

# **WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL: A CASE STUDY OF AKOKO SOUTH WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Local government, being the nearest to the grass-root (or rural dwellers) has been described as the basic type of political arena where participatory democracy is characteristic of good governance can be achieved. But at this level of governance, women are considerably marginalized; instead, they enjoy mere tokenism at the higher level of governance and political arena where merely appointed then elected into positions such that the society is denied the advantage of their full potential as they are made to play a second fiddle to their male counterparts. Field work was conducted in relation to the importance of women's political participation at the grass roots, factors hindering women's political participation, and measures that can enhance women's political participation, in Oka and Akungba in Akoko South-West Local Government Area of Ondo State Nigeria. 180 questionnaire were administered on randomly selected respondents, and the study shows that women can gain more political experience at the local level; thus enhancing their effectiveness at a higher level of decision- making, if given a chance. The study also identifies factors hindering women's local political participation, most especially patriarchy. It finally suggests that women should be more empowered to participate at the local level to enhance their political experience for good governance and national development.

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**Keywords:** Women`s political participation, Ondo State, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Nigeria is a signatory to the 1979 Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights, The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, The Beijing Platform of Action and signed up to The Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Crucially, the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol).

Having recognized the essence and importance of these global and regional affirmative declarations, the Federal Government of Nigeria in an attempt to implement them captured them in Nigeria Gender Parity (NGP) which was launched in 2007. This document is unequivocal in its assertion that "Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of life at the expense of the women (Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, 2006). One area where this assertion is aptly reflected is in women representation. In fact, it is a key area in which women's empowerment has floundered since democratization (GNR, 2012).

All the international and internal conferences, listed above, have brought to the fore, the issues of gender equality and rights, particularly in relation to development. But, local implementation of these programmes has remained weak and this is obvious in Nigeria's

political sphere, most especially at the local government level, where there have been few women as chairpersons and councilors since the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic on May, 1999.

In Nigeria, women constitute a greater proportion of the total population about 49.36% (World Bank Report, 2012). In spite of this huge number, women are not well represented when in governance (Agbalajobi, 2010). As the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2009) reveals women only have 3% representation in all contested positions in the 1999 General Elections, 4% in 2003, and 6% in 2007, with the greater proportion of these being at the national level. At present, as it is shown in the same statistics, out of the 109 seats available in the office of the Senate, only 7(6.4%) are women while in the House of Representatives, only 25(7%) are women. At the Local Government level, there is no significant difference. In the 1999 General Election, only 1.8% of women were Local Government chairpersons and 1.1% were councilors. Similarly in the 2003 General Elections, there were 1.9% female chairpersons, 4.2% female councilors while in 2007, only 3.6% female chairpersons and 3.7% female councilors, all of which are far below the United Nations standard of 33% (NBS, 2009).

The 2011 election results suggest a regression from the apparent progress that followed the return to democracy in 1999. Only 9% of the candidates for the National Assembly elections in April 2011 were women. Only 13 of the 340 candidates who contested on behalf of the various political parties for the office of Governor were women. A mere 909 of the 10,037 candidates for available seats were women (i.e. 9.06%). With only 25 women elected to the 360 member of House of Representatives, Nigeria is now ranked 118 of 192 countries in terms of gender parity.

At the Local Government level, the situation is no different, as only 4% of Nigeria's councilors are women. This is even better than their counterpart number for the Chair of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) which has been below 4% since the return to democracy in Nigeria in May 1999. The decline in the number of women councilors from 4.7% in the 2003 Election to 3.7% in 2007 bring to mind the challenges of gender disparity Nigerian women are facing, in politics and governance participation and representation.

Although, according to Inter-Parliamentary Union, increase of women annually is mere 0.6% - 13.7% in the parliaments worldwide and also a small percentage of legislative councils and other local bodies in most countries in the world. It is only Sweden, Denmark and Finland in Europe that have reached a critical mass of 30% of women in Local Government, while South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago come close at 28% and 23% respectively. But, there are still countries like in Asia Pacific, where women's representation in Local Government has ranged from a low 2% to a high 30%; for instance, India, Bangladesh, and New Zealand. If South Africa, an African country that have a middle income like Niger[a could have up to 28% women representation, Nigerians therefore have no excuse to lack behind. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2001).

