

A Study of Gender Gap in Political Representation of Kogi-Central Senatorial District at the National Assembly (1999-2019)

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ABSTRACT

Female political underrepresentation at the nation's parliament has remained a hallmark of Nigerian democracy since its inception in 1999. This study sets out to establish by way of empirical investigation, the female gender gap in the political representation of Kogi-central Senatorial District at the National Assembly from 1999-2019. The study employed both primary and secondary data with relevant literatures related to the problem under study interrogated. The study relying on its findings argued that women play more of participatory role in the voting process than being elected to power with their inclusion in the political decision-making process at its low ebb in Nigeria. The study finds out that socio-cultural factors such as religion and cultural beliefs of the area under study are major obstacles on the path of female politicians to power. The study therefore argues that for the problem of women underrepresentation at the National Assembly in Kogi-central to be adequately addressed, relevant stakeholders such as political party leaders and civil society organizations needed to take a more proactive measures to fashion out how women representation at the National Assembly in the area could be improved upon owing to the fact that there is growing agitations in the country that Nigeria's political settings should provide an enabling environment for emerging female politicians to garner experience in virtually all the political facets of life including running for elections, and part-taking in the decision making process that affects the life of their communities.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Election, Politics, Gender gap, Gender equality, Women underrepresentation, Parliament.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the political status of women around the globe generally and Nigeria in particular has attracted serious attention of political spectators and scholars. The continued underrepresentation of women in politics particularly the way and manner in which access to political office is still very much stratified by gender calls for attention. (Krook and Jalalzal, 2010). The question why the increased election of women into positions of government in some countries and not in others has sparked the need for research. In responding to this question, it is very imperative for us to first distinguish "sex" from "gender". By sex we mean the biological differences between women and men and gender refers to the social meanings and roles assigned to the different sexes which varies from one country to another (Krook and Jalalzal, 2010:6) In most countries of the world, norms of gender have traditionally prescribed distinct roles in society for the two sexes. Men have been given the primary responsibility for affairs in public sphere, like politics and economy, while women have been assigned a central position in the private sphere, namely the home and the family and this is the bane of gender gap in political representation in a relatively third-world society like Kogi-central senatorial district in Kogi State.

The return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999 provided Nigerians yet another opportunity to participate in the political process of electing political decision-makers at various levels of government, federal, state and local levels. At the federal level, opportunities exist for Nigerians to elect two representatives to serve as President and Vice-president to represent them in the federal

executive organ of government. One Hundred and Nine (109) Senators are elected, three from each of the 36 states and one from the Federal Capital Territory and Three Hundred and Sixty (360) House of Representatives member are elected to represent the federal constituencies in Nigeria at the federal legislative organ of government. Two people are also elected to serve as Governor and Deputy-Governor in the 36 States of the federation to lead the state executive organ of government and State House of Assembly representatives are also elected in each state depending on the number of local constituencies available in the state to serve in the legislative organ of government.

In Kogi-central senatorial district, the female gender have at one time or the other contested to be elected to represent the zone at the National Assembly since 1999, however, such an effort can better be described as an exercise in futility because of the overbearing influences and advantages their male counterpart enjoy over them.

Studies have revealed that Nigerian women constitute half of the country's total population with about 51 percent of the women voting during elections. However, despite this high level of women participation in the voting process, women are still under-represented in both elective and appointive positions of government indicating that Nigeria hasn't attained the 30 percent affirmative as prescribed by the Beijing platform of Action (Oluyemi, 2016).

The Federal Military Government of Ibrahim Babangida carved Kogi State out of Benue and Kwara States on August 27, 1991. Kogi is a state in the north-central zone of Nigeria and the most centrally located of all the states of the federation. It is popularly called the confluence state due to the fact that the merging of Rivers Niger and Benue. Its capital is Lokoja. It shares common boundaries with Niger, Kwara, Nassarawa and The Federal Capital Territory to the north. To the East, the state is bounded by Benue and Enugu states, to the south by Enugu and Anambra States, and to the west by Ondo, Ekiti and Edo states. Lokoja, the Niger/Benue confluence town is the state capital. There are three main ethnic groups in Kogi: Igala, Ebirra, and Okun; with the Igalas being the largest ethnic group in the state, these three main ethnic groups are domesticated in Kogi-central, Kogi-west and Kogi-east respectively (Para-Mallam, 2015).

