

Gender role belief, ethnic embeddedness, religious commitment and political participation among women in Enugu South East, Nigeria.

Barnabas E. Nwankwo, Ph.D

Department of Psychology,
Caritas University, Enugu.
banniewankwo@yahoo.com

and

Solomon A. Agu, Ph.D

Department of Psychology,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology.
amasol2003@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study looked at gender role beliefs, ethnic identity, religious commitment and their relationship with political participation among women. Two hundred and eighty participants (280) were drawn using convenience sampling from the University Communities of Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu and Caritas University Enugu. One hundred and ninety (190) were married while ninety (90) were single. Also the age ranges of the participants were 28 to 63 years, with a mean age of 44.83 and standard deviation of 9.04. 100% of the participants were of Igbo ethnic group in the South East region of Nigeria. Adopting a correlational design, Pearson moment correlation statistics was used to analyze the data. We hypothesized that endorsement of traditional gender roles will negatively be associated with political participation. Also ethnic embeddedness and religious commitment will positively be associated with political participation among women. The results showed that gender role belief significantly correlated negatively with political participation ($r = -.77, P < .01, r^2 = .59$); ethnic embeddedness significantly correlated positively with political participation ($r = .74, P < .01, r^2 = .55$) and religious commitment significantly correlated positively with political participation ($r = .67, P < .01, r^2 = .44$). It was concluded that political education is required and to buffer the belief systems of women to drop traditional beliefs that subjugate women and promote patriarchy. Religious organizations should use their platform to encourage their members more to be engaged politically and the government should introduce policies that ensure equity, fairness and justice to every ethnic group whether minor or major.

Keywords: ethnic identity, religiosity, politics, gender equality, gender belief system

Introduction

Political participation is the extent to which individual members of society share, take part or get involved in the life of that society (Agbaje, 1999). Political participation is an essential component that is required for ensuring the stability and legitimacy of every

political system (Kumari & Kidwai, 1999). It is one of the fundamental ideas of a democratic society. It is the sine qua non of democracy, because democracy involves a commitment to equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacities (Anifowose, 2004). In Nigeria's post-independence democratic experience,

political participation has been greatly influenced by ethno-national considerations. Some of the issues that have affected political participation in Nigeria and which in turn have reflected on aspects of the country's crisis of democracy and nation building includes ethno-national identity of political platforms and their loss of ideology (Olu-Adeyemi, 2017). Thus, democracy is inconceivable without political participation (Agbaje, 1999). According to Pateman (1970) however, citizens' participation in politics is very important because it determines how much power is controlled. Thus in every society, the wielders of political power are very keen on ensuring at least some amount of political participation by the people. It is because of this crucial place that political participation holds that Kumari & Kidwai (1999) asserts that its denial to substantial part of the population can result to explosive situation. Consequently, the political power that women or any group of persons in a society have would be linked directly to the degree of their participation in the political process of that society (Lewu, 2005). Many studies have revealed that conventional forms of political participation, especially among young people, women, minorities and migrants, are currently in decline (e.g., Blais & Dobrzynska, 1998; Franklin, 2002; Putnam & Campbel, 2010). However, two different explanations have been put forward to explain this phenomenon: some authors argue that political apathy and alienation are increasing, whereas others argue that a shift is taking place from traditional forms of political participation to voluntary and less direct participatory activities using new

means of social/political communication (Forbrig, 2005; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins & Delli Carpini, 2006). Current theories about political participation and social engagement take into account factors at the macro level (e.g., historical, institutional, political, demographic), the social level (e.g., family, school, peer group) and the micro level (e.g., collective efficacy, self-efficacy, trust) (Dalton & Klingemann, 2007). However, the social processes that influence in promoting or hindering participation are not well understood.