Lately, local government election varies from State to State especially since 2009. Some States like Ondo, Osun did not even conduct any local government election but merely appoint caretakers. Even among the States that conducted elections, few women occupy the chair and ward councilors whereas among the States that appoint caretakers, the numbers of women in the committee are relatively low.

In Ondo State, between 1999 and 2007, the proportion of women representation at the local government elections was quite low and nothing to write home about. There was no single woman that emerged as a serious contender for gubernatorial positions. Although, some women took the bold steps of showing intention and interests for the position, they were either discarded at the party level, or voted out by their male counterparts.

Presently, only 2 (10%) women are in the Ondo State House of Assembly out of the 20 seats available, the women represent Akure South and Okitipupa

constituencies respectively. Although, the State has not conducted any local-government elections since the dissolution of those elected in 2009, out of the caretakers that have been appointed into the 18 Local Government Areas of the State only 2 are female (OSMOI, 2012).

In the case of the four Akoko Local Government Areas, no single female emerged as either chairperson or councilor throughout the 149 wards in the LGAs between 1999 and 2007. Despite the fact that some women took bold steps to contest for these positions, many of them were either screened out at the party level, or discriminated against by their male counterparts. Recently, in these four (4) LGAs, there was only one woman caretaker (late Mrs. J. Adefarati) who represented Akoko South West, which is the study area. She was also the only woman from the LGA that vied for the position of State Governor, under the then Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN) political party. But she lost at the party's primary election.

One of the main reasons for the minimal participation of women in politics in general and low representation at the local government level in particular has been the assumption that women are subordinate to men consequent to social and institutional discrimination (Bekele, 2000). Central to most international and regional treaties, to which Nigeria is a signatory, it has been globally suggested that in any representative body, there should be a 'logical balance' of men and women to adequately voice the concerns of society in the decision-making process. Good governance therefore means being participatory, accountable, predictable and transparent which reasonably calls for gender balance in political decision-making (Khan, 1993).

It is believed that women's insights and values can enhance and enrich the overall decision-making process especially at the local level where women are believed to be more sensitive to community issues. However, local government bodies have been identified to have a vital role in the developmental process. The importance of local level government is therefore in two folds. First, decisions made at the local level have implications for the women and men alike. Secondly, the third tier of government is an arena in which individuals gain experience and knowledge as well as being a political base for seeking office at higher levels (CWCS, 2002).

Therefore, to meet the needs of both men and women at the grass root level, it must build on the experiences of both men and women, through an equal representation at all levels of decision making, covering the wide range of responsibilities at the local government level.

It is therefore necessary to delve into the study of constraints to women's participation in local governance, particularly in Akoko South-west Local Government Area, being the LGA with the highest number (four out of eighteen) and various means by which the representation of women in local politics can be improved. In view of the foregoing, the objectives of this study, therefore, include:

- i. To examine the extent of women's political participation at the local government level.
- ii. To ascertain whether local politics can enhance women's political participation.
- iii. To find out factors hindering the participation of women in the local politics.
- iv. To suggest measures that can improve the active participation of women in local politics.

## **Literature review**

### **Women's participation in politics and governance in Nigeria**

It is an incontestable fact that women constitute over half of the world's population. Nigeria's case is not different; women constitute a significant part of the National Population

(Igbalajobi, 2010). Unfortunately, this numerical strength as not found corresponding expression or representation in Nigeria's public life.