This study seeks to establish the gender gap in political representation of the people of Kogi-central in elective positions of government from 1999-2015.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Democracy in the view of Segun and Samuel (2012:4) presupposes that there should be freedom for all, justice and equal treatment of all citizens, both men and women. What this suggest is that no society can be regarded to have fully democratised both in theory and practice, if there still exist inequality in terms of political participation and representation. Democratic representation implies the capacity of citizens to access and influence political institution in the view of Idike (2020). Equality is an important value of democracy expressed in terms of equality of opportunities manifested in inclusive, open competition particularly in the creation of room for equal chances in governance. What this implies is that every efforts of the citizens in the democratization process of any country must be rewarded equally regardless of color, sex, religion and so on. However, across the globe today and particularly in Nigeria, women are still grossly underrepresented in terms of political representation with their male counterpart having overwhelming dominance in both advanced and young democracies. Election and the electoral process in Nigeria over the years is being greatly dominated by the male politicians with the right to being elected to elective offices almost being treated as exclusive reserve of the male gender. The expression of interest to contest for certain elective position in the country by the female gender is being suppressed by the continuous dominance of the male politicians with the role of the later being restricted to the participatory role of voting during election in most parts of the country including Kogi-central Senatorial District.

GLOBAL GENDER GAP IN WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Equality between men and women was a core tenet enshrined in the United Nations' charter of 1945. However, after several decades of socio-economic and political engagements across the globe, women and girls still live in a world of widespread gender inequality in terms of access to economic and political opportunities with power and decision-making remaining overwhelmingly dominated by men (www.un.org/en/in). The United Nation Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030, precisely goal number five (5) advocated for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a fundamental right. However, despite this advocacy for gender equality, women do not still have equal access to power and other

opportunities compared the male gender (Bhalla, 2021). The possibility of women occupying the same number of seats at the parliament and other executive and elective offices rarely exist in most countries of the world. This limitations placed on women in terms of access to power Bhala (2021) argued is being made possible by the burden of household chores and inequitable access to higher education and aided by the patriarchal nature of political parties where men enjoys dominance over women.

Women political representation remains muted and unequal at the global level with the United Nations report showing that only 22 percent of all parliamentarians were women in 2016, an upward shift from 11.3 percent in what is obtainable at 1995 (George and Rachel, 2019). Gender norms in the view of George and Rachel (2019) undermines women's role in public life and what prompts resistance to women's political leadership. The norms that keep women out of politics also shape how people vote and how women should spend their time and behave. Despite the global advocacy that certain quota of political representation be given to women, their implementation still seems problematic with women still underrepresented.

The 2022 Global Gender Index report showed the progression of women in leadership in public office. Of all female Heads of State globally, the longest serving ones have presided over Germany for 16.1 years, Iceland for 16 years, Dominica for 14.9 years and Ireland for 14 years. The global average share of women in ministerial position nearly doubled between 2006 and 2022 increasing from 9 percent to 16.1 and the global share of women in parliament rose from 14.9 to 22.9 percent (Zahidi, 2022:7). Despite this reported improvement in women's political representation at the parliament, the male parliamentarians still enjoy overwhelming majority.

FEMALE GENDER GAP IN POLITICAL AFRICA

Empirical studies have shown that African countries are still far from achieving women's equal and effective participation in political decision-making. Women constitute only 24 percent of the 12,133 parliamentarians in Africa according to the first women's political participation barometer report of 2021 and factors such as social, religious, economic and patriarchal factor are being identified as major impediments on the paths of women to compete favourably with their male counterpart (IDEA: 2021).

UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE NIGERIA'S PARLIAMENT

Theoretically speaking, extant laws and governmental policies in Nigeria does not in any way discriminate against women inclusiveness in position of leadership. Section 40 of the 1999 constitution states that "every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests". Section 42 (1) of the constitution also states that "a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not by reason only that he is such a person subjected to any form of discrimination" (CEDAW Report, 2017).

The National Gender Policy of 2006, Objective 5, target b, stipulates that the State is committed to "adopt special measures, quotas and mechanisms for achieving minimum critical threshold of women in political offices, party organs and public life by pursuing 35% affirmative action in favour of women to bridge gender gaps in elective and appointive post at all levels by 2015" (CEDAW Report, 2017:) However, these laws and governmental policies were only there in theory but missing in practice as women are still grossly underrepresented in the politics of Nigeria generally and Kogi-central in particular. To support this submission, George-Gerenyi (2010:102) has argued that despite general commitment in section 2 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nigeria falls short of the desired result of giving males and females equal opportunities to advance socially, physically, educationally, politically and economically with research showing that women in southern part of the country are ahead of their counterparts in the northern part largely as a result of the conservative Islam. Corroborating this argument, Idike (2020:1) asserts that in the Nigeria of today, there exist a widespread gender injustice across all kinds of emerging democracies. He argued that the national average of women's political participation in the country has remained 6.7 percent in elective and appointive offices and it falls below the global average of 22.5 percent, the African regional figure of 23.4 percent and the West African sub-regional figure of 15 percent. What this suggest is that Nigeria by all standards of measurement both global, regional and sub-regional falls below countries that can be grouped into nations that have made serious efforts to bridge the gender gap against women in political representation. Out of over 84 million registered

voters in 2019 election in Nigeria, women accounted for almost 40 million representing 47.14 percent of the total figure, yet gender intolerance has remained prominent in the national politics of the country. The number of women elected into the Nigerian Senate reduced from seven (7) in 2015 to six (6) in 2019 and the House of Representatives suffered same decline from 20 to 12 in 2019. Global data on national parliaments indicated that as at September 2022, out of 360 House of representatives members, only 13 are women representing 3.6 percent and out of 109 Senators, only 8 are women representing 7.3 percent (www.data.ipu.org/womensranking).

