
Can they ever Accomplish 35% Representation? Radio and Political Participation of Nigerian Women

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ABSTRACT

Men in Nigeria predominately occupy political positions despite the 35% affirmative action quota by the democratic government and media campaign on the inclusion of women in politics. The study examined the influence of radio on women's political participation in Nigerian politics. It focused on investigating the influence of radio in the political engagement and mobilisation of select women in Makurdi to politically participate in the 2019 elections and ascertain the extent of the use. Hinged on the Democratic Participant Theory, the study adopted the survey research method and purposively selected 200 respondents from the Makurdi metropolis. Findings show a significant increase in interest in political participation due to media access and radio use for political campaigns in Makurdi. The finding implies that despite influences of pervasive social media, radio can potentially increase the number of women aspirants in the political offices if adequately utilised. Therefore, the study recommends the location of community radios in local communities for easy access to women and increased political participation.

KEYWORDS: Women, Nigeria, Election, Radio, Political Participation

INTRODUCTION

Women participation in politics is receiving world attention. According to research, media and online discussions on women, political participation, and decision-making in Africa (Omojola & Morah, 2014) improves visibility of women generally. In addition, significant commitment to women's decision-making is made at the international level (Nyekwere & Nyekwere, 2012). The Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which called on the government to take measures to ensure women equal full access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making reiterated the need to increase the representation of women. In 2006, the 50th Session of the Commission on the status of women adopted conclusions on the parity participation of women and men in decision-making procedures. Also, the United Nations focus on gender equality and women empowerment in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a manifestation of such attention. Basically, the law in Nigeria “provides for a maximum of 60% and a minimum of 30% representation for either sex, which was implemented as a result of the Beijing Conference. The Conference agreed that 30% of public seat and positions should be reserved for women” (Agbalajobi, 2010.p.81).

Nyekwere & Nyekwere (2012) posit that subscription to various international declarations and other charters aimed at elimination of discrimination against women and adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action is a call on the government to take actions to guarantee women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision – making. It lends credence to Nigerian support for the full integration of women in its development process. As a social group, women are severely disadvantaged and marginalised in societies, particularly in developed countries. Even the female children are bedevilled by gender-based violence often reported in media, plus the advent of new media equally, which complements the effort of the traditional media though with more communication prospects (Morah, 2016). She affirms Chaffee and Metzger’s mindset that "the new media now celebrate opportunities for self-expression that were once denied by the old media. In the context of child rape, more victims are coming out to speak, especially on social networks, and this generates a lot of comments and feedback from readers" (Morah, 2016, p.71). The above view implies that women are expected to be more empowered to acknowledge their rights and are likely to freely participate in politics because of media influence. However, in

Nigeria, culture and religious practice have combined to reduce women to a mere appendage of their male counterparts in virtually every area of life (Okunna 1999).

According to Afolabi et al. (Agbalajobi, 2010), women comprise over half of the world's population and generally contribute significantly to societal development. He argues that Nigeria's most important commodity (asset) is its dynamic, entrepreneurial and innovative people, and one of its most underutilised assets is the economic potential of the Nigerian woman. For Agbalajobi (2010), women assume five key roles: mother, producer, home – manager, community organiser, and social-cultural and political activist. Women movements have engendered political activism attributed to historical gender discrimination and equality of these roles. The level of education in Nigeria is deficient, especially in the Northern part of the country, with 60% compared to other regions (AIT News 2015, December 21).

Globally, women's economic empowerment is low compared to their male counterparts. Many women still live in their menial jobs or are without jobs. Nigerian women own an estimated 30% of the country's registered entrepreneurial business and are behind 41% of business start-ups; 6% of parliamentarians are female, and women account for only 24% of non-agricultural employment (Daily Sun 2016, July 13). Citing McKinsey (Nwogwugwu, 2016) observes that Global Institute recently estimated that raising women's wages and labour force participation to match men's would boost global output by more than 25%. Peterson Institute for International Economics studied 22,000 companies worldwide and found that having more women on corporate boards and in leadership positions is a hallmark of higher profitability. (Nwogwugwu, 2016). Having more women in political positions would help to boost the economy and bring about national development. According to Naomi (Morah & Singh, 2020, p.22), development "involves not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services aimed at improving the individual and collective quality of life." Therefore, women's political participation demands inclusion and equitable distribution, a facet of development.