Women's participation in politics and governance is of strategic importance, not only for women's empowerment, but because it has wider benefits and impact (GNR, 2012). Many people have expressed the view of the great importance of women's participation and representation in governance of their country that it can bring to national development. Hillary Clinton, an ex- secretary of State a serious contender in United States politics argues that "if half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal, and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy. We still have a long way to go and the United State must remain an ambiguous and unequivocal voice in support of women's right in every country, every region, on every continent" Madeleine, K. Albright, (an ex- US Representative in the UN and an ex-Special Adviser) chairperson, of the National Democratic Institute of Nigeria also said "every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they are never given a chance to compete in the electoral process, then countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent". However, Anifowose (2004) asserted that for any nation to realize the noble idea of democracy with its emphasis on participation, competition and liberty of the people, there is need for the promotion of gender inequality. Democracy will not bring development to a country where there is no active involvement and participation of the two sexes; male and female (Anifowose, 2004).

When discussing women's participation in governance and politics in a country like Nigeria, various variables of participation such as voting in an election, and contesting for public offices, come readily to mind. It is therefore, important to note that participation could also be used to discuss women's representation in the public offices. For instance, if the number of votes cast by women in an election increase from 10 to 40% of the total votes cast, there is a form of increase in participation. But when the number of women holding public offices is relatively low, compared to men, there is an under-representation, yet women's number of vote increases (Agbalajobi, 2010).

Cramer (2005) argues that men and women allocate resources differently and that women tend to favour a redistribution agenda and to spend more on children's education, social services and health. These are the basic needs of the people, which can bring about tremendous development to any nation. But women who have the tendency to carry out these programmes of development are under-represented in the democratically elected parliaments around the world and this is an undisputable fact (Karp and Banducci, 2008).

The vital importance of women's participation in politics and governance is attested to by Daramola and Oniovokukor (2006) who found that intra-state conflict is likely to occur in States where gender equality in political representation, has not been achieved. The reason for this is that ethnic mobilization is more likely to readily develop where there are severe gender inequalities since gender relations contribute crucially to the shaping of group identities, in ways that influence the dynamics of inter-group conflict. In other words, ethnic nationalism is essentially patriarchal and it promoted more effectively where gender inequality is relatively high. And Daudu (2007) has shown that ethnic identity is particularly important for Nigerians.

A retrospective glance at the political history of Nigeria suggests that adequate mechanisms to promote women involvement in the current democratic experiment have not been established. There are published literatures on Nigeria, which establish the pattern of women's participation in politics; (e.g Igbalajobi, 2010) some analyze various processes and institutions that shape women's pattern of representation (e.g Dauda, 2007) while some have stated the implication for women's empowerment (GNR, 2012).

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework employed for this study is Kanter's "Glass-Ceiling Theory" (1977).

This theory focuses on the ways in which the structure of work organizations, especially those with large proportion of white-collar workers, establish women in subordinate positions i.e, they put a 'glass-ceiling' over women's opportunities (Kanter, 1977).The key political positions in the political system of Nigeria especially at the local government level can be related to the organization referred to in Kanter's theory. He described work organization in terms of three dimensions:

- **Opportunity:** People who have less opportunity tend to be low in self-esteem and aspiration while people with more opportunity are competitive and have greater self-esteem.
- **Power:** Kanter defined power as capacity to mobilize resources in support of individual interests. People with low power tend to be authoritarian, subordinating, coercive, critical, territorial and are not well linked. People with high power tend to be non-directive, encouraging to subordinates, helpful and popular.
- **Proportions:** This is a social mix. The small proportion tends to be highly visible, highly stressed and stereotyped. The large proportions invisibly fit in with the group, find networking and the acquisition of sponsors.

Discussing Kanter's opportunity as one of the three dimensions of work organization, the Nigerian political arena is not different: women are not given the opportunity to exercise their political right such as occupying key political positions ranging from the local government to the federal government level of decision-making. Instead, they are subjected to certain appointed positions where they would only act as figure- heads while men who appointed them indirectly control them too in the position, all within a patriarchal social structure.

In terms of power, Nigerian women are just like as Kanter described those with low power, while men are those with high power, especially at the local government level. For instance during elections, men mobilize women; enticing them with diverse incentives in order to vote, and never encourage them as to how to mobilize themselves, to be serious contenders for elective posts.