Over the years, there has been raging debates over the participation or desire of women in Nigerian politics. Some argue that women are weaker sexes owing to social value, norms and beliefs, which have neglected their meaningful contributions and have placed them in a subordinate position to men in the nation's political system (Suleiman 2017). This 'sexual division of labour' in the political system is often traced to the onset of colonialism in Nigeria. Their Western cultural notion of male superiority reflected in their relations with Nigerians. The 1922 Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution disenfranchised Nigerian women and limited the participation of adult male to the wealthy. This is not to say that there was no existing element of gender inequality in traditional state and stateless societies in Nigeria but that the colonial order made gender discrimination more pronounced. In traditional Yoruba states in South West Nigeria, for example, women held high political offices like the *Iyalode*, *Iyaloja*, *Iyalaje* and even the office of the *Oba*. But at the establishment of the colonial order, women became estranged to these rights

politically, but in the Yoruba Kingdoms they could still perform their traditional roles. The political enfranchisement of women in Nigeria politics seems to have maintained on the surface a level of gender equity politically, because it is assumed that constitutionally there are no barriers to women's participation. Throughout recorded history in all part of the world, women have been subjected to domination by men. This is as a result of persisting cultural stereotype, abuse of religious and traditional practices, patriarchal societal structures in which economic, political and social power are dominated by men and the role women have historically played as the followers of male political leaders. This form of discrimination is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one. The only difference is that, it has lasted for so long in this part of the world as other developed nations of the world are moving towards gender equality and equity. Women are unjustifiably discriminated against in many ways. For instance in some courts and police stations in Nigeria today, women who propose to stand for sureties for accused persons have been disqualified simply because they are women. In spite of the fact that world over today, democracy has become a vital tool for attaining sustainable development and the impact of the definition of democracy remains elusive. Political participation which is sine qua non of democracy and allows for diversity of opinion and participation of both men and women cannot thrive by excluding the women folk that constitute half of the world's population. According to Anifowose (2004) some established democracies like Britain

and the U.S., democratic polyarchies, for a long time, were in fact male polyarchies. Even famous advocates of democratic and republican government rejected claims that women should be full citizens. For the most part, they adopted the prevailing view that the proper role of women was marriage, procreation and family, not politics. Thus, John Locke held that "all men are by nature equal, they never recommended that women be allowed to vote and considered it more or less self-evident that in family matters, the husbands have the final say (Anifowose, 2004).

Tracing the historical origin of male domination according to Anifowose (2004) is impossible, but believes that one highly plausible explanation is to be found in physical difference. Men are generally heavier, taller and even physically stronger than women and therefore more capable than women to enforce their will through physical violence and threat of violence. Women on the other hand are vulnerable because of their role of child bearing and nursing. In addition, discrimination and subjection of women is further enforced by custom, traditional, practices, beliefs and the law, behind which stood the coercive force of the state. In sum, the key point is that discrimination against women has its root in the nature of our societies which celebrate men as being unique, stronger and fit for the public space while women are feeble and weak and meant to stay within the confluence of the private space. This has gone a long way to affect women's perception of politics and has therefore led to a very low level of political interest, knowledge and activity of women in

politics. The 1979 Nigerian constitution guaranteed the rights of women to participate in active politics; however, the last decade has witnessed a relative increase in women's participation. This is only when we measure increase in participation with certain standards like the number of women who vote in elections; the number of public offices held by women; number of women related policies implemented by government etc. Over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in women's participation in politics in Nigeria considering these standards, yet there is inherently a pronounced level of underrepresentation of women in politics when compared to their male counterparts. Women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the following ground; that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. Secondly that all human beings are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life. The right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. The 1999 Nigerian constitution by virtue of Section 40 states the following: 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: Provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this Constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition. Section 42(1) of the same constitution states

further that: A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination. This further confirms that you can go to court to seek redress if as a woman your franchise is violated and that the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Section 77 of the Constitution also 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 Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to a legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election. From the foregoing, it appears that there is nothing in the constitution, which excludes the participation of women in politics in Nigeria. Yet when it comes to actual practice, there is extensive discrimination. Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in the 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections held in the country. Men dominate most public offices till date. Female

gubernatorial candidates have emerged but none has ever won and same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women yet they remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts.

As with most third world countries, there have been no systematic studies of Nigerian political culture even though most observers are convinced that it is one of the most important causes of its fluid, unstable politics. Therefore, all we can do here is outline the broad themes those observers point to. First and most obviously, there is little that most Nigerians like about their political system. Things did not start that way. A few polls done in the early 1960s suggested that Nigerians had a greater sense of nationhood than did people in most of the third world. One 1962 survey found that only 16 percent of those sampled had trouble thinking of Nigeria in national terms. Similarly, three quarters of that same sample felt that Nigeria had "made progress" over the past five years and two-thirds thought it would continue to do so in the five years to come.

