ASSESSMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES: EVIDENCE FROM OKENE LGA OF KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

Research Problem:
Despite global efforts to enhance gender parity, women's political representation in Nigeria remains low, particularly in sub-national contexts like Kogi State. The 2019 elections in Okene LGA highlighted stark gender disparities, yet limited empirical studies have systematically examined the specific sociopolitical and structural factors constraining women's political engagement in such local contexts. This study addresses the gap by interrogating the socio-institutional and attitudinal factors affecting women's participation in Okene's electoral process.

Methods:
The study employed a quantitative methodology, utilizing structured, close-ended questionnaires administered to respondents in Okene LGA. Descriptive statistics and logistic regression analyses were applied to evaluate patterns of perception and determine statistically significant predictors of female political participation.

Theory:
Anchored in Social Role Theory, the study assumes that persistent societal expectations shape political roles and reinforce normative gender hierarchies that influence women's visibility and agency in the political space.

Results:
Findings revealed a contradictory reality: while domestic violence paradoxically increased political activism among some women, broader patterns of political violence, religious conservatism, gender-based leadership biases, low educational attainment, and prohibitive campaign costs severely deterred participation. Extremist threats and discriminatory norms compound the effect.

Conclusion:
Women in Okene face multi-layered deterrents to political involvement, necessitating both institutional reforms and sociocultural transformation.
Key Contribution to Knowledge:
This study nuances existing literature by quantifying and contextualizing women's political deterrents within a localized Nigerian setting, emphasizing the contradictory impact of violence and the intersectionality of sociocultural constraints.
Recommendations:
It advocates legislative adoption of affirmative action such as gender quotas, increased civic education for women, and the subsidization of campaign costs to broaden political inclusivity.

1.0 Introduction

Inarguably, gender inclusion is a vital element of any country's political, economic and social development. Gender exclusion or inequities specifically in politics can lead to serious socioeconomic and political difficulties especially for plural states like Nigeria, with deep social cleavages that make them prone to conflict and violence (Oyewole *et al,* 2021). Over the years, the increasing agitations or activisms for gender equality have raised intense academic discourse on poor participation of women in politics all over the world (Oyewole *et al,* 2021; Oni and Agbude, 2011). Women's poor political participation is a universal sensation and gender inclusion has been highlighted as being central to a country's pursuit of peace (Oyewole *et al,* 2021). According to Burns (2007) opportunities and threats to state building cannot be understood without first understanding gender roles and relations. This affirmation further reiterates the argument that the search for national development in most countries, particularly in Africa, is established on a prototype that fails to reckon with women and their skill sets and competences (Bullough *et al.,* 2012).

In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2021 puts the implications of gender exclusion more pointedly; societies whose political institutions are more inclusive and participatory, tend to be more peaceful and resilient, just as societies practicing exclusion tend to be more vulnerable to fragility and conflict. Thus, the germaneness of women participation in democratic governance cannot be over emphasized. Sustainable democracy relies upon the equality and complementary participation of men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society through political processes (Oni and Agbude, 2011). In spite of widespread democratization in most countries, women record low participation in politics and decision-making process across the world (Oyewole *et al,* 2021).

In Nigeria, surrounded by the crisis engendered by religious fundamentalism and ethnic prejudice, gender inequity constitute a distinctive dimension that thwarts, and is complicated by, Nigeria's governance predicament (Oyewole *et al,* 2021). While women constitute 49% of the national population, the national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 7% in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5%, Africa

Regional Average of 23.4% and West African Sub Regional Average of 15% (Oloyede 2016; Oyewole *et al,* 2021). The challenge of women's participation in Nigeria's politics became more worrisome following the nation's return to democracy since 1999. Following the transfer of power (i.e. from the military regime to a civilian democratic administration), everyone anticipated for a significant improvement in women's political participation in the country. Quite the reverse, the percentage of women's political participation were 3%, 5%, 7%, 7%, 7% and 6% women representation in the national parliament in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections respectively. It is evident therefore, that the perception that democracy would automatically enhance women's political

participation in Nigeria has not been recognized after sixteen years of its return to democracy. Thus, the aim of this study is, to examine the determining factors of women's political participation in Nigeria between 2015 and 2019, in order to seek possible ways on how to engender gender equality in the political affairs of the country.