In similar vein, Nigerian women are the small proportion (in the context of the Kanter's analysis). It is an indisputable fact that Nigerian women are not only limited by patriarchy, that are duly and unduly stereotyped and highly stressed with responsibilities.

## Methods of research

### Study area

The study area of this research is Oka and Akungba Akoko, in Akoko South West Local Government Area of Ondo State respectively. This Local Government is one of the eighteen local governments in Ondo State. Its headquarter is situated at Oka-Akoko. The local government is made up of five (5) major towns namely Oka, Oba, Akungba, Ikun, and Supare. It has an area of 226km<sup>2</sup> and the postal code of the area is 342.

A large proportion of the indigenes of this local government engage in farming primarily and as such, tertiary activities like teaching, surveying, law and banking profession, bakery, carpentry and local government jobs.

Oka and Akungba were chosen out of the five towns that comprises Akoko South West Local Government because they are the most populous and also because of the fact that politics is more pronounced among the inhabitants of these two towns than the rest of the towns in the Local Government.

## Data collection

The study employed a non-probability and probability sampling techniques. The five communities that comprise Akoko South West LGA were clustered according to their population proportion and the two most populated communities (Oka and Akungba) were purposively selected. This study is both a quantitative and qualitative research using structured interview schedule to generate quantitative data and in-depth interview (IDIs) to elicit information that are often difficult to obtain through the quantitative method

A total number of 180 people having voting rights (i.e. above 18 years of age) were randomly selected from the two selected communities, women respondents having larger percentage since they are the ones that directly affected by the problem of the study (i.e. they suffer low participation) and questionnaires were administered on 100 women 50 each from Oka and Akungba respectively, also 80 questionnaires were administered on the randomly selected male 40 each from the two towns. In order to acquire the needed vital information, In-depth interview (IDIs) were conducted on purposively selected key respondents like; present, past Local Government Chairpersons, Deputy Chairpersons, Caretaker, councilors, some party leaders, wards women leaders, parties women leaders, wards youth leaders, local chiefs and some other people that have contested for any of the Local political positions in the communities. Data collected from the field was analyzed using SPSS. The hypotheses for the study were tested using chi-square statistical method. The IDIs conducted both in English and local languages, were recorded in audiotapes subsequently, translated into English, and transcribed into notebooks.

## Data presentation and analysis

Table I: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	100	55.56
Male	80	44.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

From the Table 1 above female respondents 100 (56.25%) are more than the male respondents 80 (44.4%) as it was purposively decided for the study. This is made so by the researcher because, women are the major respondents affected by the problem of the study.

Table II: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
20-29	30	74	104	57.78
30-39	24	16	40	22.22
40-59	16	8	24	13.33
60+	10	2	12	6.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

From table II above, it shows that most of the respondents fall within age of 20-29; male 30 and female 74 forming the total of 104 (57.8%), follow by age-group 30-49 which totally form 40 (22.22%). The number starts decreasing from the age-group 40- 59 with 24 (13.33%) while those above 60 years takes the smallest 12 (6.7%).

This table becomes important in the study because of the fact that, age plays an important role in decision-making, this is significant in the rights that is stated in the Nigerian constitution for certain age-group to vote and be voted for in an election, in the country.

Table III: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Single	30	37.5	36	36	66	36.67
Married	40	50	50	50	90	50
Divorced	10	12.5	10	10	20	11.11

Widow	-	-	4	4	4	2.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

From table III above table, half of the male respondents 40(50%) are married, followed by the single 30(37.5%), when divorced males are 10(12.5%), none of the male respondents is a widower. From the female respondents, 36(36%) are single, while the married are 50(50%). 10(10%) claimed to be divorced, while the remaining 4(4%) are widows.

Table IV: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Qualification	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Tertiary	24	30	10	10	34	18.89
Secondary	24	30	24	24	48	26.67
Basic	22	27.5	46	46	68	37.78
No education	10	12.5	20	20	30	16.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table IV, it indicates that there is general low level of education among the respondents both male and female, as the highest percentage of their level of education is basic education 68(37.78%).