However, that early optimism did not turn into sustained support for any of the country's regimes. If anything, Nigerians have grown more skeptical and cynical about politics and politicians. Part of the problem is that Nigeria is one of the most fragmented countries in the world. As we have seen earlier, the division is largely along overlapping religious and ethnic lines. The more naive observers assumed that ethnic

identification would give way to a national one soon after independence, not just in Nigeria but in the newly independent states in general. That has not been the case. If anything, ethnicity has become more not less, important. The limited evidence available to us suggests that most Nigerians do in some way think of themselves as Nigerians. However, their ethnic identification matters more as a source of pride (e.g., we Igbo) and even more importantly as a source of dislike and division (e.g., you Yoruba).

The three largest groups (Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba) have virtually nothing in common politically, socially, or historically. The overwhelming majority of Nigerians only speak their "home" language, and if they learn another, it is invariably English and not one of the other indigenous tongues. The different groups live separately, either in their traditional regions or in ethnic enclaves in the few cities that are ethnically mixed. Closely paralleling ethnicity is religion. Religion is nowhere near as important as ethnicity in most of the south, where, for instance, Yoruba Muslims tend to act politically as Yorubas more often than as Muslims. In the north, however, it is hard to disentangle the impact of religion and ethnicity because so much of Hausa-Fulani culture is defined along Islamic lines. Traditional political and religious officials (who are often one and the same) have resisted attempts to "Westernize" the region, often with considerable success. Northern women participation in politics is always minimal. Similarly, when the federal government sent Igbo women census takers into the region in 1963, it touched off widespread protests. The northern desire to

use a separate legal system based on *sharia* or Islamic law has held up the drafting of the constitutions of all three republics. Finally, there is the region itself, which to some degree transcends both religion and ethnicity in even broader fears the north has about the south and vice versa. As we saw earlier, many northerners are afraid that southern (or modern) cultural values and economic practices will undermine their way of life. Southerners, by contrast, fear that a northern majority could seize power and leave them a permanent and aggrieved minority.

Nigeria is a plural society made up of over 250 ethnic groups with many sub-groups. Three major ethnic groups -Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo -dominate the political landscape while other ethnic groups are regarded as minorities. This has created sub-nationalism. Ekeh (1973) has argued that ethnicity has flourished because the Nigerian elite who inherited the colonial state have conceptualized development as transferring resources from the civil public to the primordial public. The ethnicity of Nigeria is so varied that there is no definition of a Nigerian beyond that of someone who lives within the borders of the country (Okpu, 1985). Yet, the concept of ethnicity and ethnic identity in Nigeria requires definition. An "ethnic group" could be described as a "group of people having a common language and cultural values". These common factors are emphasized by frequent interaction between the people in the group. In Nigeria, the ethnic groups are occasionally fusions created by intermarriage, intermingling and/or assimilation. In such fusions, the groups of which they are composed maintain

a limited individual identity. The groups are thus composed of smaller groups, but there is as much difference between even the small groups; as Chief Obafemi Awolowo puts it, as much as there is between Germans, English, Russians and Turks. The count of three hundred ethnic groups and above in Nigeria overwhelmingly enumerates ethnic minority groups, those which do not comprise a majority in the region in which they live. These groups usually do not have a political voice, nor do they have access to resources or the technology needed to develop and modernize economically. They therefore often consider themselves discriminated against, neglected, or oppressed. There are only three ethnic groups which have attained "ethnic majority" status in their respective regions: The Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Yoruba in the southwest. Ethnicity is one of the keys to understanding Nigeria's pluralistic society. It distinguishes groupings of peoples who for historical reasons have come to be seen as distinctive by themselves and others on the basis of locational origins and a series of other cultural markers.