Women's full and effective political participation should not be seen as mere privilege that can either be given to women or not, it is a matter of human rights, inclusive growth and sustainable development (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019). The active participation of women, on equal terms with men at all levels of decision-making and political involvement is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy and the inclusion of their perspectives and experiences into the decision-making processes (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019). Despite this submission, in the twenty-first century, women are facing obstacles in their political aspiration to be elected to power worldwide. Women around the world at every socio-political level find themselves under-represented in parliament and far removed from decision-making levels (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019:1) In spite of the great desire for women's empowerment in all sectors by many countries championed by the United Nations and its agencies, the representation of women in government and other public decision-making positions is still very low all over the world. Although, the experiences of women in all regions of the world differs, a situational analysis still points out a huge gender gap between women and men's representation in political leadership as well as in other aspects of public life in Nigeria (Abiola, 2019). The situation is not different in Kogi State generally and Kogi-central in particular. Nigeria policy formulation has appeared to favour women, but it has been nothing but a mere paper work called an acts of parliament which its implementation never see the light of the day because of the domineering influence of male political elites who see such enactment and implementation as a confrontation to the male gender dominance in politics, governance, leadership, policy formulation and decision making (kogireports.com)

Factually speaking, Kogi-central Senatorial District has contributed greatly in the negative way in the female gender gap at the Nigeria's parliament. Since the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, no female politician has been elected to represent either the Senatorial District or any of the three (3) Federal Constituencies in the area at the National Assembly, only male politicians have been elected to fill these legislative positions. Kogi-central Senatorial District is undoubtedly one of the political district to look at when it comes to women underrepresentation at the Nigeria's parliament. The farthest female political aspirants could go is to win primaries, but winning the election proper where a number of political parties presents their candidates for electoral contest have been practically difficult and the only time a female political aspirant gave the men a very serious fight in the National Assembly election conducted in the area was in the 2019 Senatorial election when Natasha Akpoti contested under the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the men still have their way with the emergence of Senator Yakubu Oseni as winner in that election.

In the views of Ibroscheva and Raicheva-stower (2014), politics is still perceived as a gender-congruent profession for women, that is, one that violates the feminist gender roles, which takes its toll on those who strive to break the glass ceiling. Even if the woman in concern are adjudged to be competent for the job, the media is most likely to act in such a way that is detrimental to the electoral success of the woman. What this suggest is that the media space is also greatly used in the negative manner to spread false propaganda about female politicians which is capable of thwarting their chances of winning.

After twenty-one (21) years of Nigeria's return to democracy from 1999-2021, public offices in Nigeria have been dominated by men with women greatly under-represented. Since then, Nigeria has not recorded any significant improvement in the level of women inclusiveness in position of leadership. Statistics from IRI revealed that from 1999 to 2015, 31 senators, 98 House of Representatives members, and 303 House of Assembly members that are women. It was reported that in 2019, women experienced the lowest level of women's participation in politics and only 2970 women were on the electoral ballot (11.36%), out of this figure, only 62 women were elected (Olaniyan and Oyindamola, 2020:1).

Previous studies showed that women are seriously marginalized and under-represented in politics and governance with men dominating most

of the legislative and executive leadership positions in Nigeria and this situation continues to get worse from one round of election to another (Nwabunkeonye, 2014, CEDAW Report, 2017, Eniola, 2018 and Akpan, 2018). What this suggests is that, female politicians are seriously lagging behind in terms of access to political power and wide gaps exist between the positions held by men and women in the realms of political governance and representation in Nigeria with the male politicians taking the lead.

Scholars in previous studies have tried to identify the several socio-cultural, economic and political factors responsible for women under-representation in Nigeria but however, varies in their opinions. The patriarchal nature of most societies some scholars have argued is responsible for women disadvantaged position in the politics of most countries. Most governments of the world are run by socially dominant men, and their policies reflect their interests. In every period of change, including those of revolutionary upheaval, men's interests, not women's, have prevailed, and many men, but few women, have benefited from progressive social policies. Equality and justice for all usually means for men only. Women have never had their revolution because the structure of gender as a social institution has never been seriously challenged and men are benefitting greatly from the "patriarchal dividend" (Lorber, 2001).

Nwabunkeonye (2014:287) opined that unhealthy political environment where politics has become a do-or-die affair characterised by intimidation and violence, political party discrimination that seems to favour male politicians against their female counterparts, wrong perception of women in politics as wayward and irresponsible people, indigenisation of women political aspirants are the bane of women under-representation in politics and governance in Nigeria. In fact, women are so discriminated against that those who get married to men outside their locality face two problems, one internal to where she originated from and the other one external to the locality she's married to. While the people in the area of her origin do no longer see her as part of them, the people of the area where she's married to does not also see her as originally part of them and this has affected them greatly in their political life and aspirations.