2.0 Statement of the Research Problem

The research problem is that despite the fact that women constitute nearly half or more of the Nigeria population, the average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained relatively low both in elective and appointive positions. This is problematic from democracy point of view. Following the nation's return to democracy since 1999, the perception that democracy will automatically enhance women's political participation in Nigeria has not been felt or recognized. For that reason, it is imperative to investigate the determining factors of women's political participation in Nigeria in order to engender gender equality in the country's political affairs. Thus, it is against this backdrop this study examines the factors determining women's political participation in Okene Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State with particular reference to the 2019 elections.

3.0 Research Objectives

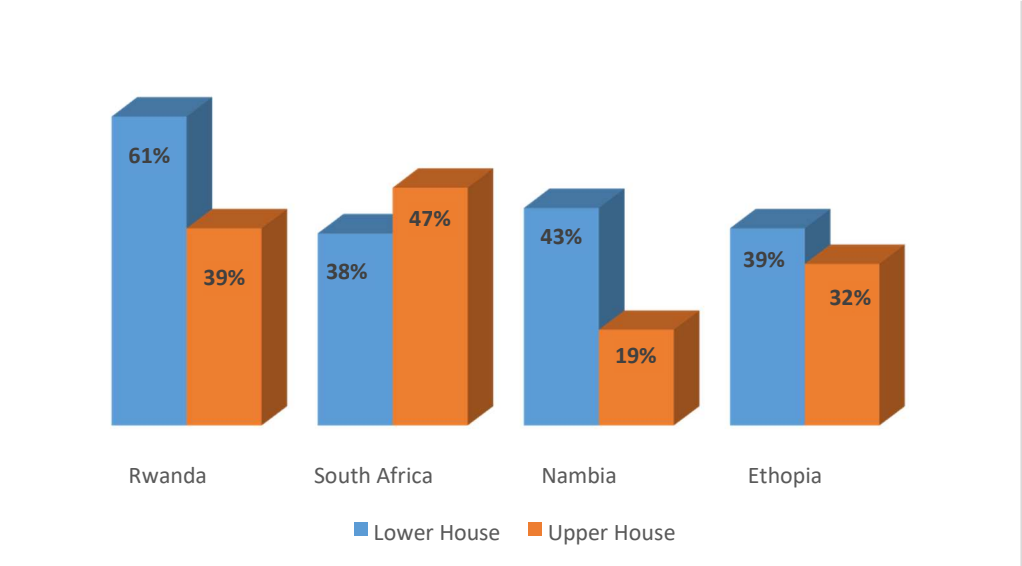
The broad objective of this study is to examine the factors that determined women's political participation in Okene LGA of Kogi State in the 2019 elections.

4.0 Conceptual Clarification

4.1. Women's Representation in Political Institutions

Women's representation in elective office differs from nation to nation which is controlled by the nature of the state and the dynamics of the state's governance and political structures (Oyewole *et al,* 2021). In most countries, women are more represented in the legislative arm of government than in the executive arm (Goetz 2003; Oyewole *et al,* 2021). Recognized liberal democracies such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada have recorded a general increase in women's political representation in recent years (Wineinger and Nugent 2020; Oyewole *et al,* 2021). In 2014, an increment in the number of women in the US's congress and state legislatures saw them occupy 19% and 24% of the seats respectively. Also, in Africa's budding democracies, where elective offices have been the domain of men, women's political participation has remained constant notwithstanding some exceptions. For instance, Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda and South Africa have all recorded an increase in the number of women in their parliaments in recent years (Townley 2019; Oyewole *et al,* 2021). According to Oyewole *et al* (2021), the current figures for women's representation in these countries as of 2020 were: Rwanda (61% lower house, 39% upper house), South Africa (47% upper house, 38% lower house), Namibia (43% lower house, 19% upper house), and Ethiopia (39% lower house, 32% upper house). These statistics are presented in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1. Women's Political Representation in Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda and South Africa



Source: Oyewole *et al* (2021)

