics?

Table 3

S/N	Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total
9	Employment of some women into strategic appointive and elective positions in Nigeria	173 (66.5%)	37 (14.2%)	35 (13.5%)	15 (5.8)	260 (100%)
10	Reduction of discriminatory policies on the ground of sex, race color or religion	29 (11.2%)	18 (6.9%)	171 (65.8%)	42 (16.1%)	260 (100%)
11	Generation of positive externalities for the minority and low income opportunities	33 (12.7%)	10 (3.8%)	183 (70.4%)	34 (13.1%)	260 (100%)
12	Increased awareness on the rights and strategies for upholding gender equality in Nigeria politics	195 (75%)	31 (11.9%)	20 (7.7%)	14 (5.4)	260 (100%)

Source: field survey

Analysis:

In table 3, item nine showed that 210(80.7%) of the respondents are of the opinion that Affirmative action policy has encouraged women inclusion in national politics through employment of some women into appointive and elective positions in Nigeria, while 50(19.3%) respondents disagreed to that assertion. Item ten clearly indicate that 47(18.1%) respondents supported the statement that through the policy of affirmative action, discriminatory policies were reduced, whereas 213(81.9%) respondents were of the opposite opinion to that assertion. In item eleven, 43 (16.5%)of the respondents agree that affirmative action policy has supported positive externalities for the minority and low income opportunities as a measure for women inclusion in national politics, while the sampled population of 217(83.5%) respondents disagreed to that assertion. Item 12 indicate that 226(86.9%)of the respondents strongly supported the very fact that Affirmative action policy had increased awareness right of women and other venerable class on the rights and strategies for upholding gender equality in Nigeria politics, while only 34(13.1%) respondents disagreed to the statement.

Research Question IV

What are the problems faced by women in the course of taking part in political activities in Nigeria.

Table 4

S/N	Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total
13	Ignorance and apathy to politics in most third world communities	195 (75%)	31 (11.9%)	20 (7.7%)	14 (5.4%)	260 (100%)
14	Superstitious beliefs in African political system	231 (88.8%)	18 (6.9%)	7 (2.7%)	4 (1.5%)	260 (100%)
15	Nature and style of politics	210 (80.8%)	21 (8.1%)	17 (6.5%)	12 (4.6%)	260 (100%)
16	Family responsibilities and lack of fund	205 (78.8%)	21 (8.1%)	20 (7.7%)	14 (5.4%)	260 (100%)

Source: Field survey

Analysis:

Item 13 shows that 226(86.9%) respondents support the fact that ignorance and apathy to politics on the side of women contribute to the problems faced by women in African political system and in particular Nigeria: while the opinion of 34(13.1%) respondents suggest the opposite. Item 14 highly show that 249(95.7%) respondents affirm the fact that superstitions beliefs in African political system constitute to the problems faced by women in the course of participation in political activities in Nigeria, whereas 11(4.2%) respondents were not supportive to that assertion. In item 15,231(88.8%) respondents agree to the assertion that the nature and style of politics in Nigeria constitute one of the problems confronting women participation in political activities in the country: while 29(11.1%) respondents did not agree to that notion. Item 16 indicate that 226(86.9%) respondents agree to the fact that family responsibilities and lack of fund constitute limitations to women political activism in Nigeria, while 34(13.1%) respondents disagree that family responsibility and lack of fund were some of the challenges confronting women political participation in Nigeria.

Research Question V

What possible strategies should be adopted to ensure sustainable Affirmative action for national development?