Women have contested for several positions in the six elections conducted in the country since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999 but have recorded very poor results and remain underrepresented. For instance, records have shown that in 2002, women made up only

three percent of elected officials, in 2007 they made up seven percent and in 2011 they made up about five percent and even before the 2015 general elections few women emerged as candidates after the political party primaries. The 2019 election is adjudged to be the worst in terms of women under-representation with few women elected to the parliament (Akpan, 2018 and)

In the 29 states where election was held in 2015, the representation of women that contested for the office of governor and deputy governor was 87 out of the 380 candidates (22.9 percent) that ran for the positions. In the contest for senatorial seats, 122 women out of 747 candidates, representing 16 percent, were cleared by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to run in the March 28 election. The number was not better in the contest for the lower chamber of parliament. Two hundred and sixty seven (267) women out of total 1774 candidates ran for seats at the House of Representatives, representing 15 percent (Akpan, 2018:2).

In fact, according to the Deputy Director Gender Division of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Mrs. Blessing Obidiegwu, 14 females were elected into the House of Representatives and eight won as Senators in the 2015 general election (Akpan, 2018:2). What this implies is that men have dominated the National Assembly since the inception of National Assembly in 1999 and the domination of men in Kogi-central politics has contributed greatly to that gap.

The Nigerian society is gender stratified in such a way that rights and responsibilities are being assigned on the basis of physiological differences between men and women. While men are believed to be physically stronger than women and are expected to be involved in physical activities and more labor oriented tasks, women are seen to be emotionally driven and only fit for domestic and reproductive roles while men are regarded as traditional heads of households and wield enormous decision making powers (Eniola, 2018:1-2). The gender stratified nature of Nigerian society is not enough to explain women's gender gaps in political representation in Nigeria that tends to favour men more than women. Other socio-cultural, economic and political factors also inhibit women participation in politics and the undue advantages male politicians enjoy over them when it comes to accessing political power.

Para-Mallam (2015) argued that the inadequate representation of northern women in politics, as candidates or as elected officials, or in the civil service or security agencies, is often

blamed on cultural factors, particularly a more socially conservative form of Islam. Starting from a low base, increased representation of women in positions of authority and influence, as well as pending improvements to the legislative base and political environment, appears both possible and imperative. What this implies is that women under-representation in positions of leadership particularly in the northern part of Nigeria can be attributed to the religious factor of Islam which does not favour women being saddled with leadership responsibilities. This is not untrue with the situation in Kogi-central senatorial district which is a segment of the north. Being a Muslim-dominated area, it is seen as an aberration by majority of the people in the area to allow a woman being elected to either executive or legislative positions of government in the midst of so many men.

Electoral violence against female political candidates in Kogi State has also been stated as one of the major impediments against women political progress in the state. This form of violence is rooted in the prevailing patriarchal culture of anti-female discriminatory norms and practices. Women function primarily as wives, mothers and family care-givers, and even breadwinners as they engage in different types of businesses ranging from farming, fishing and petty trading in clothing and other merchandise depending on what zone of the state the woman is from (Para-Mallam, 2015:12). There is this traditional mind-set of limiting women from getting involved fully in public life. There are numerous cases that exemplify the challenges of women in Kogi State politics particularly in Kogi-central. For instance, one of the female political candidate that can be adjudged to have given male candidates a good fight in the area under study is Barrister Natasha Hadiza Akpoti who contested for the senatorial position of the zone in 2019. Her political aspiration was matched with serious political violence by thugs recruited by male candidates. In some areas of the zone to be specific in Okene local government area of the senatorial district, voters were barred from voting for her during the election.

Previous studies in Kogi State also points to the fact that, sexual violence is also being perpetrated by 'godfathers or party officials who expect female aspirants to provide sexual services in exchange for political favours. The fear and shame attached to sexual patronage in political life is a strong deterrent to many potential female aspirants and their families. Therefore, just as in Bayelsa, sexual patronage among the political class was cited as a reason husbands, families and

society at large often dissuade their women from participating in politics. Those who insist on standing for office often end up getting divorced (Para-Mallam, 2015)

'Even though they know you are not doing what they think you are doing, the moment the family come together and say this is what they want, the men tend to follow that position. So it is very risky and dicey. It is either you marry the politics or you marry your husband. That's why my ... friend is divorced up till now' (Para-Mallam, 2015:13).

Most women who summon the courage to venture out and contest for elective positions in Kogi State also face psychological intimidation in the form of name-calling, hate speech, character assassination, and threats to force them to withdraw contesting. Some people would either call them prostitutes, arrogant women and women without husbands at home and this has gone a long way in dampening the political moral of most female politicians. In fact, women are mostly used for campaigns and voting during elections in Kogi State.