Nonetheless, in Nigeria the reverse is the case of the regional trend in women's participation in political leadership. As a matter of fact, women are hardly visible in the country's political narrative (Oyewole *et al,* 2021). Pointedly, a woman has never been elected president, vice president nor governor since Nigeria's independence. The highest number of female deputy governors ever attained was six out of the possible 36 elected in 2007 (Oyewole *et al,* 2021). Since then, the number has unfailingly decreased. Eight women were elected senators in 2007; the number dropped to seven in 2011, and rose back to eight in 2015, with eight being the highest number of female senators ever recorded in the country since 1999. The situation is not any different in the 360-member Federal House of Representatives which recorded its highest female representation in 2011 with a total of 26 women elected (7%).

4.2 Women's Participation in the Electoral Process

The second important point to consider in understanding women's participation in electoral processes is the voting process. A narrow conceptualization of voting in the scholarly literature fails to account for the practical complexity of what it represents. Voting is normally seen as a dichotomous variable with an 'either/or' possibility. It is either one voted or one did not vote, leading some scholars (Mangi, Shah and Ali Soomro 2019) to describe voting as one of the easiest among the varied forms of political participation. In reality, however, voting as a measure of political participation is not as unproblematic as some scholars suggest, especially in the Nigerian context. In fact, the physical act of voting is the last in a process of actions that constitute voting. The process starts long before the elections, with the voter registration exercise without which participation in voting is impossible. In Nigeria, voter registration involves the biometric capturing of voter's information.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) uses the information captured to produce the voter's card which allows a voter to vote on Election Day. However, over the years voters' turnouts during election show that basing political participation on valid votes cast in an election underestimates actual electoral participation in Nigeria. A voter has to scale a number of hurdles in order to cast his or her vote. Lumping someone who did not register to vote and someone who was prevented from voting by neighborhood violence or other factors into the same category of 'voter apathy' is conceptually problematic. Re-conceptualizing voting as a process consisting of a number of acts, instead of treating it as a single monolithic act, is important for measuring women's political participation.

Moreover, in addition to voting, two other forms of female participation in the electoral process are of specific interest to this study: working for a political candidate and attendance at political campaign rallies. Pyeatt and Yanus (2017) observe that, generally around the world, women trail men in these forms of political participation. Oyewole *et al* (2021) also noted that among African Americans in the US, these two forms of political participation are more common among men than they are among women. While many factors may explain a lower level of female involvement in working for political candidates and attending political campaign rallies, it is important to note that both activities take women out of the safety of their homes or environments. These two issues are of interest to this study because of how they are linked with the context of violence, and where cultural norms place some limitations on women's freedom and public agency.

5.0 Women's Civic Participation

The conception of political participation has come to include some actions previously considered to be non-political (Goetz, 2003). Among them are civic actions, such as making claims on the government of the day, which have an indirect route to influencing political decisions. People make claims on government or other forms of authorities in different ways. They could do this by joining a protest, boycotting service or duty, or signing a petition (Dalton, 2008). Claims can also be made by contacting people in authority such as local government councilors, members of parliament, officials of government agencies, political party officials, traditional leaders, or religious leaders, and the media. People make these claims either as individuals or by joining groups that are dedicated to forms of civic action. What is common to different forms of civic action is that they are geared toward ensuring a better society (Wicks *et al.* 2013).

In Nigeria, women engage in different forms of civic action, notably the #Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) movement which used different media and forms of civic action to demand that the government rescue over 200 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram terrorists in 2014 (Ojebode and

Oladapo 2018; Oyewole *et al.* 2021). The BBOG raised public consciousness and recruited members locally and internationally, using civic action such as social media activism, protests, rallies, and daily sit outs to hold the government accountable for securing the release of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls (Aina *et al.* 2019). However, Nigeria has been witnessing a shrinking of its civic space due to government intolerance of both online and offline protests and any other form of action that is intentioned to demand public accountability. While the BBOG movement also operated within a closing civic space characterized by police brutality and arrest, the closure has worsened since 2015 under the administration of President Muhammad Buhari. Nevertheless, as the resilience of the BBOG movement shows, closure of civic space does not always foreclose women's civic action.