But this is more significant among the females; which has their highest level of education in 46(46%) and with highest number of respondents with formal education 20(20%), unlike their male counterparts which have their highest level of education in Tertiary and secondary education 30% and with those with no education 10(12.5%).

This could indicate that women's low education hinders their political participation, especially at the local governance.

Table V: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Civil Servant	28	35	20	20	48	26.67
Trading	10	12.5	40	40	50	27.78
Farming	20	25	4	4	24	13.33
Artisans	10	12.5	14	14	24	13.33
Students	10	12.5	20	20	30	16.67
Others	2	2.5	2	2	4	2.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table V above most of the female respondents are trader 40(40%) while their male counterparts are mainly civil servants 28(35%). 24(13.33%) each of the respondents are full-time farmers and artisans, 30(16.67%) are students while 4(2.22%) are engaged in other occupational activities.

Table VI: Respondents' response to: Can women be efficient in Local Political Positions.

Responses	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Total	Frequency
Yes	18	22.5	64	64	82	45.5
No	32	40	16	16	48	26.7
Not sure	30	37.5	20	20	50	27.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table VI above, 18(22.5%) of the male respondents believe if women are allowed they can efficiently handle local positions, 32(40%) of the opinion that women are not capable, 30(37.5%) had no definite answer.

Responses of the female respondents show that the women have confidence in themselves to perform efficiently if they were allowed to occupy local political positions.

This is shown as 64(64%) saying ‘yes’, 16(16%) have contrary opinion and only 20 (20%) are not sure.

Table VII: Respondents’ Views on the Importance of Women Participation in Local Politics

Importance	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Total	
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
(a) Local Government politics is more accessible than state and Federal	70	38.9	50	27.8	30	16.7	20	11.1	10	5.5	180	100
(b) Local Government Positions are less competitive	70	38.9	50	27.8	40	22.2	10	5.6	10	5.5	180	100
(c) Local Government Politics is less intimidated	120	66.7	30	16.7	10	5.6	10	5.5	10	5.5	180	100
Women tend to gain more political experience in local politics	110	61.1	50	27.8	6	3.3	10	5.6	4	2.2	180	100

From Table VIIa above, 70(38.9%) of the total respondents strongly agreed that local politics is more accessible than state and federal, 50 (27.8%) agreed, 30(16.7%) strongly disagree, 20(11.1%) disagree while 10 (5.5%) were not sure if this view is true or not.

Table VIIb shows that 35(38.9%) strongly agreed that positions at the Local Government level are less competitive, 25(27.8%) agreed, 20(22.2%) strongly disagree, 5(5.5%) disagree while 5(5.5%) were not sure.

Table VIIc shows 60(66.7%) strongly agree that local politics are less intimidated, 15(16.7%) agreed, 5(5.5%) strongly disagree and were not sure.

Table VIId shows that, 110(61.1%) strongly agree that women tend to gain more political experience by participating in local politics, 50(27.8%) agree, 6(3.3%) strongly disagree, 10 (5.5%) disagree while only 4(2.2%) were not sure of the view.

The table shows that 64(35.6%) strongly agree that women political participation is capable of developing general political system. 66(36.7%) agree, 14(7.8%) strongly agree, while 28(5.5%) were not sure.

Table VIII: Respondents Views on Consequences of Low Women’s Political participation in Local Politics

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
(a) Low women political participation at local level is not a good governance	80	44.4	80	44.4	-	-	-	-	20	11.1	180	100
(b) Low women political participation can lead to low representation at decision-making level	60	33.3	30	16.7	40	22.2	30	16.7	20	11.1	180	100
(c) Low women participation and representation is a form of discrimination	50	27.8	60	33.3	50	27.8	-	-	20	11.1	180	100

From Table VIIIa above, shows low women participation at the local government is not a good characteristic of good government in the country. As 80(44.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed, and the same 44% agreed with this view. While none of the respondents disagree, only 20(11.10%) were not sure of the view.

