

**POLITICAL PARTIES AND COMPLIANCE WITH EXTANT LAWS AND POLICIES ON
INCLUSIVITY AND GENDER IN GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Political parties serve as vehicle through which groups, organizations, males, females, youths etc. are represented or selected to represent the various groups. It has been observed that representations in most societies are unequal or lopsided. Because of unequal representation, extant laws and policies on inclusivity and gender became the norm, in order to enhance or eliminate lop-sidedness in representation. The objective of the study is to determine the level of compliance of political parties with extant laws on inclusivity and gender in Gombe State. Five (5) Political parties were selected based on votes scored and/or won election in the state. Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. The findings revealed noncompliance to extant laws and policies on inclusivity and gender. It was discovered that there was absolutely near absence of Women, Youths, and Persons With Disabilities (PWD) to leadership position in the leadership positions in political parties excerpt those positions that were solely reserved for the aforementioned groups e.g. Women leader for women. The findings also reveal that there are extant laws and policies on inclusivity and gender at Party level, national level and International level but implementation is the problem. Women, youth and PWD do not occupy leadership positions mainly due to poor finances, unfavourable political environment, custom, tradition and other social factors. The study recommends that for democracy to succeed, it is expected that all and sundry should be represented for the growth and development of the country and sanctions be placed on erring Political Parties that fail to comply with extent laws and policies on inclusivity and gender.

Key Words: *Compliance, Extant Laws, Gender Policy, Inclusivity, Political Party*

INTRODUCTION

Political parties remain the only platform in Nigeria for democratically elected leaders to emerge. Political parties in Nigeria date back to when the Clifford Constitution of 1922 provided for the establishment of the Nigerian Legislative Council (Dudley 1982 as cited in Sadeeque, 2017). Given the important role of political parties, it is critical that parties promote women, youths and People with Disability (PWD) in their candidate's lists, provide the candidates with appropriate training and support, and allocate campaign funds equally. In many countries, the adoption of party quotas, either voluntarily or due to a legislative requirement, has become very popular in the last few decades. The implementation of

gender quotas and inclusivity for all groups however, is not an only tool used by political parties to advance/champion the participation of women, youths and PWD women in politics.

Extant laws are concern with active laws in a given society or country. Therefore, political parties are establish in line with the laws of the land such as Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution provides for the Right to Freedom of Assembly as well as the right to form or join a Political Party. The Constitution also stipulates provisions on the formation of such groups in Sections 221 – 229 while the Electoral Act in Sections 78 – 102 contains provisions and regulations on Political Parties (Plac, 2019). Hence, there is need for political parties to comply with these laws among others.

As the gatekeepers of elected posts in almost all countries, political parties are consistently identified as responsible for women's, youths and PWD political underrepresentation impliedly or explicitly in governance. At the end of 2015, men held an average of 78 percent of all parliamentary seats globally (IPU, 2015 as cited IDEA, 2016). This over-representation of men is not only problematic in and of itself, but the under-representation of women's, youths and PWD interests in decision-making bodies also acts as an obstacle to equitable and sustainable development.

The youths and PWD are not left out on the issue of under-representation especially in countries that are developing such as Nigeria. Furthermore, despite constitutional provisions, commitments to treaties and conventions; level of compliance of political parties to these laws and policies seems to lopsided. At the national level, there is the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999, Criminal Code and Penal Code Laws of Nigeria, Customary Laws and Practices and the Police Act, as well as several policies such as NAPEP, National Policy on Women, National Policy on Sexuality Education in Schools, Nutrition Policy, Universal Basic Education Program, National Policy on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, National Policy on HIV/AIDS, towards bridging the gap in gender. The need to improve the status of women, youth and PWD, and eliminate gross inequality is no longer the issue, but how to implement the laudable local and global policies and initiatives in order to bring social justice to the deprived and vulnerable group (Dominic; Matthew, & Akunna, 2014).

‘The structures and caucuses of the political parties are mostly male dominated. (Irene, 2011). Taking into consideration all the hurdles for women, youths and PWD to ascend to political parties leadership position, it is imperative to examine the level of compliance to laws and policies on gender and inclusivity and to find if the responsibility for underrepresentation lies with noncompliance to extant laws and policies on gender or/and other factors could be responsible and proffer lasting solutions for gender and inclusiveness in the political parties in Gombe State and Nigeria in general.