Deaux and Kite (1987) defined gender belief system as a set of beliefs and opinions about males and females and about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity. This belief system includes such factors as stereotypes about men and women, attitudes toward appropriate roles for women and men, and perceptions of those who presumably violate the traditional pattern of gender roles. Research on gender associated beliefs suggests that people's responses to others are based on an assumption that what

is not feminine is masculine and vice versa. People expect others to fit into a relatively stable set of gender roles, traits and physical attributes, generally believing, that a person who is either masculine or feminine in one aspect of behaviour is similarly masculine or feminine in other aspects of behaviour. Consequently, ambivalent attitude towards women should be particularly strong among women who hold traditional gender- role attitudes (Kite & Whitley, 1996; 1998). For that reason, this research will focus on the gender- role belief component of the gender belief system.

Religiousness and spirituality have long been important to most humans and are generally associated with better health outcomes (Koenig, & Larson, 2001). Distinctly conceptualized, religiousness is a reflection of a social entity entailing particular beliefs, customs, and boundaries, whereas spirituality is concerned with transcendent aspects of personal existence (Miller & Thoresen, 2003), and refers to personal, subjective aspect of religious experience (Hill & Pargament, 2008). Emphasis is shared, however, on meaningfulness in life and a motivational quality that promotes goal oriented behavioral activation (Park, 2007). On the other hand, religiosity involves thinking, feeling, and behaving in accordance to doctrinal beliefs, which are endorsed in a religious institution (Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). However, Religious commitment is a term loosely used to reflect degree or level of religiosity. It attempts to capture how internally committed the person is to his religion. One of the best indicators of

religious commitment is the estimation of intrinsic religious motivation or intrinsic religiosity. Persons described as having an intrinsic orientation to religion have been described as living their religious beliefs, the influence of which religion is evident in every aspect of their life (Joshi, & Kumari, 2011). Worthington et al. (2003) defined religious commitment as the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living. In other words, religious commitment indicates the amount of time spent in private religious involvement, religious affiliation, the activities of religious organization, and importance of religious beliefs, which are practiced in intrapersonal and interpersonal daily living (Worthington et al., 2003). Commitment refers to the extent an individual actively participates and holds the beliefs espoused by the religious tradition (Kohut et al. 2000). Worthington (1988) used a religious commitment model to look more closely at how religion affects individuals both positively and negatively and under what conditions. He hypothesized that the extent to which individuals were positively affected by religion were those who were the most committed to their religion (Worthington, 1988). Variables that have been used to measure religious commitment include membership, participation in religious activities, and adherence to religious creed (Hill & Hood, 1996). In this study, religious commitment is measured in terms of these variables. Although religion is not formally entrenched in the Nigerian government, religion is deeply rooted in the country's social structure and as a result it has great potential to shape

Nigerian political attitudes, specifically political interest. The psychological and sociological forces inherent in religious organizations offer several routes by which political interest can be stimulated and fostered. In buildings of worship, people gather together and interact in ways that have natural consequences on their levels of political interest. This study seeks to understand how religious commitment affects engagement in politics. The social aspect of religion can only influence people who are actively involved in religious organizations, therefore being physically and emotionally committed to religion is expected to increase political interest. Due to the pluralistic nature of religion in Nigeria, great variation exists in religious organizations and practice. While this diversity of religious tradition may cause the level of political interest to differ by tradition, higher levels of religious commitment should increase political interest regardless of tradition by escalating social awareness and political ability. In addition, as religious bodies are often organized on a local scale, increasing religious commitment should have a larger impact on political interest in local rather than national affairs. Therefore, higher levels of religious commitment should increase political commitment and interest, especially at the local level. While religious attendance measures some of an individual's likelihood to be influenced by religious organizations, religious commitment provides a stronger measure of religion's impact on political interest. Participation in politics is a critical tool for empowering individuals. This is because participation in political leadership empowers individuals to

participate in formal political structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use of societal resources are generated. In Nigeria, women are under-represented in political leadership and this can be explained by the apathy displayed towards voting. A lot of interventions have been formulated to enhance women's participation in political leadership (Suleiman, 2017). In Nigeria, disparity and inequality in participation in political leadership has persisted probably due to demographic factors, cultural factors, economic factors, gender based electoral violence (Anifowose, 2004). Participation in politics is imperative for women's empowerment because greater number of women in politics will support women's cause at every level. It is with this in mind that the study has been designed to fill the gap. Therefore, this research aims to find out the relationship between gender role belief, ethnic embeddedness, religious commitment and women's participation in politics.