6.0 Modernization Theory

This study adopts modernization theory as advanced by Karl (2017). Literature on modernization is extensive and the vastly cited and foundational works in the field are Lipset (1959), Inglehart and Welzel (2005), and Inglehart *et al.,* (2002). Modernization theory faults the internal cultural factors for women's subordination in the developing world. It is argued that some traditional cultures, and especially the religious ideas that underpin the values, norms, institutions and customs of the developing world, ascribe status on the basis of gender (Karl, 2017). In practice, this means that males are accorded patriarchal control and dominance over a range of female activities and, consequently, women have little status in developing societies.

Considering the modernization theory, it is evident that the traditional process could cause decline in women's political representation in developing countries such as Nigeria. Inarguably, women have demonstrated to be useful when needed, assisting with raising peaceful homes and societies, however women lost ground, in national development agenda and continuing to be victims of economic, social and household roles, all of which decreased their representational presence in the political realm (Duong, 2012).

Even though societies claim to fight discrimination against women, they all suffer different degrees of failure in recognizing the critical link between public production and social or household reproduction (Bonvillain 2001; Duong 2012; Karl 2017). It was expected that in

order for third world countries to become developed through the process of modernization, they have to leave their traditions behind, or that shifts towards modernity will automatically bring about positive culture (Duong 2012; Karl 2017). However, leaders still allow traditional patriarchal attitudes to continue, these attitudes persist and are prominent in contemporary Nigeria society. Hence, the purpose of this study; to explore the traditional factors such as religious fundamentalism, ethnic prejudice and norms in determining women's political participation in Nigeria.

7.0 Research Methodology

7.1 Research Design

This study adopts quantitative research design which aims at discovering how many people think, act or feel in a specific way. Quantitative projects involve large sample sizes, concentrating on the quantity of responses, as opposed to gaining the more focused or emotional insight that is sometimes the aim of qualitative research (DJS Research, nd). The standard format in quantitative research design is for each respondent to be asked the same questions, which ensures that the entire data sample can be analyzed fairly. The data supplied are coded into numerical format, and can be analyzed in a quantifiable way using statistical methods. Surveys can, however, be tailored to branch off if the respondent answers in a certain way - for instance people who are satisfied or dissatisfied with a service may be asked different questions subsequently. Quantitative research design lean towards favouring closed-ended questions. Providing respondents with a set list of answers, they will not normally be able to give lengthy open-ended responses (DJS Research, nd). This design ensures that the process of quantitative research is far more efficient than it would be if qualitative-style open ended questions were employed.

7.2 Area of Study

The survey area of focus is Okene LGA of Kogi State. Okene LGA is one of the 21 local government areas of Kogi State, with, it has an area of 328 km². It was carved out in 1976 from the then Ebira Division by the Administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo, following the 1976

Local Government Reform. Ajaokuta and Ogori-Magongo LGAs were created from the old Okene LGA in 1991 and 1996 respectively. The people of Okene Local Government Area are a part of Ebira Tao people of the Central Senatorial District of Kogi State. Okene LGA has two major districts which are Okene and Okengwe districts with 11 electoral wards and many villages.



Figure 3.1 Map of Okene Local Government Area

The people are predominantly Muslims with a large size of Christian population too. To a great extent, there is a fusion of tradition and religions with only a negligible few still practicing exclusively traditional religion. Okene is one of the most beautiful places in the whole of West Africa with the most beautiful palace known as Azad's palace which belongs to the Ohinoyi of

Ebiraland (King of Ebiraland), Dr. Ado Ibrahim Atta. Okene LGA is rich in solid minerals such as limestone, gemstones, quartz and so many others used as raw materials in so many industries. Most of their revenues are generated from solid mineral resources while allocations for public development are gotten from the government.

7.3 Population of Study

Okene LGA has about area of 328 km² with a population of 320,260 as at the 2006 population census. The Okene LGA residents is a varied population encompassing peoples of different callings and social statuses like politicians, government workers, private employees, artisans, traders, Christians, Muslims, religious leaders, leaders of traditional institutions, and students, among others. The population of this study is specifically targeted at the electorates and politicians in the LGA. Thus, population of this study consist of diverse respondents from different backgrounds such as: religion, tribe, educational qualifications and different years of experience.