Since the commencement of democracy in Nigeria, we have had more women appointed into positions of authority than elected representatives (Agbalajobi, 2010). It does not mean women do not come out to vote during the elections, but instead, they slack when it has to do with positions. Women who sum up the courage to aspire for leadership positions are sometimes

encouraged or deceived into being supported by their political party or fellow women. For instance, Jubril Sarah from Northern Nigeria was able to score only one vote in the 2011 People Democratic Party (PDP) nomination of its presidential flag bearer in Nigeria.

Politically, Nigerian women have little representation at critical policy-making levels, even though they are described as among the best in social functions and economic management. According to (Ikwuegbu 2005), women are excluded from positions of authority and relegated to the background as second-class citizens. For instance, media reports indicates that after the 2011 elections, women in Nigeria seem to be more committed to the full implementation of the 35 per cent Affirmative Action. Various women groups in the country, such as the Gender Affirmative Action (GAA) and the 100 Group platforms, were reportedly lobbying President Goodluck Jonathan to concede 15 ministerial posts and 35 per cent of the other federal appointments women (Nigeria Tribune, 2011, June 2). Reports showed that former President Goodluck Jonathan would have achieved the 35 per cent affirmation action by appointing one more woman into his cabinet. Nevertheless, the appointment of 14 women out of 41 cabinet members reached (33%) affirmative action (Nigeria Tribune, 2011, June 2). There were little efforts made to the development and contribution to the enlightening of women during the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua administration. He established a centre for cancer treatment in Abuja for women in 2011. Presently, President Buhari's administration should be more women inclusive to make the 35% Affirmative Action a reality.

The media in every society is the fourth estate of the realm and should be fair in reporting development issues. Development in Africa cannot be complete without unbiased media reporting and active participation of African women in every ramification. However, such developmental effort is more effortless today due to the impacts of more radio channels and new media technology. Even "young people have broadly embraced the use of social media, especially in Africa and Nigeria probably as an easy means of education, communication and socialisation" (Morah & Uzochukwu, 2020). Many women now have social media accounts and tend to be more politically conscious. Though social media is pervasive, radio is the most accessible and popular communication medium, especially in Nigeria, because of its characteristics and reach. The study investigates the role of radio in influencing the political participation of women of Makurdi in the 2019 elections.

THE PROBLEM

Over the years, there have been varied debates over the participation or desire of women in Nigerian politics. Democracy is founded on equity and equal opportunity for the masses. Despite the democratic governance in Nigeria, women are still underrepresented at most levels of government and other executives/decision making bodies in the country. Their underrepresentation sometimes stems from their exemption from the decision-making bodies in the country or their inadequate participation in politics since representative in a democratic government emanate from the election. Sanbonmatusu, as cited in (Agbalajobi, 2010), concludes that 'women would be even more supportive of electing more women to public office if they were that knowledgeable as men about the extent of women's under representation'.

Scholars have attributed women's low level of participation to different factors (Okunna, 1999; Uzochukwu, Morah & Okafor, 2016), such as lack of funds and resources as politics is heavily monetised; low self-esteem, lack of confidence to run an election by some women, jealousy, hatred, traditional and religious factors. Other pinpointed factors include conflicting demands on the time of women candidates due to their domestic and social responsibilities, the dual burden of domestic tasks, and professional obligations (Agbalajobi 2010). However, observation shows that in most cases, women are usually considered fit for nomination only if they have powerful men as their political godfathers. Inadequate trust among women for their fellow women who aspire for a political position; women perception of politics as a dirty game, illiteracy, limited access to education, lack or inadequate access to political information and violence during elections were regarded as factors against women's political emancipation. These scenarios have robbed women of vital positions in government that would have to help them participate fully in the governance of the society, contribute meaningfully in the decision making and development process of the country and protect their interests. However, since the media is believed to set agenda and develop society (Morah, 2016), radio should help persuade and convince women to participate in politics actively. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the extent to which radio influenced women in Makurdi to participate in the 2019 elections actively.