Objectives of the Study:

- i. To find out the level of compliance of political parties to extant laws and policies on inclusiveness and gender in Gombe State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Politics

The concept of politics has been viewed in different perspectives by different scholars who have written on the subject matter. Heywood (1997) confers his credence to the divergent views of scholars on the concept of politics, when he noted that respected authorities cannot agree on what the subject matter is all about. In this vein therefore, the term politics has been defined in various ways (Olorunmaiye, 2009).

Heywood (1997) inextricably linked politics to the phenomenon of conflict and cooperation when he defined politics as the art of government, a phenomenon which relates to public affair, a means of resolving conflicts either by compromise, conciliation or negotiation, rather than through force and naked power. Sodaro (2001) share this view by defining` politics as ‘the process by which communities pursue collective goals and deal with their conflicts authoritatively by means of government. Easton (1990) defines politics as the ‘authoritative allocation of values’ in a political system. By this Easton sees politics as encompassing the various processes through which government responds to the pressures and demands of allocating benefits, rewards or penalties in a society. This is why Lasswell (1958) sees politics as the

determination of ‘who gets what, when and how’. It is however observed that the various definitions above consider the concept of politics from the view point of the normative function of politics which is the resolution of conflict of interests.

The holistic approach to the concept of politics is however observed by Williams (1980) as cited by Olorunmaiye (2009). He viewed the concept of politics from two perspectives; firstly, that politics is a discreditable activity whose virtue is the competitive pursuit of private interests and secondly, that politics is concerned with the administration of the common affairs of the public, a matter of universal rather than particular concern, whose aim is defining and promoting the common goods. Sodaro (2001) opined that politics is a process that connotes its continuing sequence of events and interactions among various actors (individuals, organisations and government) which generally take place within a structure of rules, procedures and institutions rather than haphazardly.

Extant Laws

Section 17 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (As Amended) states that the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be seeded on the principles of freedom, equality and social justice. Chapter II of the same constitution deals with non-justifiable directive principle of state policy. The state is enjoined to direct its policy towards ensuring that all citizens without discrimination on any ground whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of lively-hood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment [Section 14 (3), Section 15 Sub-Section 12.

In addition, discrimination on grounds of ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political opinion is prohibited. Thus, a Nigerian citizen is not to be subjected either expressly, by or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria, or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria or other group, place of origin, religion, political opinion or gender are not subject (Section 42) (1) (a) (b).

Political Party

A political party is more than an organization for seeking and controlling political power. More critically, it is an organization for expressing and harmonizing interests, and that they are intermediates between the citizens and political society, government and state (Ikelegbe, 2013). There are numerous types of political parties such as elite-based parties, mass-based parties, ethnic-based parties, elector list parties and movement parties (Gunther & Diamond, 2003). People form political parties to represent their ideas. Members of a party agree to take the same position on many issues and agree to support the same changes to law and leaders. Politics is highly intricate in which it is often stated that – no permanent friend or permanent foe in politics. Meaning the association could change ideas and the ideology could change. The political activities are considered to be ‘free zone’ to all irrespective of gender, experiences in African countries and Nigeria in particular show that certain cultural values have systematically over the years impeded female from participating in politics, at least to a certain degree which to some extent tend to redefine the tenets of participatory democracy (Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014).

Theoretical framework

Because of the nature of this study, its adopt group theory as guide in our analysis and understanding of extant law on gender policies by political parties.

Historically the group theory was adopted because of the strong views of scholar Arthur Bentley (1908), in his book titled “process of governance”, he stated that the interactions of groups are the basis of political life and rejected statist abstractions. In his opinion, group activity determined legislature, administration and adjudication.

According to the group theory of politics, public policy is the product of the group struggle. What may be called public policy is the equilibrium reached in the group struggle at any given moment, and it represents a balance which the contending factions or groups constantly strive to win in their favour. Many public policies do reflect the activities of groups (Anderson, 1997). This means that this theory attempts to analyse how each of the various groups in a society tries to influence public policy to its advantage at the

policy formulation level. In other words, the central practice of this model is that interaction among groups is a critical ingredient in politics.

Public policy is, thus, a temporary point of compromise reached in the course of competition between mosaics of numerous interest groups with cross-cutting membership. The ability of the group that is favoured at one point to sustain its gain depends on its power to counteract the powers of other groups that would make efforts to tilt decisions to their favour. It is this type of competition between groups that determine pattern of allocation of societal resources (Enemu, 1999).