Table VIIIb also shows, 60(33.3%) strongly agree that low women political participation can lead to low representation at the decision-making level. 30(16.7%) agreed, 40(22.2%) strongly disagree, 30(16.7%) disagree while 20(11.1%) were not sure of the view.



Table VIII reveals that, 50(27.8%) strongly agree that low women political participation and representation is a form of discrimination, 60(33.3%) agree, 50(27.8%) strongly disagree. While none of the respondents disagree, 20(11.1%) were not sure of the view.

Table IX: Respondents' Views on the Factors Hindering Women's Participation in Local Politics

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
(a)Political Violence hinders women's participation in local politics	64	35.6	76	42.2	20	11.1	10	5.6	10	5.5	180	100
(b)Low level of education hinders women's participation in local politics	60	33.3	60	33.3	30	16.7	14	7.8	16	8.9	180	100
(c)Socio-cultural beliefs hinder women's participation in local politics	82	45.6	58	32.2	24	13.3	6	3.3	10	5.6	180	100
(d)Reproductive role hinders women's participation in local politics	74	41.1	66	36.7	20	11.1	8	4.4	12	6.7	180	100
(e) High rate of poverty among women hinders their political participation	80	44.4	50	27.8	30	16.7	10	5.6	10	5.5	180	100
(f) Religious beliefs hinders women's participation in local politics	60	33.3	60	33.3	20	11.1	20	11.1	20	11.1	180	100

Table IXa above shows that 64(35.6%) of the respondents strongly agree that political violence hinders women political participation, 76(42.2%) agree, 20(11.1%) strongly disagree, while 10(5.6%) disagree, only 10(5.6%) were not sure of the view.

Table IXb shows that low level education hinders women political participation, 60(33.3%) strongly agree, and the same 33.3% agreed, 30(16.7%) strongly disagree. Only 14(7.8%) disagree and the remaining 16(8.9%) were not sure.

From Table IXc it is revealed that 82(45.6%) of the respondents strongly agree with the view that patriarchy hinders women political participation, 58(32.2%) agree, 24 (13.3%) strongly disagree, 6(3.3%) disagree while 10(5.6%) were not sure of the view.

Table IXd shows that 74(41.1%) strongly agreed that reproductive role hinders women political participation, 66(36.7%) agree, 20(11.1%) strongly disagree while 8(4.4%) disagree, only 12(6.7%) were not sure of this view.

Table IXe in the above table, shows that poverty hinders women political participation; as 80(44.4%) strongly agree, 50 (27.8%) agree, 30(16.7%) strongly disagree, 10(5.6%) disagree while 10(5.5%) were not sure of this view.

Table IXf shows that, 60(33.3%) strongly agree and the same 33.3% agree that religious belief hinders women political participation, 20(11.1%) strongly disagree and at the same time agree, also this same 11.1% were not sure of the view.

Table X: Respondents' Views on the Measures that can encourage Women's Political participation at the Local Government Level

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
(a)Government should implement policies	100	55.5	30	16.7	20	11.1	10	5.6	20	11.1	180	100
(b)Women Advocacy organizations should organize orientation programmes	140	77.7	20	11.1	10	5.6	-	-	10	5.6	180	100
(c )Non-Governmental bodies should organize orientation programmes	40	22.2	20	11.1	70	38.9	50	27.8	-	-	180	100
(d)Religious leaders should encourage followers	65	72.2	15	16.7	5	5.6	-	-	5	5.5	90	100
Women themselves should express confidence by participating fully	140	77.7	10	5.6	10	5.6	10	5.6	10	5.5	180	100

From Table Xa above 100(55.5%) strongly agree that there should be governmental policies that will kick against women subordination, 30(16.7%) agree as well. While 20(11.1%) strongly disagree, 10(5.6%) disagree, but 20(11.1%) were not sure of this view.

Table Xb shows that 140(77.7%) strongly agree that women advocacy organization should organize orientation programmes for better women political participation. While 10(5.6%) strongly disagree, none of the respondents disagree. Only 10(5.6%) were not sure of the view.