7.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Following the adoption of quantitative research design, this study uses pull survey technique, where random residences (electorates & female politicians) of Okene LGA are administered questionnaires. Thus, the Slovin's (1960) formula was used to calculate the targeted sample size (n) of Okene respondents given the population size (N) and a margin of error (e). The formula is stated as thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \qquad 3.1$$

where *n* is the sample size, *N= 320,260* is the population of Okene LGA residents, *e* = 0.05 is the Margin of Error. This method was utilized for two reasons; firstly, is to make sure that the sample is large enough to represent the population such that the sampling statistic will be the same with the population parameter and, secondly to ensure that each resident is truly represented in the population. The sample sizes for Okene population is calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{320260}{1 + 320260(0.05^2)} = 399.5 \equiv 400$$

Hence, for the purpose this research a total number of 400 sample size was utilized.

7.5 Instrument of Data Collection

A well-structured questionnaire was utilized as instrument for data collection. The structured questionnaire is mainly comprised of close-ended questions. Due to the politician-respondents busy work schedule and convenience, some of the interview sessions were conducted via phone calls. Also, largely part of the questionnaires were administered to residents (electorates and politicians) within the Okene LGA via online. The questions were framed in such a way that they supplied answers to the research questions. A set of questions were designed to relate to particular research question.

7.6 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected are entered, coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and R-Console. The study employs descriptive analysis and inferential analysis methods. The descriptive analysis includes frequencies, percentages and charts; while the inferential analysis includes chi-square and logistic regression analysis.

8.0 Presentation of Data

8.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Figure 1 presents the locations of all the respondents in this study; the figure clearly shows that all respondents are from wards under Okene LGA. Subsequently, Table 4.1 presents the demographic information of the respondents. The results reveal that most (68%, n=272) were female while few (32%, n=128) were female. The age pattern of the respondents depicts that majority (78%, n=311) respondents were between 38-67years. Also, the educational level of the respondents presented in

Table 1.1, depict that the majority (82%, n=329) of them possessed HND/BSc and High Degrees. The religion and socio-economic status of the respondents were also presented in Table 1.1. Hence, the demographic results of the respondents indicate that the respondents have the versatile requisite knowledge to provide the required answers to the questionnaire.



Fig 1. Ward of the Respondents

Table 1.1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	128	32.0
Female	272	68.0
Age		
18-27 Years	52	12.9
28-37 Years	37	9.1
38-47 Years	116	29.0
48-57 Years	183	45.7
58-67 Years	12	3.2
Educational Level		
No Formal Education	15	3.8
Primary/FSLC	13	3.2
Secondary Sch / SSCE	11	2.7
OND/NCE	32	8.1
HND/BSc	202	50.5
Higher Degree	127	31.7
Religion		
Christianity	71	17.7
Islam	320	80.1
Tradition	9	2.2

Socio-Economic Status / Occupation		
Civil Servant	24	5.9
Entrepreneur/Business Person	124	31.2
Farmer	15	3.8
Politician	166	41.4
Student	39	9.7
Unemployed	32	8.1

Source: *Field Survey 2022*

8. 2 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Responses

Furthermore, Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 present the descriptive analysis of the respondents' responses regarding the women involvement in electoral processes and politics in the LGA. According to Fig 2 results most of the respondents admitted that women in Okene LGA are encouraged to engage in politics and election (53%) and as a result of this majority (86%) of the women in the LGA involve in political activities and electoral process. Howbeit, Fig 3 reveals that while most (86%) of the respondents are active in electoral process i.e. casting of votes, majority (91%) of the female politicians had not contested for any elective position or been appointed for a position. Thus, these results indicate poor political representation of women in Okene LGA.