Hypotheses

1. Gender role belief will negatively correlate with political participation
2. Ethnic identity will positively correlate with political participation.
3. Religious commitment will positively correlate with political participation.

Method

Participants

Using purposive sampling method, two hundred and eighty women were drawn for the stud. They include female workers (academic and non-academic staff) from Enugu State University of Science and

Technology and Caritas University Enugu. One hundred and ninety (190) were married while ninety (90) were single. Their age ranged from 21-57 years with mean age of 44.80 and standard deviation of 3.87. This sample was chosen because the researchers wanted to control the issue of literacy and educational level. All the participants were literate and have a minimum of diploma certificate for the non academic and master's degree for the academic staff.

Measures

Four instruments were used in this study

Gender Role Belief was measured using the Attitude Towards Women Scale by Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp (1973). The scale assesses respondents' endorsement of traditional gender role behaviour. The short AWS consists of 25 items and has been found to have high degrees of reliability and construct validity (Nwankwo, 2003). For the current sample, the scale yielded a coefficient alpha of .69. Higher scores indicate endorsement of more traditional gender role beliefs. The scoring ranges from very negative (1) through neutral (4) to very positive (7).

Ethnic Embeddedness was measured using The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure by Phinney (1992). The scale has 12 items used in assessing individuals from diverse cultures and groups. It has a good reliability coefficient of .80 across a wide range of ethnic groups and ages. An example of scale items include: "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group" and "I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me." The measure taps factors such as ethnic identity search (a developmental and cognitive component)

and affirmation, belonging, and commitment (an affective component). For the current study a reliability co-efficient (Cronbach's) of .74 was established.

The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) (Worthington, et. al.(2003). is a brief 10-item screening assessment of the level of one's religious commitment using a 5-point Likert rating scale from 1 ('Not at all true of me') to 5 ('Totally true of me'). It was used to measure the extent to which an individual adheres to his or her religious beliefs, values, and practices and whether he/she utilizes them in everyday living. RCI-10 examines religious commitment. The scale has a reliability coefficient of .89. An example of scale items include, "My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life" and "I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith". For the current sample, the scale yielded a coefficient alpha of .69.

Political Participation was measured using the Socio-Political Participation Scale (Moreno-Jiménez, Rodríguez, & Martín, 2013). It is a 10 item instrument used to measure individual's level of participation in the politics of his community. The authors established a reliability co-efficient (Cronbach's a) of .84. Examples of scale items include "I am a member of/collaborate in meetings/activities organized by trade unions or political parties" and "I actively participate in the various electoral processes (vote, attend rallies, know the election manifestos of the parties, etc.)." For the present study, the researchers established a reliability coefficient of .71.

Procedure

The data collection for this study was done in January, 2018. Trained research assistants were utilized in the different schools where the authors are based to collect filled questionnaire forms. The questionnaires were distributed at the different offices of all the available and willing staff (teaching and non-teaching) of all the faculties in the universities. They were informed that the researchers were conducting a study on political participation amongst women in South East Nigeria and their participation was voluntary. Those who were not willing to participate were not given the questionnaire forms to fill. Of the three hundred (300) questionnaire forms

distributed, two hundred and ninety (290) were returned but two hundred and eighty (280) were sufficiently completed by the participants and used for data analysis. Informed consent was obtained from all participants by telling them that participation in the study was voluntary; and that only those who are willing and ready to complete the research instruments should collect the questionnaires. There was no reward for participation in the study.

Design/Statistics

The study adopted a cross section correlational design. Pearson moment correlation analysis was used in analyzing data.