Table Xc reveals that 40(22.2%) of the respondents strongly agree that non-governmental bodies could be of help by organizing educative programme, 20 (11.1%) agree as well, 70 (38.9%) strongly disagree with this view, 50(27.8%) disagree while none of the respondents claimed not to be sure of this view.

Table Xd shows that 130(72.2%) strongly agree that religious leaders should encourage women followers in their religious environment, 30(16.7%) agree, 10(5.6%) strongly disagree, none of the respondents disagrees, while 10(5.6%) were not sure of the view.

Table Xe shows that 140(77.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Personal confidence by the women themselves would improve their political participation. 10(5.6%) of the respondents strongly disagree, disagree, and were not sure of this view, respectively.

## Test of hypothees

### Hypothesis One

Hi: There is a significant relationship between patriarchy and low women participation at the local politics

Hii: There is no significant relationship between patriarchy and low women participation at the local politics

**Question: “Patriarchy hinders women participation in local politics”**

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Total	
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
Patriarchy hinders women participation in local politics	41	45.6	29	32.2	12	13.3	3	3.3	5	5.6	180	100

Using Chi-square,

$$x^2 = \frac{\sum fo-fe}{fe}$$

Where  $x^2$  = Chi-square  
 $\sum$  = Summation  
fo = Observed frequency  
fe = Expected frequency

Variable	Observed (o)	Expected (e)	o-e	o-e <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{E}$
Strongly Agree	82	36	46	2116	58.778
Agree	58	36	22	484	13.444
Strongly Disagree	24	36	-12	144	4
Disagree	6	36	-30	900	25
Not sure	10	36	-26	676	18.778
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4320</b>	$\frac{120.00}{x^2=120.00}$

The degree of freedom (df) = r - 1

Where df = degree of freedom  
r = number on a row  
= (5-1)  
= 4

The % point distributed at 0.05 significant level

**Decision Rule**

From the calculation, the computed chi-square ( $x^2$ ) value is 31.62 and it is greater than the value of 0.05 significant level, hence the hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is rejected and therefore the other hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted.

**Hypothesis Two**

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between women participation in local politics and women political experience.

$H_1$ : There is a significant relationship between women participation in local politics and women political experience.

**Question: Women tend to gain more political experience in local politics**

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Total	
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
Women tend to gain more political experience in local politics	110	61.1	50	27.8	6	3.3	10	5.6	4	2.2	180	100

## Chi-square calculation

Variable	Observed (o)	Expected (e)	o-e	o-e <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{e}$
Strongly Agree	110	36	74	5476	152.11
Agree	50	36	14	196	5.4
Strongly Disagree	6	36	-30	900	25
Disagree	10	36	-26	676	18.778
Not sure	4	36	-32	1024	28.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8272</b>	$\frac{229.78}{x^2=229.78}$

**Decision rule**

From the calculation, the computed chi-square ( $x^2$ ) value of -1.09 is lesser than value of 0.05 significant levels; hence the hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is rejected while hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted.

**Discussion of findings**

From the results of the in-depth interviews conducted, it is observed that men do participate more in politics than women in Akoko South West local government area and the few women who are involved in politics of the local government participate partially.

It is observed too that women do not often occupy key political positions in the area as the men do. Even at the political party level, positions, such as, party women leaders, party treasurers etc. are given to the women. Few women who are put in better positions at the local government level are there on appointment, for instance interim Local government caretaker chairperson, acting chairperson of Local government board commission etc.