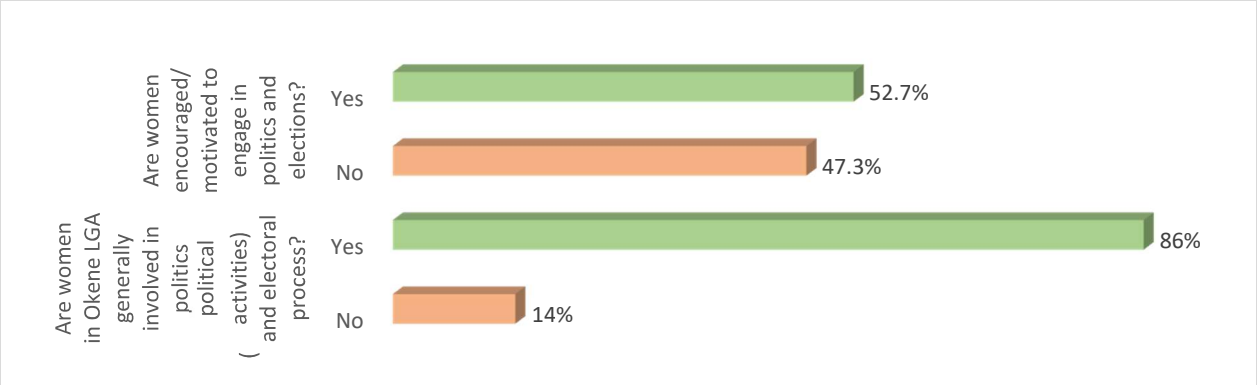


Fig 2. Women involvement in electoral processes and politics in the LGA (a)

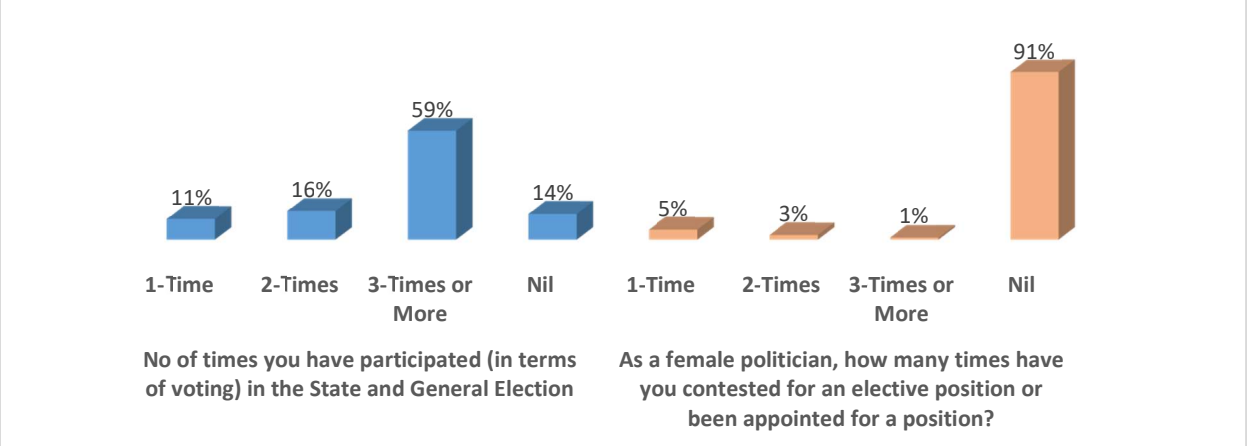


Fig 3. Women involvement in electoral processes and politics in the LGA (b)

Moreover, Table 1.2 presents the assessment of the determinants of women's poor political participation in Okene LGA. The results reveal that fear of violence such as domestic violence, political violence, electoral violence and violence by extremists mostly and almost always deters the participation of women in political activities. Additionally, the results reveal that leadership gender-based preference, religion, income status, educational level, social class, Cost of nomination forms or campaigning timing of political meetings and activities mostly and almost always hinder the participation of women in political activities in Okene LGA.

Table 1.2 Determination of Women's Political Participation

Determinants	Almost Always	Mostly	Not at All	Occasionally	Once or Twice
Fear of domestic violence in the neighborhood hinders the participation of women in political activities	24%	36%	13%	24%	3%
Fear of violence at political event deters the participation of women in political activities	29%	43%	8%	18%	2%
Fear of electoral violence discourages women to participate in electoral process	32%	40%	9%	16%	3%
Fear of violence by extremists hampers the participation of women in political activities	28%	46%	10%	16%	1%
Leadership gender-based preference (i.e. preferred men leadership) hinders women participation in politics in the LGA	38%	41%	7%	14%	1%
Religion influences the poor participation of women in politics	16%	35%	20%	28%	1%
Cultural norms influence the poor participation of women in politics	12%	24%	30%	33%	2%
The income status is a huge influence of women's political participation	31%	40%	12%	16%	1%
Educational level of women influences women low political representation	18%	36%	22%	21%	3%
Age of women influences women low political representation	10%	27%	34%	27%	2%
Connection (i.e. who knows who) influences women low political representation	42%	43%	4%	9%	2%