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary table of means on Gender Role Belief, Ethnic Identity and religious Commitment as correlates of Political Participation

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
GENDER ROLE BELIEF	280	95.00	60.00	155.00	115.85	26.49	701.73
ETHNIC EMBEDDEDNESS	280	23.00	12.00	35.00	17.68	5.10	25.96
RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT	280	30.00	11.00	41.00	21.50	5.85	34.27
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	280	66.00	16.00	82.00	34.43	18.57	344.83
AGE	280	36.00	28.00	63.00	44.83	9.04	81.74
Valid N (listwise)	280						

From table 1 above participants obtained a group mean of 115.85 with a standard deviation of 26.49 on gender role belief; ethnic embeddedness 17.68, SD = 5.10; religious commitment = 21.50, SD = 5.85 and political participation= 34.43, SD = 18.57. Also the age ranges of the participants were 28-63, with a mean age of 44.83 and standard deviation of 9.04.

Table 2: Zero order correlation coefficient Matrix showing Gender Role Belief, Ethnic Embeddedness and religious Commitment as correlates of Political Participation

	1	2	3	4	5
1 GENDER ROLE BELIEF	1				
2 ETHNIC IDENTITY	-.59**	1			
3 RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT	-.50**	.85**	1		
4 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	-.77**	.74**	.67**	1	
5 COEFFICIENT OF DETERMINANT (r^2)	.59	.55	.44		

**; $P < .01$, *; $P < .05$ Bold are relevant coefficient for research hypothesis

From table 2 above, the result shows that gender role belief significantly correlated negatively with political participation $r = -.77$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .59$. Based on the result above, the stated hypothesis which states that “gender role belief will significantly correlate with political participation” was accepted. From the table, the result shows that ethnic embeddedness significantly correlated positively with political participation $r = .74$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .55$. Based on the result, the stated hypothesis which states that “ethnic embeddedness will positively correlate with political participation” was accepted. Also the result shows that religious commitment significantly correlated positively with political participation $r = .67$, $P < .01$, $r^2 = .44$. Based on the result, the stated hypothesis which states that “religious commitment will significantly correlate with political participation” was accepted.

Discussion

The first aim of this study is to find out the relationship between gender role beliefs and political participation. The result showed that there was negative association between gender role beliefs and political participation among women. Gender stereotypes theory

emphasizes the importance of personal traits and beliefs. Basically, women are stereotyped to be compassionate and people-oriented which affect women’s beliefs, attitudes and later political identification. Because of gender stereotypes, women are perceived as being warm, compassionate. Their political commitments will focus on families as caregivers for family members, especially seniors and children.

The second aim of the study is to know how ethnic identity/embeddedness relates with political participation. The results indicate a positive relationship. However, it is observed in Nigeria that ethnic minorities participate more in non-institutionalized ways because it is not possible to influence local politics via voting. According to Lien (1994) acculturation increases participation; attachment to homeland culture does not necessarily discourage participation. Given the importance of ethnicity in structuring people’s identities, scholars have sought to incorporate ethnicity in their models of people’s political behavior. Studies focusing on individual support for group interests among ethnic minority members find that higher socioeconomic status generally leads

to a reduced emphasis on ethnicity in forming individual political opinions. However, this relationship is often considerably weaker among ethnic minorities with frequent experiences of discrimination, pessimistic assessments of equal opportunities in a country, and social pressures from group members to comply with group norms (Just, 2017). Research also shows that, in comparison to majority populations, members of ethnic minorities are generally less active in politics, more likely to use contentious forms of political action, and support left-wing political parties that promote minority interests. Key explanations of differences between ethnic minorities and majorities in Western democracies focus on the importance of individual and group resources as well as political empowerment via representation in policymaking institutions, usually enabled by higher shares of minority populations within electoral districts. The idea that ethnic identity structures people's political attitudes and behavior has roots in social identity theory. This theory stipulates that any group is defined in relation to other groups. In addition, the basic human need to assign order and meaning to the social environment encourages people to differentiate themselves into social groups even in situations where no real differences between groups exist (e.g., Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Once established, social categorization and perception of oneself as belonging to a certain group leads people to adopt the kind of behavior that favors in-group members and discriminates against out-group members. Ethnicity and race are not the only sources of social differentiation,