Marital factor has also been discovered as one of the barricading factors against women full participation in politics with the resultant effect of women under-representation. Husbands feel threatened by the prospect of their spouse' success in contesting for elective positions. Others capitulate to the desires of their extended families to restrain their wives from public life. This is likely due to the fact that it would be considered a gender role reversal to have the wife in a public leadership position while the husband remains at home to take care of domestic issues (Para-Mallam, 2015:17).

Other factors responsible for women under-representation in the politics are institutional and economic in nature. Institutional constraints which include barriers such as political systems that operate through rigid schedules that do not take into consideration women's domestic responsibilities, and the type of electoral quotas used, serves as important factors for women under-representation (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019:6-7). The situation is not different in Nigeria as political meetings in Nigeria where important decisions are being taken are being held overnight, a period when women are supposed to be on the same bed with their husbands.

The socio-economic status of women to a greater extent play a significant role in enhancing their participation and representation in political decision-making bodies (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019:6-7). Majority of Women in Nigeria generally and Kogi-central in particular lack the economic

power that can enhance their participation. The cost of campaigning and prosecuting elections has become so high in Nigeria that most women cannot venture into politics since it involves spending.

Most literatures on women underrepresentation in positions of leadership in Nigeria such as Eniola and Abiola, 2008, Nwabunkeonye, 2014, Para-Mallam, 2015 and Akpan, 2018 hinged on socio-cultural, economic and political factors barricading women access to political power but not on how religious factor of Islam and electoral violence perpetrated on female political aspirants have created a gender gap and barricaded women from being elected as either a Senator or Member of House of Representatives to represent Kogi-central senatorial district and the federal constituencies in the area.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study adopted patriarchal theory propounded by Kale Millet in the book written by the author and titled 'Sexual Politics' in the early 1970s. The term patriarch was derived from Greek Patriarchs, meaning 'head of tribe'. It was central to seventeenth-century debates over the extent of monarchical power. During this era, the supporters of absolute rule claimed that the power of a King over his people was the same as that of a father over his family and that both were sanctioned by God and nature (Bryson, 2003).

Millet as cited in (Bryson, 2003) argued that in all societies, relationship between sexes have been based on power and that they are therefore political. This power takes the form of male domination over women in all areas of life. He argued that patriarchal power of men over women is basic to the functioning of all societies and it extends far beyond institution of power. He argued that patriarchy is primarily maintained by a process of conditioning which starts with childhood socialization within the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion to such an extent that its values are internalized by men and women alike, for some women this leads to self-hatred, self-rejection and an acceptance of inferiority. Millet argued that the history of patriarchy is the history of man's inhumanity to women using with the latter relegated to the background.

Using Millet's patriarchal theory to explain the female gender gap in the political representation of Kogi-central Senatorial District at the National Assembly, it is arguable to say that the patriarchal tendencies inherent in the social and political organization of the Senatorial District is responsible for female underrepresentation at the

National Assembly in the area. This patriarchal tendencies begins at childhood socialization where the male child is being rated above the female ones with the latter instructed to give special respect to the former. This is further strengthened by the undue advantages the male children enjoys over the female ones in terms of access to quality and higher education. The Islamic belief of the people of leadership role and positions being the exclusive reserve of the male gender also aided the patriarchal domination of men over women in politics and governance. The female gender is being limited in terms of functioning in the society to household and parenting roles and this has greatly impacted negatively on their chances of ascending to leadership positions especially at the parliament. Their right to vote and be voted for to clinch on sensitive elective offices have been greatly inhibited. The only female political aspirant that have given male politicians a very serious fight in the area was Natasha Hadiza Akpoti who contested to represent the Senatorial District at the upper chamber of the National Assembly. The superiority factor enjoyed by the male gender in the area supplemented by government machinery gave the elected Senator in the said election, Yakubu Oseni over her.

III. METHODOLOGY

Kogi-central senatorial district of Kogi State is an area located in the north-central part of Nigeria. It is made up of five (5) local government areas namely, Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ogori-Magongo, Okehi, and Okene and three Federal Constituencies of Adavi/Okehi, Ajaokuta and Okene/Ogori. According to the 2006 population census, Adavi local government area has population figure of 217,219, Ajaokuta 122,432, Ogori-Magongo, 39,807, Okene 325,623, and Okehi 223,574 (www.kogistate.gov.ng). These population summed together gives us 928,655.