OBJECTIVE/RESEARCH QUESTION

This research aimed to investigate the influence of radio on the political participation of women during the 2019 elections in Makurdi, the capital of Benue State. To that end, the following research question guided the study:

RQ 1: To what extent does radio use influence female residents, in Makurdi to politically participate in the 2019 elections?

POLITICS AND WOMEN

The mass media is an essential stakeholder in societies achieving development goals – both contributors and beneficiaries. The media's contribution can do more in the draft SDG goal 16, which points to peace, social inclusion, justice, accountability and effectiveness. Media, especially radio, have a relevant role in many aspects of development, ranging from governance to inclusion, empowerment, peace, and women and youth involvement (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2015). In recognition of the urgency of achieving SDG16 in Nigeria, the media as ‘agenda setters’ can therefore give voice to youth and women, enabling their full participation in their communities.

Women are generally subjected to domination by men especially in Africa. This is due to persisting culturally stereotyped societal structure of Africa where men dominate economic, political and social power, and women have historically played the role of the followers of male political leaders. Agbalajobi (2010) believes this form of discrimination is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one though it lasted for so long in Nigeria as other developed nations move towards gender equality and equity. Women are inexcusably discriminated against in many ways, especially in Nigeria. The author highlights that, for instance, in some courts and police stations in Nigeria today, women who propose to stand for sureties for an accused person who has secured bail are routinely disqualified because they are women (p.77). Today, democracy has become a vital apparatus for attaining sustainable development, and consequently, the meaning of democracy remains elusive.

For Anifowose (2004), some established democracies like Britain and US, democratic poly archives for a long time, were male poly archives. Even famous advocates of democratic and republican governments rejected claims that women should be full citizens. For the most part, they adopted the prevailing view that the proper role of women was marriage, procreation and family,

not politics. As John Locke said, 'all men are by nature equal, they never recommended that women be allowed to vote and considered it more or less self-evident that the husband opinion is final (Nwankwo & Agu, 2018)).

Tracing the historical origin of male domination is difficult (Anifowose as cited in Agbalajobi, 2010). However, it is believed that a highly plausible explanation for male domination is found in physical differences. Unlike women, men are generally heavier, taller, and more capable than women to enforce their will through physical violence. On the other hand, women are vulnerable because of their role in childbearing and nursing. In addition, discrimination and subjection of women are further enforced by custom, traditional practices, beliefs, and the law, which stood the state's coercive force.

Nwaogu(2006) agrees that democracy should presuppose equal opportunity for all. However, the preamble for the strategic objectives and actions to enhance women's access to power and decision making admits, among other things, that despite democratisation in most countries, women are primarily underrepresented at most levels of government, especially in religious and other executive bodies. In Nigeria, the deficit can be adduced to colonialism, culture, and varied environments complicated by militarism's history, which fully crystallised the state into one that identified power and leadership with men and subservience with women (Nwaogu, 2006). He notes further that the colonial experience in the history of Nigeria marked the beginning of the disarticulation of the Nigerian political structure since it was the deliberate exclusion of women from politics during that time that spurred the anti-colonial women movement in Nigeria between 1915 – 1956. Famous activists such as Margaret Ekpo, Onu Ifeyinwa, Madam Tinubu, Fumilayo Kuti defiantly challenged colonial policies like exclusion from governance, taxation without accountability and forced labour.

However, as prescribed by most cultures, the division of roles between males and females assigns the subordinate position to women. Afolabi, (2010) explains that the consignment of women's roles to the domestic arena, while the public space is seen as the traditional place for men, tend to perpetuate discrimination and distinctions based on sex. However, a growing emphasis on gender equality is a central component of democratisation. In collaboration, Ediomu – Ubong (2006) agrees that traditional beliefs circumscribe the role of women along the domestic and reproduction lines and prevent women incursion into politics which is considered men domain. He notes that

the military government has exemplified the orgy of women's political marginalisation in Nigeria since no woman was appointed state governor during the Babaginda and Sani Abacha's regime. Women's economic condition acts as constraints to their full participation in politics in Nigeria, exacerbated by the current trend toward money politics in Nigeria, high registration and nomination fees, plus campaign expenditure (Ediomo-Ubong, 2006).