and their importance may vary across individuals and over time (e.g., Chandra, 2005; 2006). However, these features of individual identity play a considerable role in shaping people's political attitudes and behavior, particularly among minority members who are more likely to define themselves in terms of ethnicity than majority members (Birbir, 2007). People rely on ethnicity in making political decisions to enhance their cognitive efficiency. In Nigeria because of the nature of political system, only a few proportions give attention to or display interest while majority are indifferent, none opining and not interested. Most of them may participate only in election, lapsing into activity in believing in election mostly because of non-proper education of the people politically and also lack of critical information on political issues not reached to the people and therefore little or no interest in many issues. Only few proportion gives attention to or display interest while larger majority show apathy to political participation. Thus, majority of the citizenry are not effectively represented in terms of the contribution of their aspirations, demands, preference and orientations. For instance, one would believe that if people start writing on newspapers and commenting on radio asking their representatives like governors, senators, members of house and others what they are doing to and how are they representing them. It is importance to rate that there will be a change and the response to the people demand will be higher. Consequently, government may not be responsive to the preferences of the majority of the citizenry, particularly the poor disadvantaged lower social status and young women etc.

Although, public may tend to unduly favour the rich and the middle class (Daniel, 2015).

The third aim of this study is to find out if there will be a positive relationship between religious commitment and political participation. This was also confirmed. The gap between religiously committed and non-committed individuals is much greater at the local level. Becoming involved in religious organizations increases people's likelihood of being interested in the affairs and politics of their communities. According to this study, religious commitment not only increases political interest, but its influence is stronger in local politics. That the impact of religion on political interest varies between levels of government is exciting because religion's impact on local political behaviors has received little scholarly attention. Although the structure of this study cannot calculate the exact statistical significance of the difference between the impact religious commitment has on local and national political interest, it does offer strong support that religion has a stronger influence on political behaviors. While this study indicates that religious commitment stimulates political participation, further research of the impact of religion on other political behaviors at both the national and local levels should be conducted. Insight into the relationship between religion and local political behaviors will not only increase our understanding of political behavior but could also significantly alter how religion is used as an explanatory variable in the study of political behavior. Interestingly, the time of conducting this research coincided with voters' registration process in Nigeria where the citizenry is

advised to get their permanent voter's card. There were mostly awareness in several churches and mosques as the priests and imams held several talks and sermons advocating and encouraging their members as a matter of urgency to vote in the coming elections. Nigeria is a religious nation and her citizens are very committed religiously. Their clergy are revered and held in high esteem, therefore such disposition naturally will increase interest in political participation which previously were not discussed by religious groups and churches, thereby reducing interest in the political process by the believers.

Conclusion

Women Participation in Nigerian politics is an issue of great importance. Women have been put at the background politically for years; this has engendered a consciousness of women under-representation in public life. However, the intention of most women to participate in politics is basically to support their female folk, this is their substantive responsibility and it is even on this platform that most women emerge as public office holders successfully. They use the platform of women movement as a veritable platform to seize political power and consolidate the power on this same platform. Be as it may, there is an increase in women participation on these bases and women movements are promising in achieving gender equality and equity. Ethnicity influences the patterns of many people's political behavior. On average, those who belong to ethnic minorities tend to be less active in politics, prioritize more contentious action to express their policy demands, and support left-wing

political parties that are more committed to promoting their group interests. Civic and political participation are not influenced only by psychological and social factors. They are also influenced by macro level contextual factors. These factors include the characteristics of a country's demographic structure, electoral system, political institutions and processes, legal and human rights institutions and processes, associations and organisations, cultural practices, economy and recent history. These various factors between them create a set of political opportunity structures for the people living within a country, and these structures have a demonstrable impact on the civic engagement, political engagement, voting behaviour, other forms of conventional participation, non-conventional participation and civic participation of the people who live within that country's borders. The effect of religious literalist beliefs on political behavior is very different for men and women. Women tend to be more fanatical and committed to religious beliefs and are very literal about it. Such literalism reduces perceptions of gender-based inequality among men, there seems to be a connection between these beliefs and political participation. Interestingly, among women, acceptance of a literalist ideology culminates in fewer grievances linked to gender and less impetus for political participation. The asymmetric gender effects are consistent with system justification theory, which maintains that people are motivated to defend, bolster, and justify the status quo, even when doing so goes against their own self-interest and maintains their disadvantaged status. Theoretically, the study has contributed to the

advancement of knowledge about factors that influence women's participation in politics in Nigeria. The study also has practical significance by providing insights to policy makers concerned with gender equality in politics. It is hoped that the findings will be instrumental in the formulation of strategies that ensure gender balance in the political arena. The imperative of democratic consolidation in Nigeria requires that women, who constitute half of the national population, should find prominence in the mainstream political development of the nation since democracy is only achievable on the altar of popular participation of every citizen of the society, males and females alike. It is therefore conclusive that any corrective measure adopted to address the low participation of women in Nigerian politics will only be superficial unless the nation's socioeconomic, cultural and political factors that limit women empowerment are decisively addressed.