The locus of power in the society changes from time to time, depending upon the group that succeeds in exerting its own supremacy over the others. Accordingly, the power to determine policy direction changes with the change in the fortunes of each or a combination of these groups. It is in appreciating the fluidity of power base in society that Latham contends that what we regard as public policy is in reality a temporary equilibrium reached in the course of the inter-group struggle (Latham, 1965 cited by Adam, 2018).

As soon as the equilibrium point is altered in the favour of new groups another policy will emerge or the old policy will be modified. Politics in essence entails a dynamic equilibrium created by the struggle between different groups. In Latham's opinion, the legislature acts only as a referee to the inter-group struggle and it ratifies the victories of the successful coalitions, as well as record the terms of the surrender, compromises, and conquest in the form of statutes or Bills (Latham, 1965). Since the power to dominate policy decision is dependent on group solidarity and power, the dynamics of the policy process is expected to be more vibrant and fierce in plural societies than in homogenous ones. In such societies the ability of a group to tilt the policy to its favour depends on a number of factors, prominent among which are: wealth, organisational skill, and leadership quality, bargaining skill, access to decision-makers or in Nigerian parlance connection. The group theory is relevant and adopted in this study as it views the gender issues as a struggle between male and female to better the lot of each group (male/female) of the society and so as to achieve higher equilibrium. The researchers consider the theoretical perspective relevant because of the nature of the political parties in the country with clear cut functions under the constitution.

Empirical Review

Historically women never enjoyed parity with men in the political or in the issues of governance in the pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial period (Ekpenyong et. al. (2015). All through these periods till date the political system is male –centric. The issue of extant law on gender in the pre-colonial and colonial period was never an issue. The Clifford constitution of 1922 introduced the first elective principle that awakened the political consciousness of few male indigenes, which was a departure from low political participation of Nigerian indigenes. The political marginalization of women continued after independence in 1960. In the First Republic (1960 - 1966) only four (4) women were seen in the corridor of political power. Mrs Wuraola Esan and Mrs Beatrice Kerry were the only two female legislators in the Federal Parliament. There was no Minister. During the second republic (1979 - 1984), there was only one (1) female senator out of 571, and 11 female members of the House of Representative out of 445. In the 19 states of the federation, there was no female representation in all the States Houses of Assembly and there was no female chairperson of councillor at the local government level (Ekpenyong et. al, 2015).

Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014) explained that available statistics on gender representation in public offices, especially at the highest decision level such as the office of the president, state governor and local government chairperson, revealed that female representation was almost at zero frequency. Except in few instances where women were elected as local government chairpersons, no woman has ever in the history of Nigerian elections, been elected as chief executive both at the national and the state levels. Similarly, a summary of gender representation in the National Assembly during the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections, put together, shows that women ridiculously under-represented by 5% at each of the two houses of assembly. Beside no woman had ever ascended the office of the Senate President, while the only female, Patricia Etteh, who was elected as speaker of the House of Representatives in 2007, was impeached by a male dominated House before the end of her tenure.

In 1999 and 2003 out of 130 federal boards of public corporations only 7 (5.6percent) were women. In the same period, out of 47 cabinet ministers appointed only 7 were women which represent 14.89 percent. One woman was appointed as Director General of a government regulatory agency. Special advisers and senior special assistant were two women respectively. Six women were appointed as special assistant, 8 women as permanent secretaries and one woman as special assistant to the vice president. In 2011 more women were given political appointment, twelve women were appointed as ministers out of 42 which represent 30 percent and 4 women out of 20 as special advisers (Obayemi, 2015). All these show a clear departure from low women representation during the military era and a clear indication of gender gap in the country.

Most studies on political parties and gender policies have not look into the level of compliance of political parties with extant laws and policies on inclusivity and gender in Gombe state. As such, this study tries to fill the gap by critically examining the level of compliance of political parties with extant laws and policies on inclusivity and gender in Gombe state and the nation at large.

Methodology

The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data include the use of survey instruments of questionnaire administration to respondents and in-depth unstructured interview while the secondary source include the interrogation of published materials such as books, journal articles, and other relevant unpublished materials. The primary Sources of data include responses generated from the administration of the questionnaire on members and leadership of political party and as well conducting Key informant Interview (KII) which makes the research purposeful.