Ikwuegbu (2005) posits that traditionally, the women in Nigeria are excluded from positions of authority, seen as a liability rather than an asset, not consulted on matters bordering on their interest and relegated to the background second class citizens and often perceived as part of their husband's property. It is thus apparent that challenges faced by women in society are a combination of direct discrimination and structural barriers, such as the hours that political meetings are held, which can conflict with women's other responsibilities toward their families. Media reports have also shown that women have not been able to influence the platforms of political parties because the party nomination system in Nigeria is yet to become objective. Women are yet to be recognised and appreciated even at party levels. This is evident in the discrimination meted against them within political parties where they sometimes, face challenges of exclusion from fixing agreement meetings at ungodly hours and through traditional and cultural norms. Though the Nigeria constitution guaranteed women's rights to participate in active politics, the last decade has unfortunately witnessed a relative increase in women's participation. Since the advent of democracy, there seems to have been a remarkable increase in women's participation in politics in Nigeria. "This is only when we measure increase in participation with certain standards like the number of women who vote in elections; the number of public offices held by women; number of women related policies implemented by government" (Nwankwo & Agu, 2018, p.146). Considering these standards, yet there is inherently a pronounced under-representation of women in politics compared with their male counterparts.

Agbalajobi (2010) surmises that women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the condition; that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and governance of the country. Secondly, all human beings are equal, and women possess the same right as men, to participate in governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. Even Nwankwo & Agu (2018) affirms the provisions of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution on section 40 which states:

Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular, he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other associated for the protection of his interests provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that commission does not accord recognition.

Section 42(1) of the constitution state further that: “A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.” The above provision further confirms that one can go to court to seek redress if a woman’s franchise is violated. The constitution particularly prohibits discrimination based on gender status as Section 77 of the constitution state that:

Subject to the provisions of this constitution, every senatorial district or federal constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this part of this chapter shall return a member who shall be directly elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives in such Manner as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly. Every Nigerian citizen who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for the purpose of election to a legislative house shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election (Nigerian Constitution,1999)

From the preceding, no section in the constitution appears to exclude women's participation in politics in Nigeria. Nevertheless, in actual practice, there is extensive discrimination. Few and almost insignificant women were elected into various posts in the year 1999,2003,2007 and 2015 general elections held in the country. Except that of 2011, where women in Nigeria seem to be more committed to the full implementation of the 35per cent Affirmative Action and 100 Group Platforms reportedly lobbied former President Goodluck Jonathan to concede 15 ministerial posts and 35per cent of other federal appointments to women (Agbalajobi.2010). However, men dominate most public offices to date; female gubernatorial candidates have emerged, but none has ever won, and the same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women, yet they remain underrepresented compared to their male counterparts.

WOMEN, MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA

Historically before the advent of the colonial masters women like Queen Amina of Zauzau, Moremi of Ife and others were among women of repute who sacrificed in service to their communities. Queen Amina's military and political successes exemplified women's access to politics as she was believed to have fought and won many wars. Moremi also voluntarily sacrificed her only child Oluorogbo to save Ife from further invasion. In the west, women union and Majekobaje society led finally to the dethronement of the Alake of Egba land in 1946. Mrs Soleye, Mrs Osimosu, and Mrs Soyinka were leading activists of their time. In Igbo region, the Aba Market women organised by Mrs Margaret Ekpo was prominent in women empowerment (Olufumi, 2006) as cited in (Ikwuegbu, 2006).