This study adopted both primary and secondary sources of data collection to generate data. In the primary method of data collection, survey questionnaires and interviews were administered to a number of respondents. The secondary sources of data used for the purpose of this study involves the review of relevant literatures, textbooks, journals and Newspapers related to the problem under study. A number of 764 questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents from the five (5) local government areas under study. This number is arrived at using the Krejcie and Morgan formula which states that for a population of 75,000, 382 is representative of the entire population and for 1,000,000, 384 is

representative (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). The total number of population under study is 928,655 according to the 2006 population census. Since the total population under study is not above 1,000,000, 382 is representative of the entire population. However, it is assumed that from 2006 to 2021, there must have been an increase in the population of people in the area and thus the addition of 382 to the initial number to make it 764. The questionnaires were distributed in accordance with the population strength of each of the local government area. The most populated local government area, which is Okene received the highest number of questionnaires and the lowest in population, Ogori received the lowest number of questionnaires. Three electoral wards were selected from each of the five local government areas under study. The names of all the electoral wards in each of the local government areas were written in pieces of paper and three wards were selected from each of the local government areas using simple random method of sampling. In Adavi Local Government Area, Uhucheba, Kuroko 1 and

Okunchi/Ozuri/Oniyeka wards were randomly selected. In Ajaokuta, Adogo, Achagana and Old Ajaokuta ward were selected. In Ogori/Magongo, Oshobane, Okibo and Eni wards were selected. In Okehi, Obangede/Uhuodo, Obeiba II and Eika/Ohizenyi wards were selected and in Okene local government area, Otutu, Obehira-eba and Orietesu wards were selected for the purpose of this study.

This study also interviewed 7 people in the area including former and serving House of Representatives member, with two from each of the federal constituencies to be interviewed. In each of these Federal Constituencies, one serving and one former House of Representatives member is being interviewed. The female Senatorial candidate of Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the 2019 Senatorial election in the area would also interviewed.

The data generated for the purpose of this research work is being analysed using simple tables and percentages to establish the research findings.

IV. RESULTS FINDINGS

Table 1: POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF KOGI-CENTRAL AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FROM 1999-2019

HOUSE OF SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE OF SENATE	SEX	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ADAVI/OKEHI FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY	SEX	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AJAOKUTA FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY	SEX	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OKENE/OGORI FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY	SEX
1999-2003 Ahmed Tijani Ahmed	M	Abdulkareem Salihu	M	Ahmadu Adamu Samari	M	Sani Stephen	M
2003-2007 M.S Ohiare	M	Aliyu Omeiza Saiki	M	Okino Ado Moses	M	Abdulazeez Idris King	M
2007-2011 Otaru Salihu Ohize	M	Abdulkareem Salihu	M	Sadiq Asema M.	M	Suleiman Y. Kokori Abdul	M
2011-2015 Nurudeen Abatemi -Usman	M	Abdulrahman Badamasuiy	M	Sadiq Asema M.	M	Yusuf Ahmed Tijani	M

2015-2019 Oseni Yakubu	M	Muhammad Kabir Ajanah	M	Lawal Muhammed Idrisu	M	Yusuf Ahmed Tijani	M
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Source: www.citizensciencenigeria.org

Table 2: RESPONSE OF RESPONDENTS ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRES IN ADAVI, AJAOKUTA, OGORI, OKEHI AND OKENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN KOGI-CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT

	Adavi (Number of Questionnaires distributed 150 and 144 retrieved)	Ajaokuta	Ogori	Okehi	Okene
Q1. Does any gender-gap exist in the political representation of Kogi-central at the National Assembly?	Yes - 134 (93%) No - 7 (5%) Indifferent- 3 (2%)	Yes - 121 (83%) No - 18 (12%) Indifferent- 5 (5%)	Yes - 105 (95%) No - 4 (4%) Indifferent - 1 (1%)	Yes - 141 (92%) No - 10(7%) Indifferent- 3(1%)	Yes - 98 (60%) No - 49(30%) Indifferent- 15 (10%)
Question 2. How many female Senator has Kogi-central produced since 1999?	139 - 0 Senator (97%) 4 - 3 Senators (2%) 1- 2 Senators (1%)	140 - 0 Senator (96%) 2- 4 Senators (1%)	109 - 0 Senator (99%) 1- 2 Senators (1%)	151 - 0 Senator (99%) 2- 2 Senators (1%)	156 - 0 Senator (96%) 6- 3 Senators (4%)
Question 3. How many Female House of Reps member has Kogi-central produced since 1999?	140 - 0 House of Reps member (97%) 2 - 3 House of Reps member (2%) 1 - 1 House of Reps member (1%)	142 - 0 House of Reps member (98%) 2 - 3 House of Reps member (1%) 1 - 1 House of Reps member (1%)	106- 0 House of Reps member (96%) 4 - 2 House of Reps member (4%)	141- 0 House of Reps member (92%) 10 - 2 House of Reps member (7%) 2 - 5 House of Reps member (1%)	159- 0 House of Reps member (98%) 2 - 3 House of Reps member (2%)
Question 4. Factors responsible for female political underrepresentation in Kogi-Central	75- Religious (52%) 60- Cultural (41%) 8- Low Education (6%) 1- non-participation of women (1%)	23- Religious (16%) 120- Cultural (83%) 8- Low Education 2 (1%)	32- Religious (29%) 76- Cultural (69%) 8- Low Education 2 (2%)	51- Religious (33%) 99- Cultural (65%) 2- Low Education (3%)	50- Religious (31%) 111- Cultural (72%) 1- Low Education (1%)
Question 5. Does women show interest in political contest in the Senatorial District?	54- Yes (38%) 90- No. (62%)	67-Yes (46%) 78- No (54%)	40-Yes (36%) 69- No (63%) 1- Partially (1%)	54-Yes (35%) 96- No (63%) 3- Partially (2%)	70- Yes (43%) 90- No (56%) 2- Partially (1%)