S/N	Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total
17	Establishing enabling legislation to ensure proper implementation of Affirmative action policy in Nigeria	231 (88.8%)	18 (6.9%)	7 (2.7%)	4 (1.5%)	260 (100%)
18	Removal of artificial barriers related to culture and traditions	209 (80.4%)	30 (11.5%)	14 (5.4%)	7 (2.7%)	260 (100%)
19	Campaign to sensitize Nigerian women on the need to brace up with the challenges of the time	228 (87.7%)	22 (8.5%)	6 (2.3%)	4 (1.5%)	260 (100%)
20	Government to promote gender balanced policy in education, politics and others	118 (45.4%)	38 (14.6%)	61 (23.5%)	43 (16.5%)	260 (100%)

Source: Field survey

Analysis:

Table 5 item 17 shows that 249(95.7%) agreed on establishing enabling legislation as a strategy for ensuring sustainable implementation of Affirmative action policy for national development, while 11(4.2%) respondents did not support the assertion. In item 18, 239(91.9%) of the population suggest removal of artificial barriers and obnoxious cultural practices as possible strategies for enduring Affirmative Action policy implementation for national development, whereas 21(8.1%) respondents were not in agreement to that assertion. Item 19, 250(96.2%) respondents agreed that public campaign strategy should be adopted to sensitize Nigeria women on the need to brace up with the challenges of national development, while 10(3.8%) respondents disagree to such sub-minion. Item 20 vividly show that 156(60%) of the sampled population supported the opinion that government at various levels should promote balanced gender policy in areas of education, politics and other spheres of national development, whereas 104(40%)

of the respondents disapproves of adoption of such opinion as possible strategy for ensuring sustainable Affirmative action for national development .

Research Rindings, Conclusion, and Recommendations.

This research is conducted on the topic “Affirmative Action and women political participation in Nigeria: A Study of selected Communities in the four local council areas in Ebonyi North zone comprising Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Ohaukwu and Izzi local government areas of the state. However, four communities were selected from the pilot council areas of the senatorial zone for the research.

Discussion of Research Findings

- The study bordering on the relegation and discrimination suffered by women in politics established that such factors affected women as a result of certain cultural and traditional practices, gender stereotype, lack of self-esteem and courage by women and high level display of apathy by women in open politics.
- That women have played certain roles in national development in areas of domestic responsibilities and in farm works and vocational activities. High responses to questions on these items attest to that assertion. On the other hand, the research debunked certain claims that women have played prominent roles in national development of the country by engaging in civil service duties only and political activities at the local and national levels. These points to the facts that only few women are found in the area of civil service and corridors of power which limited their chances of contributing meaningfully to national development.
- The study on impact of affirmative Action Policy on women inclusion in national policy have contributed substantially in the employment of some women into appointive and elective positions in Nigeria. This proves to the fact that more women are now found occupying appointive and elective positions of authority than before. But then, the reduction in discriminatory policies has not been effective as supported by the research of sex, race or religion. Again, the policy of Affirmative Action has not impacted much on women inclusion in relation to generation of positive externalities for minorities and low income opportunities. The researches on impact of Affirmative Action policy reveal that the policy has positively made remarkable stride in raising the

consciousness on the rights and strategies for upholding gender equality in Nigeria Politics.

- In the course of this study, series of problems were identified as constituting hindrances to women participation in political activities in Nigeria. High rate responses revealed such problems as follows: ignorance and apathy, superstitious beliefs in African political system, the nature and style of Nigeria politics, pressure of family responsibilities and lack of financial resources to fund political activities.
- The research identified certain possible strategies and measures to be adopted to ensure sustainable affirmative action for national development. Such measures as revealed by the rate of responses include: establishing enabling act to ensure proper implementation of the policy, removal and stoppage of obnoxious cultural practices and artificial barriers, mounting public campaigns to sensitize Nigeria women on the need to be politically alive and for government to promote gender balanced policy in education, politics and other spheres of human activities.

Conclusion

Affirmative action policy is a model which takes in account for fair and balanced opportunities in terms of education, politics and employment offers. Though, women were believed to have been endowed with specific potentials very appropriate for over all national development, but they are yet to be accorded the pride of place in numerous public issues, including matters which directly or indirectly affect them. Historical antecedents revealed that the dominance of men folk on virtually human activities created the conditions of discrimination and relegation of women in many African societies, particularly in Nigeria. However the dynamism in global events culminating in global changes in terms of heightened political consciousness, political activism, clamor for social freedom and human rights made the adoption of application of the principle of affirmative action inevitable. Women across African continent began to form organizations as platforms and channels for agitating for some levels of recognition and inclusion into the mainstream of national politics. In Nigeria precisely, the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) was formed in 1958 by the early women activists

and crusaders as an umbrella organization to help galvanize support for women gender to fight their common course.