Oganwu (as cited in Ikwuegbu, 2006) explains that the First Republic offered women minor political positions. Only two female senators, Wuraola Esan and Beatrice Kwango, were nominated by parties and not elected in the first republic. Similarly, during the Second Republic, only one woman Chief France Afegbua was in government while the Third Republic, had three deputy governors. They include Hajiya Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs Ekpenyong of Cross River State. Olufumi (2006) pinpoints the period covering the struggle for independence saw women like Mrs Fumilayo Ransome Kuti of National Council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC), Hajiya Gambo of Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), who was the first woman in modern times that called for women solidarity and Madam Naonusa of Action Group (AG). These groups of women were later recognised and absorbed into NEPU. Though they contributed to politics by mobilising women for post-independence politics, they never held the political post. Olufumi(2006) further notes that the post-independence era ushered in a new set of women interested in politics. Prominent among them were Madam Lilia Dongoyaro, who was the leader of the women wing of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN); and Mrs Oyibo Odinamadu, who was the running mate of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN); and Hauwa Kulu Abata who was also the woman leader of Nigeria People's Party(NPP) in the Second Republic. During the Buhari/Idiagbon regime, the Federal Military government directed that there should be at least one woman in the Cabinet of all the States of the federation.

However, during President Obasanjo's first term in office (1999 - 2003), about seven (7) women were appointed as Ministers; during the second term (2003 - 2007), he appointed more than seven

women into his cabinet with some others as his advisers. (Akomolafe, 2006). Notably, women like Ngozi Okonji Iweala were appointed the Finance Minister, Oby Ezekwesili Minister of Budgeting, Titi Ajanaku Minister for Women Affairs, Dora Akunyili, (NAFDAC) Director-General and later Minister of Information and Orientation under President Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan's administration. Also, women like Kofo Buknor Akelere of Lagos State, Pauline Tallen of Plateau State, Virgy Etiaba of Anambra State were deputy governors. Later, Virgy Etiaba also became the first female governor in Nigeria, a position she assumed when the governor, Peter Obi, was impeached. These women and others showed leadership mastery and were appointed at different times.

According to Ajah (2011), the increased number of women in political appointments has raised the consciousness of Nigerian women in the game of politicking. He notes further that during the 2011 governorship election, the number of women who contested in various elections increased reasonably. Women participation in Nigeria has cut across all elective political positions except the Presidency, which they lost at the party primaries. Women's agitation for political relevance has cut across every tribe, religion and the six geopolitical zones in the country. For instance, in 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan appointed 14 women into his cabinet. These women, among others, were; Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy; Mrs Alison – Madueke, Minister of Petroleum; Prof. Ruquyyatu Rufia, Minister of Education; Hajia Zainab Maina, Women Affairs and Social Development; Mrs Stella Oduah-Ogiewwonyi, Minister of Aviation. Others include Hajia Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi Minister of State for Niger-Delta Affair; Mrs Omobola Johnson, Information and Communication Technology Minister; Mrs Stella Ochekepe, Minister of Water Resources; Mrs Ama Pepple, Minister of Lands and Housing; Mrs Hadiza Mailafiya, Minister of Environment; Prof. Viola Onwuliri, Minister of State for FCT. Some women were also appointed as special advisers, elected as Senators and members of the State House of Assembly. The 2011 elections indeed seem to have recorded women's greater participation in the history of Nigerian politics, which is a good indicator for development as, women's full participation is essential for sustainable development (Morah & Omojola, 2012).

The present administration seems to have reduced the number of women in political appointments as President Muhammadu Buhari appointed six (6) women in 2015. Apparently, the

representation is low (6 out of the 36 administration lists) compared to the Goodluck regime, which had 14 women in the administration and more inclusive women. The six (6) women that initially made the Buhari's administration list in 2015 were; Aisha Abubakar: Minister of State Trade and Investment (Sokoto State); Aisha Alhassan: Minister for Women Affairs (Taraba State); Amina Mohammed: Minister of Environment (Gombe State); Cladius Omoleye Daramola: Minister of State, Niger-Delter(Ondo State); Kemi Adeosun: Minister of Finance (Ogun State); Zainab A'mmed: Minister of State Budget and National Planning (Kaduna State). It is the intention of ascertaining whether effective communication is a reason for initial poor representation of women in present administration that partly justifies the essence of this study.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPANT THEORY

Democratic Participant theory advocates media support for cultural pluralism at a grassroots level and opposes the commercialisation and monopolisation of modern media and its top-down non – participant character. The theory recommends horizontal rather than top-down communication to ensure a circular flow of communication. Morah& Okunna (2020) argue that this theory is hinged on the insistence that the present bureaucracy and commercial and professional hegemony in the media be broken down to guarantee easier media access for all users and consumers. Baran and Davis (2006) point out that the democratic–participant theory calls for the development of innovative small media that group members can directly control.