Question 6. What should be done to fill the gender-gap in political representation of Kogi-central	18- Encourage women to contest (13%) 120- Allocate certain quota of political representation to Women (83%) 6- Redefining the role of women (4%)	8- Encourage women to contest 28 (19%) 101- Allocate certain quota of political representation to Women (70%) 6- Redefining the role of women 15 (10%)	Encourage women to contest 6 (5%) 101- Allocate certain quota of political representation to Women (92%) 3 Free and fair election (3%)	Encourage women to contest 25 (16%) 126- Allocate certain quota of political representation to Women (82%) 2 Free and fair election (2%)	Encourage women to contest 19(12%) 116- Allocate certain quota of political representation to Women (72%) 25 Free and fair election (15%)
Question 7. Effects of female political underrepresentation in Kogi-Central at the National Assembly	115- Disempowerment of women (80%) 17- Women marginalization(12%) 12- underdevelopment (8%)	124 - Disempowerment of women (86%) 17- Women marginalization 18(10%) 12- underdevelopment 3 (4%)	97 - Disempowerment of women (88%) 17- Women marginalization 9(8%) 4- underdevelopment (4%)	128 - Disempowerment of women (84%) 17- Women marginalization (11%) 8- underdevelopment (5%)	Disempowerment of 144 - Disempowerment of women (70%) 35- Women marginalization (22%) 13- underdevelopment (8%)
Question 8. Perception of people about women who participate in politics in Kogi-central	100- wayward woman (69%) 20- Jobless woman (14%) 10- not qualified to rule (7%) 14- Arrogant women (10%)	117- wayward woman (81%) 20- Jobless woman 12 (8%) 10- not qualified to rule 16 (11%)	95- wayward woman (86%) 20- Jobless woman 7 (6%) 8- not qualified to rule (8%)	116- wayward woman (76%) 35- Jobless woman 7 (22%) 2- not qualified to rule (2%)	97- wayward woman (60%) 50- Jobless woman (31%) 2- not qualified to rule (2%)
Total Number of Male and Female respondents	Male 89 (62%) Female 55 (38%)	Male 96 (66%) Female 49 (34)	Male 64 (58%) Female 46 (42)	Male 79 (52%) Female 74 (48)	Male 97 (60%) Female 65 (40)

Source: Field Work

Table 3: RESPONSE OF FIVE (5) PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Question	Response	LGA of the Interviewed	Gender of the Interviewed
1. Does any gender-gap exist in the political	Agreed: 5 (100%) Disagreed : 0 (0%)	Okene : 2 Okehi : 2	Male : 4 Female : 1

representation of Kogi-central at the National Assembly?	Indifferent : 0 (0%)	Adavi : 1	
Question 2. How many female Senator has Kogi-central produced since 1999?	None: 5 (100%)		
Question 3. How many Female House of Reps member has Kogi-central produced since 1999?	None 5 (100%)		
Question 4. Factors responsible for female political underrepresentation in Kogi-Central	Religious factor 2 (40%) Cultural factor 3 (60%)		
Question 5. Does women show interest in political contest in the Senatorial District?	Yes : 4 No: 1 Indifferent		
Question 6. What should be done to fill the gender-gap in political representation of Kogi-central	Allocate quota of representation to Women 4 (80%) Encourage women to contest 1 (20%)		
Question 7. Effects of female political underrepresentation in Kogi-Central at the National Assembly	Disempowerment of women 3 Underdevelopment 1 (20%) Corruption 1 (20%)		
Question 8. Perception of people about women who participate in politics in Kogi-central	Wayward women 3 (60%) Irresponsible Women 1(20%) Jobless women 1(20%)		
Total Number of people Interviewed	5 Male : 4 Female : 1		

V. DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the names of those that have represented Kogi-central Senatorial District at both chambers of the National Assembly (House of Senate and House of Representatives) from 1999-2019. This data is a clear indication that no female politician has been elected to represent the Senatorial District at the National Assembly either at the upper or lower chamber with the male politicians dominating the political representation of the District at the National legislative chambers since the inception of democracy in 1999 to 2019.