Area of residence influences women low political representation	13%	34%	28%	22%	3%
Social class of the women influences women low political representation	25%	40%	12%	19%	4%
The timing of political meetings and activities influences women low political representation	33%	32%	16%	17%	3%
Cost of nomination forms or campaigning influences women low political representation	46%	31%	9%	13%	1%

Source: *Field Survey 2020*

Prior to the interpretation of the Logistic Regression Model estimation in Table 1.4, the independent categorical variables, shows that 1 degree of freedom (df) is returned for each of the independent variables. Here, the total number of levels in each variable is 2. The one level left (i.e. No) is considered as reference variable, and the other variable (Yes) is interpreted in reference to this level (No). The results of the Chi-square (29.525) and p-value (0.014) in the model summary

(Table 1.3) reveal that the logistic regression model is significant fit to predict the Women Political Participation.

Table 1.3 Model Summary

Observed		Predicted: Women Political Participation		Percentage Correct
		No	Yes	
Women Political Participation	No	128	2	98.5
	Yes	17	0	.0
Overall Percentage				87.1
Chi-Square = 29.525 Sig.= 0.014 ; -2Log Likelihood = 75.774				

Table 1.4 Estimation of the Logistic Regression Model

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta-Coeff.	S.E.	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Women Political	Domestic Violence (1-Yes)	0.885	0.932	1	0.042*	0.413
	Political Violence (1-Yes)	-1.813	1.379	1	0.029*	6.127

Participation (Yes)	Electoral Violence (1-Yes)	-1.451	1.422	1	0.037*	0.234
	Violence by extremists (1-Yes)	-0.774	1.402	1	0.041*	0.461
	Leadership gender-based preference (1-Yes)	-0.875	0.965	1	0.044*	0.417
	Religion (1-Yes)	-0.572	0.81	1	0.048*	0.564
	Cultural Norms (1-Yes)	-3.14	1.272	1	0.014*	23.108
	Income Status (1-Yes)	1.677	0.989	1	0.09	5.348
	Educational level of women (1-Yes)	-0.611	1.124	1	0.037*	0.543
	Age of women (1-Yes)	-0.881	1.038	1	0.396	0.414
	Connection i.e. who knows who (1-Yes)	-0.783	1.48	1	0.048*	0.457
	Area of residence (1-Yes)	1.938	1.311	1	0.139	6.948
	Social class of the women (1-Yes)	0.124	0.883	1	0.889	1.131
	Timing of political meetings and activities (1-Yes)	-0.198	0.911	1	0.828	0.82
	Cost of nomination forms or campaigning (1-Yes)	-0.035	2.447	1	0.047*	0.966
	Intercept	-4.247	1.262	1	0.101	0.014

Note: * denotes significant at 0.05 level

Table 1.4 shows the predictive relationship between the dependent variable (Women Political

Participation; Yes) and independent variables; Domestic Violence, Political Violence, Electoral

Violence, Violence by Extremists, Leadership gender-based preference, Religion, Cultural Norms, Income Status, Educational Level of Women, Age of Women, Connection (who knows who), Area of residence, Timing of political meetings and activities, Cost of nomination forms or campaigning and intercept. Among the independent variables, Domestic Violence, Political Violence, Electoral Violence, Violence by Extremists, Leadership gender-based preference, educational level of women, Religion, Cultural Norms, Connection (who knows who) and Cost of nomination forms or campaigning turned out to be significant (i.e. p-values are less than 0.05).