The core of this theory stresses that participatory communication is vital for political development. The issue of men being elected into top positions; and women being seen as second class citizens -being appointed rather than elected should be bridged. The theory agrees, in essence, with equal horizontal participation in politics between men and women and not a linear performance in any election as a result of information emanating from media coverage. Democratisation of radio in Makurdi will make radio become a 'small medium' that is accessible to women to enhance their political participation. Therefore, when the radio effectively communicates political messages communally, it should persuade women to engage and participate actively in elections and politics.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is the survey method. Quantitative and qualitative data were generated through field survey research design. The survey method collects large and standardised data from the field using a well-structured questionnaire (Morah, 2020). Standardised

data enables the researcher to provide information to the research questions to make generalised influences about the target population. It enabled the researcher to exploit the factors that are not directly observable. The researcher's area of study is Makurdi, the capital of Benue state. Benue state has twenty-three local governments, including the area of study (Makurdi). The purposive sampling technique was used to select 200 women to represent the population of women in the Makurdi metropolis. The purposive sampling technique was adopted because the study targeted only women and the study demands a good representation.

FINDINGS/DISCUSSIONS

The data analysed was obtained from copies of the questionnaire distributed face to face among women from the Makurdi metropolis. Out of 200 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 200 representing a response rate of 100% was completed and returned. Data analyses are presented below on psychographic and demographic variables underlying this study using SPSS data analysis software.

The findings show that 120(60%) respondents are married while 80 respondents are single, representing 40%. Therefore, the numbers of married women were more, which implies that the majority of the respondents could make political decisions independently.

Findings also indicated that (20)10% of the respondents are 18–25years old, (60)30% of the respondents are from 26-35years old, (80)40% of the respondents are 36-45years old, While (40)20% of the respondents are 46years and above. Therefore, since the age range 36-45years had the highest number of responses, it is conspicuous that they are in the know about the political history of Nigeria concerning women and understand the need for women inclusion in politics.

RQ 1 To what extent do Radio Makurdi influence female residents in Makurdi to participate in the 2019 elections politically?

Table 1: Do you listen to political communications on Radio Benue Makurdi?

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	180	90%
No	20	10%
Total	200	100%

Data in Table 1 shows that most 190 (90%) respondents listen to political communications on Radio Benue. The result implies that most women are likely to be influenced by the content of radio campaigns in the 2019 elections.

Table 2: Radio's high-level efficacy in women mobilisation for politics in Makurdi

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Disagrees	36	18%
Disagree	16	8%
Undecided	8	4%
Agree	96	48%
Strongly Agree	44	22%
Total	200	100%

The above Table 2 indicates that the majority 140 (70%) respondents agree that Radio Benue is highly effective in mobilising women for politics in Makurdi. A minor 4%(8) respondents were undecided because they were unsure of their views. The result implies that radio is a very effective means for women to participate in politics during the 2019 elections in Makurdi. The finding corroborates Morah(2019) findings on media's usefulness for development.

Table 3: Radio was the most accessible medium in Makurdi during the 2019 election Campaign

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Disagrees	16	8%
Disagree	12	6%
Undecided	4	2%
Agree	108	54%
Strongly Agree	60	30%
Total	200	100%

Data on Table3 shows an absolute majority of 168(84%) respondents agree that radio was the most accessible medium carrying political communications during the 2019 election campaign. The

result indicates that most women have greater access to political messages on radio and are likely to be influenced to vote and participate in the election.

Table 4: Do you think women’s knowledge gap in political communications did not hinder political participation in the 2019 Election?

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Disagrees	24	12%
Disagree	108	54%
Undecided	20	10%
Agree	36	18%
Strongly Agree	12	6%
Total	200	100%

From the response in Table 4, 132(66%) respondents did not agree that gaps in electoral campaign knowledge did not hinder active political participation in the 2019 elections. The result implies that radio access closed the knowledge gap concerning political communication among select respondents. It pinpoints the relation between media access, uses and gratification, which further affirmed democratic participation and knowledge gap theories. It supports Morah & Uzochukwu (2020, B) findings that media has capacity to influence adult decisions if there is greater media access and ease of use.