Table 2 shows the responses of respondents selected from the five (5) local government areas under study. Out of the 764 questionnaires distributed, 714 was retrieved. Four hundred and twenty-five 425 of the respondents indicated that they are male while two hundred and eighty-nine indicated female as their gender. Majority of the respondents indicated that gender gap exist in the political representation of Kogi-central at the National Assembly with the female gender at disadvantaged position. Most of the respondents indicated that no woman has ever been elected to represent the Senatorial District at House

of Senate or House of Representatives which confirms that female gender gap actually exist in the political representation of the Senatorial District at the National Assembly. On the factors responsible for female underrepresentation of the area under study at the National Assembly, most of the respondents indicated cultural factor as the most inhibiting factor with religious factor following suit. There seems to be correlation and consistency in the responses of the respondents from the five (5) local government areas under study. One could therefore safely assume that religious and cultural factor is responsible for female underrepresentation at the National Assembly in the area under study. Most of the respondents also indicated disempowerment of women as the major effect of the underrepresentation of women at the National Assembly with indications that there is negative perception about women who venture into politics in the area and this without doubt is a discouraging factor for aspiring female politicians. To close the gender-gap in the political representation of the zone, most respondents suggested that certain quota of political representation should be allowed to the female gender. What this suggest is that it may be difficult for a female to be elected to represent the Senatorial District at the National Assembly in an open contest for men and women and this can be curtailed by allocating certain quota of political representation to women.

Table shows the response of those interviewed during the course of this study. Majority of those interviewed agreed to the fact that gender gap exist in the political representation of Kogi-central at the National Assembly as they couldn't mention any female Senator or House of Representatives member that have been elected to represent the zone. Majority of those interviewed also agreed to the fact that women underrepresentation has led to the disempowerment of women as the female gender are being denied so many opportunities that comes with being in power. Majority of those interviewed revealed that for women political underrepresentation to be reduced to the bearest minimum, certain quota of political representation should be allocated to the female gender as they are considered weaker sexes that cannot square up effectively against men in political contest.

VI. IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH PRACTICE

This study being a research on the female gender-gap in the political representation of Kogi-

central Senatorial District at the National Assembly from 1999-2019 provides empirical evidence about the problem under study. This has added to existing knowledge about gender-gap in the political representation of Nigerians at the nation's parliament. Findings from this research work indicates that continuous dominance of men over women in the political representation of the area under study at the National Assembly could lead to women disempowerment and marginalization and for this menace to be properly addressed, policy makers and relevant stakeholders in the Nigerian polity must take necessary steps towards bridging the gap. Allocation of certain quota of representation to women in each states of the federation is very important to close this gap. Encouraging women to venture into political contest may not be sufficient enough to bridge the existing gap in political representation in Nigeria because of the overbearing influence of men over women. Such influence can only be whittled down by enacting a policy where a number of parliamentary seats would be allocated to women with men barred from contesting in such areas. Those this may be seen as a denial of the rights of men to contest but to attain equality and justice which are core tenets of democracy, enacting this type of policy is very important.

In most of the Senatorial District of the country, we have more than one federal constituency. A policy could be enacted stating that where you have more than two federal constituency in a Senatorial District, one woman should be elected to represent the area at the Federal House of Representatives, and one female Senator to be elected from each state. The election of these female lawmakers can be done on rotational basis by shifting base from one federal constituency to the other so that men could still be afforded the opportunity to contest during the period when it is not compulsory for a female lawmaker to be elected in the area.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study is essentially carried out to unravel the socio-cultural, economic and political factors responsible for female underrepresentation at the National Assembly in Kogi-central Senatorial District from 1999-2019. Relevant literatures related to the problem under study were reviewed. Previous studies in this regard did not address how the religious factor of Islam and the level of violence perpetrated against female political aspirants in Kogi-central Senatorial District is negatively affecting the chances of women being elected to represent the zone at the

National Assembly since the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999. The cultural beliefs of the people in the area under study which gives more priority to male political representation than women coupled with the religious beliefs of the people that sees it as a taboo for women to be elected to leadership positions are major impediments on the path of women striving to occupy leadership position in the area.

To bridge the gap in women political representation in Kogi-Central Senatorial District at the National Assembly, the study recommends the following; - Relevant stakeholders in Kogi-central Senatorial District should see women's political underrepresentation as a denied right and seek for ways to bridge the gap. Electoral gender quota should be introduced in the Senatorial District for the political recruitment and election of female political aspirants to parliamentary positions at the federal level. There should be a regulatory body that would sanction any of the areas that fails to comply with the agreed template for balancing in terms of political representation of the area.. Legislation and policies supporting a more gender-balanced representation in elected representatives at the federal, state and local levels should be enacted. Political parties should also come up with gender action plans for its members stating how it wants elective positions to be distributed among men and women.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher intends to carry out a study in the nearest future on the negative impact of women underrepresentation at the National Assembly on development. The researcher also intends to carry out a research on how female political representation can be used to stem the problems of corruption, poverty, unemployment and inequality in Nigeria.

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