Explicitly, while concentrating on the significant determinants associating with Women Political

Participation in Okene LGA, the beta-coefficient against all the forms of violence (except for Domestic Violence) indicate the significant negative influence of violence on women political representation in Okene. More specifically, the odds [i.e. Exp(B)] against Political Violence, Electoral Violence and Violence by Extremists indicate the likelihoods of poor political participation of women in Okene to increase by 6.13-times, 0.23-times and 0.46-times respectively. Howbeit, the beta-coefficient against Domestic Violence indicate the significant positive influence on women political representation in Okene. In fact, the odd against Domestic Violence suggests that Domestic Violence has the likelihood of about 41% to increase the women political participation in Okene LGA.

Similarly, the results in Table 1.4 depicts significant negative beta-coefficients against the following independent variables; Leadership gender-based preference (-0.875), Religion (-0.572),

Cultural Norms (-3.14), Educational level of women (-0.611), Connection (-0.783) and Cost of nomination forms or campaigning (-0.035). By implication, the odds against the variables indicate that Leadership gender-based preference, Religion, Cultural Norms, Educational level of women, Connection (who knows who) and Cost of nomination forms or campaigning have the likelihoods to increase the women poor political participation by 0.42-times, 0.56-times, 23.11-times, 0.54times, 0.46-times and 0.97-times respectively.

9.0 Discussion of Findings

The study found that women in Okene LGA are encouraged and making progress to engage in politics just like most women across Africa, in terms of political representation (Townley 2019). However, in spite of this encouragement, majority of the female politicians had/have not contested for any elective position or been appointed for a position. Thus, this study established poor political representation of women in Okene LGA.

Furthermore, some existing studies such as Arowolo and Aluko (2010); Kelly (2019), Trelles and Carreras (2012), Ley (2017) and Paasilinna *et al.* (2017), have documented negative implications of violence for women's participation in politics. However, this study established a mix of positive and negative implications, which is identical to Oyewole *et al.* (2021). Particularly, in the case of domestic violence we surprisingly, found that violence was empowering as opposed to disempowering for women's political participation. For example, fear of domestic violence positively predicts women political participation and involvement. By implication women in Okene LGA would brave fear of domestic violence to participate in politics. This finding suggests that Okene women could be choosing to stand up to their fears of domestic violence and are willing to pay a price to increase their visibility in politics to stop domestic violence. It could be that the higher a woman's fear of domestic violence, the more likely that she will engage in seeking an alternative to participate in politics.

Moreover, the study revealed educational level of women as a negative predictor of women political participation in Okene, even with higher educated women less likely to involve in political activities. This finding aligns with Oyewole *et al.* (2021) for Nigeria, Bhalotra *et al.* (2013) for India and Kinge and Adepoju (2014) for southern Cameroon where education attainment did not positively predict voting and political activeness among women. Also, religion and cultural norms seem to negatively influence Okene women's political participation as suggested in Dim and Asomah (2019). The religionized nature of Nigerian politics sheds

some light on why Northern Female Muslims often feel marginalized because of the practice of the Sharia Islamic law in some northern states. Finally, this study established some unique findings compare to other existing literature. This includes significant negative influence of factors such as leadership gender-based preference (i.e. prefer men to women), connection i.e. who knows who and cost of nomination forms or campaigning on Okene women's political participation. This simply implies that leadership gender-based preference (i.e. prefer men to women), connection i.e. who knows who and cost of nomination forms or campaigning deter women in Okene LGA from political participation.

10.0 Conclusion

By implication of the major findings, the study concludes that domestic violence positively influences the women political participation in Okene LGA. This could be logically linked to the drives of women to join politics in order to put a stop to domestic violence in the country. However, political violence, electoral and violence by extremists significantly frighten and discourage the Okene women to participate in politics. Also, other factors that discourage Okene women to participate in politics include educational level of women, leadership gender-based preference, religion, cultural norms and costs of nomination forms or campaigning. Thus, the study concludes that there is poor progress of women as far as political representation is concerned. This exposes hidden patterns of women exclusion in political leadership in Nigeria, which goes against treating women as a monolithic group. Nigeria leadership (political-wise) cannot leave anything to chance in the urgent need to address the issues of gender-biasedness, religion and cultural norm in politics. Countries around the world are closing these gaps in political leadership by instituting affirmative action programmes such as reserved seats and quota systems. Nigeria needs to consider similar measures.

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