Table 5: Assessment of the disposition of select women toward the use of radio in the coverage of the 2019 gubernatorial election campaigns

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
They were biased, partial and favoured one party over the other.	28	14%
They were fair balanced, and indicated no form of favouritism.	52	26%
They played a neutral role	120	60%
Total	200	100%

From the response in Table 5, it was found that 28 respondents believed that the coverage of the 2019 gubernatorial election campaign in Makurdi was biased, partial and favoured one party over the other. Fifty-two (26%) respondents believed that the coverage was fair, balanced, and had no form of favouritism, while 120 respondents (60%) were on the assessment that the coverage was

a neutral one where all were treated equally. The results imply that select respondents appreciate the influence of radio during the 2019 elections to a significant extent.

Table 6: To what extent do you think radio political communications raised the women's political interest in Makurdi?

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
10 – 30%	12	6%
31 – 60%	28	14%
61 – 100%	156	78%
No response	4	2%
Total	200	100%

Data on Table 6 shows that the majority of 136(78%) respondents believed that due to the political radio communications, there is an increased level of interest within the range of 61-100% in political participation among the select women in 2019. A minimal 4(2%) respondents did not express any view on this question. The result shows that radio has significantly influenced women to actively participate in politics in Benue State.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

H₀- There is no significant relationship between the effective use of radio and the political participation of Makurdi women in the 2019 elections.

H₁- There is a significant relationship between the effective use of radio and political participation of Makurdi women in the 2019 elections

The formula of Chi-square goodness fit was used to test the hypothesis.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(FO - Fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Fe

The margin of error in the study was placed at 5% or 0.05; the formula $DF = k - 1$ was used to calculate the degree of freedom (DF).

Where,

DF = Degree of freedom

K = Number of rows = 5

1 = Constance

In this study, therefore, $DF = 5 - 1 = 4$

To test the hypothesis, the researcher used Table 4, assessing the significant relationship between access to political communications and political participation.

Hypothesis Test Table

Options	oi	Ei	oi-ei	(oi-ei) ²	$\frac{(oi-ei)^2}{ei}$
Strongly Disagrees	24	40	-16	256	6.4
Disagree	108	40	68	4624	115.6
Undecided	20	40	-20	400	10
Agree	36	40	-4	16	0.4
Strongly Agree	12	40	-28	784	19.6
Total	200				152

The table of the critical value of Chi-square at a degree of freedom of 4 and margin error of 0.05 is 9.49. It shows that the calculated Chi-square value 152 is greater than the table value of 9.49. The result is expressed as $152 > 9.49$. Therefore, the null hypothesis above is rejected while its alternative is accepted. There is a significant relationship between the effective use of radio and the political participation of Makurdi women’s in the 2019 elections.

CONCLUSION.

Women participation in Nigerian politics is an issue of great importance. Research has shown that radio is pivotal in increasing the political participation of Benue women, especially those in Makurdi. The hypothesis test affirms a significant relationship between the effective use of radio and the political participation of Makurdi women in the 2019 elections. The study negates the popular misconception that women are not interested in Nigerian politics. Women have been left in the background politically for too long (Morah, 2019). It has engendered a consciousness of women under-representation in public offices. However, the intention of every woman should be to support their female folks. It should be their substantive responsibility, and it is even on this premise most women can emerge as public office holders successfully. However, overcoming cultural barriers and stereotypes is raised as significant challenges and sexual harassment both in the political parties and on campaign grounds (Nwankwo & Agu, 2018). The media should assume its developmental and agenda-setting roles to help douse this feeling among women and garner the confidence to participate in politics and elections actively.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Given the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Government should encourage the location of community radios in local communities for easy access to women and increased political participation
- b. The professional status of women should be promoted in media to reduce the communication gap between public and private life. It would inexorably lead to an increase in the range of electable women and invariably encourage them to enter a career in politics.

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