An analysis was undertaken to find out using secondary data existing laws on gender and inclusivity in Nigeria. This gave the study the basis to find out what is the level of compliance of the Political Parties in Gombe State with extant laws and policies on gender and inclusivity.

The choice of the respondents was judgmental, in that it is assumed that political party members and their officials should know better on laws and policies on gender and inclusivity in their parties and as well know the level of compliance, “a sort of-he who wears the shoe knows where it pinches most”.

Interview was conducted specifically to clarify and validate some of the response of the respondents on the level of compliance of their parties to extant laws and policies on gender and inclusivity as well to determine whether they have these laws and policies. Their responses to the questions were very helpful in verifying aspect not captured by the questionnaire that is important to the research.

Description of Instrument

The research instrument used is the questionnaire and KII. The population of this study were members of the five political parties selected in Gombe State. The parties were selected based on 2 main criteria; the number of votes cast in the general (governorship) election in Gombe State, and secondly those that have elected member(s) in either the State or Federal elections. Base on the above criteria the following political parties were selected Peoples Democratic Party, All Peoples Congress, All Progressive Grand Alliance, New Nigeria Peoples Party and Accord Party – (PDP, APC, APGA, NNPP and AC). Thus the population consist of members of the 5 political parties selected. The number of political parties members could not be determine, as officials interviewed stated that they do not have data base of members of their parties nor could that be ascertain at (Independent National Electoral Commission) INEC office.

Sample size

The study used a sample size of 100 from the five political parties under study. It should be noted that there are 39 leadership positions in each of the political parties, 20 questionnaires were administered on respondents in each of the political party under consideration. Key informants have also been used in the study (Barney, 2016) there is no cap on how many informants make up a purposive sampling, as long as the needed information is obtained. That was principally the reason for selecting 100 as the sample size. Informants were and/or chosen out of convenience or from

recommendations of knowledgeable people which in this case were political party members and including their leadership (Tongco, 2006).

Findings

Secondary data from INEC reveals that with the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999 and particularly in Gombe State, women, youth and PWD in politics, (particularly holding elective leadership positions in the parties and contesting elections and being elected) is not encouraging, though there is mark but slow improvement over the years. In 2019, 413 contested for governorship, senate, House of Representative and House of Assembly with 378 males and 35 females only. There has not been a female president in Nigeria since independence in 1960, no Female State Governor, no Senate President; the only female speaker was impeached. These shows women are ignored in the political institutions. In 2019 elections 7 women contested for the Governorship election in the State. There were 91 political parties (Daily Post February 2, 2019) that fielded candidates for election in 2019 - that may be the reason why more women contested for the 2019 elections. In all there were 413 that contested for governorship, Senate, House of Representative and House of Assembly election. Out of these numbers 35 or 8.47% were Females that contested the election. A breakdown of women contestants shows that 7 Females contested for the Governorship election, 4 for Senatorial election, 6 for House of Representative election and 18 for the State House of Assembly election. Two female contestants won the State House of Assembly election, and another female won the Federal House of Representative election on the platform of the 2 major Political Parties in the State – PDP and APC.

At the party level in Gombe State only one (1) elective leadership (Public relations officer of PDP) position was contested for and won by a woman, except for positions that are solely reserved for women such as women leaders in all the parties under study. Though it is difficult to define who is a youth, based on the study' adoption of youth as a person whose age is between 18 to 35 years National Youth Policy (NYP), the study found that except for positions reserved for youth no political party leadership position is occupied by youth. Even for such positions all the youth leaders in the political parties do not fit into our definition of youth, despite the fact that women and youth constitutes 70% of the population. The youth comprise of all males and females of ages 18 to 35 years, who are citizens of the Federal republic of Nigeria (The NYP, 2019-2023). They are characterized by energy, enthusiasm, ambition, and creativity. They are the most active, volatile, and yet most vulnerable and under-represented in the political scene, faced with high level of socio-economic uncertainties and challenges. The youths form about half of the total population and significant proportion of the economic workforce. However, in Gombe State, youth unemployment is alarmingly high mainly due to their inadequacy in knowledge and skills to be self-reliant. Thus it is not surprisingly that they don't have the financial clout to participate in politics especially seeking elective positions that requires money (State Development Plan, 2021 to 2030).