Furtherance to women call for inclusion in national discourse, National Gender Policy (NGP) formulated the thirty-five percent affirmative action in 2006 which provided for 35% inclusion of women in all processes of governance; even when the structures to implement the NGP were not put in place. The whole essence of affirmative action policy and National Gender Policy were to tackle the issue of under representation and to promote the opportunities of defined minority group within a society. In pursuance of affirmative action agenda, wives of Nigerian presidents and state governors have also initiated pet projects to champion inclusion of women in national discourse. This research without doubt of any sort established that women, all over the world possess certain potentials which stand them out in discharge of domestic and national assignments. That women, particularly in Nigeria has been stalled by cultural practices to effectively contribute to the growth of national economy and development. That even when certain redressing policies such as the Affirmative Action Policy, National Gender Policy and pet-projects were mounted by the act of the parliament to promote gender equality, women had continued to suffer one form of neglect and discrimination or the other. Other in habiting factors to gender equality include: ignorance, apathy, tough nature of Nigeria political system, pressure of family responsibilities and poor financial capabilities. These situation and development in Nigeria call for adoption of drastic strategies and implementable measures to address the problem of gender inequality in the country.

Recommendations

The major concern of this research is Affirmative Action and women political participation in Ngeria, a research carried out in selected communities across four local council areas that make up the Ebonyi North Senatorial Zone of Ebonyi State. From the findings of the research, the under discussed recommendations were put forth as mitigating measures to ensuring effective and sustainable implementation of Affirmative Action Policy in Nigeria.

- **Enabling Legislation**

The act of parliament establishing the policy of Affirmative Action and National Gender policy (NGP) should be adequately strengthened to implement

to the later the contents of the redressing policies. In this regard, the implementation structures should be on ground, including the personnel and funding to ensure women inclusion and vulnerable class in the scheme of national politics and international politics.

- **Advocacy Visit:** Advocacy visit by women groups, government and non-government agencies (civil society organizations and the media key stakeholders within the society by identifying the challenges and find out what the audience perceive or know about the issue on ground. Such visit will afford the agency to establish measurable objective for each audience. The essence of advocacy is to bring about change, offer support, influence policies on a particular issue and to help people express their views, thoughts and access information and guidance on the subject matter. Advocacy would help to address the traditional institutions on the need to embrace modernity and eschew all forms of obnoxious customary practices against women and vulnerable groups in the society.
- **Public Enlightenment Campaign:** Public enlightenment campaign means creating awareness on matters of public interest. In this regard, vigorous campaign strategies should be mounted by the relevant stakeholders to bring detailed contents of any policy or programme, such as Affirmative Action policy or National Gender policy; expressing their implications and what objectives they are designed to achieve. Methods of embarking on public enlightenment campaigns include: conferences (Beijing conference of 1995 in China), seminars, workshops, rallies, excursions and so on. Through organized awareness trips, the women, vulnerable groups and the general public are conscientised to understand the matters which affect them and others around them.
- **Supporting Women Capacity-Building:** Capacity-building implies developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, ability, processes and resources which women need to survive, adapt and thrive well in a fast-changing world. The human capital theory posits that human beings can increase their productive capacity through greater education and skills training (www.investopedia.com). With human capacity approach, certain attributes such as knowledge, skills commitment, competence, resilience and persistence would promote competitiveness and performance among gender in the society. Capacity building of women should not be limited to certain areas only, but

should touch all spheres of human endeavors with equal level of gender participation.

- **Strengthening Democratic Structure:** Owing to the chaotic nature and style of Nigeria politics, this research advocate for repositioning of Nigeria political system which would guarantee non-violent, free, fair and credible electoral process in the country. Stable and independent electoral system would allay women's fears to show full zeal in every democratic process and other matters of public importance.

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