When the respondents were asked what was responsible for women not occupying these positions; different views were given. For instance, (1) Akeem male, 40 years old and a trader exclaimed, that "key leadership positions are not women's preserve". (2) Otunba male 45 years old politician observed that; "Akoko women do not usually participate in politics to the extent of contesting for key positions". (3) Simbi female 48 years old trader believed that "politics is for the strong people like men, not fragile person like women". (4) Charles male 50 years old farmer came in, from the different perspective as he said "*we are Nigerians, we are in Nigeria, especially here in Yoruba land, and women are not culturally permitted to equate themselves in any way with the men. It is the men that will make decisions for the women to follow. The only way women could come in politically is to vote, and go back home. It is we, men that will wait for the result and feed them back*". The 1999 Nigerian constitution by virtue of section 40 states that;

Every person shall be entitled to assemble and associate freely with other persons, and in particular, may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of 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.

Also Section 42(1) of the same Constitution states a categorical displeasure about any form of discrimination;

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that s/ he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

The same Constitution, section 77 states:

- (1) 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

- (2) Every citizen of Nigerian, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for the purpose of electionsto legislative houses, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election.

From the foregoing, it clearly appears that there is nothing in the Nigerian constitution, which excludes the participation of Nigerian women in the nation’s politics. Where the problem lies according to Okegbola (2011), is the language in which the Nigerian Constitution is written,which betrays its seeming desire to continue with the patriarchal tradition of Nigerian societies. She added that it is necessary to divest the constitution of its masculinity and make it gender/ sex recognizing that not only men are human beings in Nigeria. This is because of the pronoun ‘he’ that appears in the Constitution 235times while the word ‘women’ was used only 2times. For example, as it is in the section 26(2)(a) and 29(4)(b) in the 1999, Nigerian Constitution.

A closer look at the constitution shows that it provides for who is a Nigerian citizen and how it may be acquired by naturalization and registration. But the Constitution fails to make provision for the process by which non-Nigerian men married to Nigerian women and who are so desirous, may become Nigerian citizens. In Section 26,of Nigeria’s 1999 constitution.

It is clearly shown from the above views, that the low participation and representation of women in Nigerian politics, is far beyond the notion of “there are no suitable women” to fill political vacancies. But rather, the fundamental issues remains that there are institutional reasons, obstructing the possibility of full public advancement of women. Like it was suggested by the 55% of the respondents that government should implement policies to enhance women representation and participation. Another reason given by some female respondents for their low participation in local politics is the timing of political meeting which were usually fixed at odd hours, and the attitude of some male politicians who sees women politicians as sexual object . As a result of this some forbids their wives from participating in politics. This was the ordeal of (5) Idileola female 40 years and a civil servant whoshared her experience “*the day I came back home late from a political meetings, my husband nearly sent me packing*”.(6) Mr.’ Ife’ 57 year old, a teacher on the other hand believes that a man usually would not dis- allow his wifeto participate strongly in politics, if not for the immature nature of mostNigerian male politicians whowould always want to believe that women must always give out their bodies before getting anywhere. From the fore going, it is not mistaken to conclude that the political system at the local government level, especially in Akoko South-west LGA has patriarchal undertone.

## Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it has been shown that local government is an arena where women tend to gain political experience, but unfortunately, there is low number of women in this area of local politics. Even the few who are involved in politics are not in key and elective positions instead they are appointed. Being appointed into an elective position practically means that the appointed person is answerable to a certain higher authority. As this is the situation in the Nigerian political system, how then will the country’s system of democracy be participatory and how will the decision-making be representative? This situation is not in any way good for the political development of Nigeria, rather; it increases political underdevelopment. The study submits that if the Nigerian society can change it orientation from seeing women as shuttle/ property or sexual object and second citizen, that should not compete with the male that the society assume to be superior, the endowed gift of women in organizing their homes could also be used for the development of the country’s

political system as well as the country at large. The study then recommends that, there should be an intensive re-orientation towards changing the negative perception of both male and female in order to accept women as equal partners in the development of their communities and the country at large. It is thus rather urgent the need to do that everything possible and necessary should be to promote massive girl child education, providing more funds for women's economic empowerment and skill training that could help them mobilize needed resources in order to feature effectively during elections. Overall women's and that the reproductive roles and domestic responsibilities should not be seen as obstacle to their participation in politics rather these can be necessary elements in effectively preparing women for management of both human and social resources.

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