The findings revealed that there are sufficient laws on gender representation and inclusivity of all and sundry, but gender representation in the political processes is lopsided in that men (excluding youth and men that are living with disabilities) dominate every aspect of politicking in Gombe State. Though there is no law or policies forbidding any one from participating in the electoral process and political party activities in general, the study found that women, youth and PWD are at disadvantage due to certain constraints such as; religion, ethnicity, education, high cost of politicking, late night travels, late night meetings, finance, charged environment that is prone to violence, male dominance in election administration and societal perception that women are home makers.

To be specific the study found that participation of women, youth and PWD in the Electoral process is generally low, the factors responsible for the low level of participation are quite numerous, some are social, financial, cultural, illiteracy, religious misrepresentation and others. The findings reveal some of the factors as follows:

- i. Negative gender stereotype about women competence to run for political office. The wrong perception of women been inferior to men.
- ii. Economic factors in terms of contest for elective post, women, youth and PWD are known to be less endowed to be able to fund campaigns and other aspects of contest requiring huge finance like

hiring vehicles, printing campaign posters, purchasing Air time in media houses, and late night political campaign meetings, political violence, insecurity are other hindrance to women participation.

- iii. Societal discrimination against PWD due to lack of infrastructures that could allow them participate like others in every aspect of life e.g. vehicles, classes, buildings, instructional materials that could allow them study, move and do things like others all contribute greatly to their non-participation. Thus, the less empowered they are educationally, financially, the less there participation in every activity.

The study revealed that political parties have ineffective laws and policies on gender and inclusivity in Gombe State and the country at large. This clearly is seen from the findings of the study where the percentage of women, youth and PWD in political party affairs in the state is very low or it can be claim - nearly absent. Additionally economic, social and political factors are factors that have been found to in one way or the other resulted in the unequal representation of women, youth and PWD in governance at all levels in the country and at the political level as well. The study clearly shows that there is no compliance to laws and policies on gender and inclusivity by political parties in Gombe State, especially that party members and leadership seems not to comprehend the laws and policies and thus could not act on what they know not

Conclusion

The Nigerian government over the years has neglected or has failed to engage women, youth and PWD in the socio-economic and political activities of the country. This is clearly manifest in noncompliance to extant laws and policies on gender and inclusivity. Inequality directly violates the fundamental human rights of the Nigerian women, youths and PWD as they are less recognized compared to their male counterparts. Nigeria cannot continue to underestimate the role played by women, youth and PWD in advancing her national interests and the country's goals of peace, stability and prosperity. The study recognize that what makes us diverse makes us strong and no nation can get ahead if about half of its populations are left behind.

Every Nigerian irrespective of gender or physical appearance or age should be given equal opportunity to excel in their chosen field and contribute to the development of the nation. If a woman, youth or PWD wishes to serve his/her country through participating in politics and is fit or qualified, he/she should be allowed and encourage too without any exceptions and should be granted every opportunity to do so. Government must not and should not pay lips service to the issue of gender and inclusivity in party leadership and other aspect of politicking.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made which will be useful to stakeholders, government, political parties, legislators, NGOs, women organizations and international organizations:

1. The domestication of extant laws and policies on inclusivity and gender should be a sine quo non for all the political parties and other organizations in the country. This will ensure improved women, youths and PDW representation in leadership position of the political parties and in politicking in general in Gombe State and the nation in general. To match words with action, there should be legislation giving women, youths and PWD more elective and appointive positions so as to ensure their participation in decision making processes as an interim measure. This could be through quota, affirmative statements that are adhered to through reserving a given percentage of positions in every organisation exclusively for women, youths, PWD and other vulnerable groups.
2. The high cost of politicking – such as buying forms should be reduced or scrap or in the alternative waver should be given to women, youths and PWD. Women, youths and PWD are known to be less endowed and could not be able to fund campaigns and other aspect of politicking that requires huge financing like hiring vehicles, printing campaign posters, purchasing air time in media houses etc. thus the need to reduce cost of political participation by all means through

directives and/or compulsion by government of its agencies so as to pave way for the participation of the vulnerable especially women, youths and PWD.

3. The study also recommends passage of gender and equal opportunity bill to ensure compliance and representation at all levels and putting structures (conducive environment) that are friendly to PWD allowing them to move, interact and coordinate their activities freely. The study recommends sanctions on erring Political Parties that fail to comply with extent laws and policies on gender and inclusiveness.

These recommendations if implemented could be useful in enhancing women, youths and PWD access to leadership position in the Political Parties and every other aspect of politicking. This will enhance the representation of a sizeable proportion of the population and in turn lead to more growth and development of the country.

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