References

- Agbaje, A. (1999). Political Parties and Pressure Groups, in R. Anifowose, and F.Enemuo, (eds.) *Elements of Politics*, Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd,191-209.
- Anifowose R (2004). Women Political Participation in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects in Akinboye SO (ed.) (2004). *Paradox of Gender Equality in Nigerian Politics*. Concept Publication Limited Lagos.

- Lien, P. (1994). Ethnicity and political participation: A comparison between Asian and Mexican Americans. *Political Behaviour, 16*(2), 237–264.
- Birnir, J. K. (2007). *Ethnicity and electoral politics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Blais, A., Dobrzynska, A. (1998). Turnout in Electoral Democracies. *European Journal of Political Research 33*, 239-61.
- Chandra, K. (2005). Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability. *Perspectives on Politics, Vol 3*(2), 235-252.
- Chandra, K. (2006). What is ethnic identity and does it matter? *Annual Review of Political Science, 9*, 397–424.
- Deaux, K., & Kite, M. E. (1987). Thinking about gender. In B. B. Hess and M. M. Ferree (Eds.), *Analyzing gender: a handbook of social science research* (pp. 92-117). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Dalton, R.J., & Klingemann, H. (2007). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford University Press.
- Daniel, I.U (2015). Political Participation and Democratic Culture in Nigeria: A Case Study of Nigeria. *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal, 10* (1), 32-39.
- Franklin, M. (2002). The Dynamic of Electoral Participation. In L. LeDuc, R.G. Niemi, P. Norris (Eds.). *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*, pp. 148-168. London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Forbrig, J. (Ed.) (2005). *Revisiting Youth Political Participation*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Hill, P., & Hood, R. (1996). Advances in the conceptualization and measurement of religion and spirituality: Implications for physical and mental health research. *American Psychologist, 58*(1), 64–74
- Hill, P., & Pargament, K. (2008). Advances in the conceptualization and measurement of religion and spirituality: Implications for physical and mental health research. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 5*(1), 3-17.
- Joshi, S., & Kumari, S. (2011). Religious beliefs and mental health: An empirical review. *Delhi Psychiatry Journal, 14* (1), 40-50.
- Just, A. (2017). *Race, Ethnicity, and Political Behavior. Groups and Identities, Political Behavior*. Online Publication. Oxford University Press.
- Koenig, H., & Larson, D. (2001). Religion and mental health: Evidence for an association. *International Review of Psychiatry, 13*, 67–78.
- Kohut, A., John, C. G., Scott, K., & Robert, C. T. (2000). *The Diminishing Divide: Religion's Changing Role in American Politics*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press

- Kite M. E., & Whitley, B. E. Jr. (1996). Sex differences in attitudes toward homosexual persons, behavior and civil rights: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 336-353.
- Kite M. E., & Whitley, B. E. Jr. (1998). Do heterosexual women and men differ in their attitudes toward homosexuality? A conceptual and methodological analysis. In G. M. Herek (Ed.), *Stigma and Sexual Orientation: understanding prejudice against lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals* (pp. 39-61). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kumari, A., & Kidwai, I. (1999). *The Illusion of Power: The Woman's Vote*. New Delhi: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung.
- Lewu, M. A. Y. (2005). Women in Nigerian Politics. In Hassan A. Saliu (ed) *Nigeria Under Democratic Rule (1999 – 2003) Vol 2*. Ibadan: University Press plc.
- Miller, W., & Thoresen, C. (2003). Spirituality, religion, and health: An emerging field. *American Psychologist*, 58, 24-35.
- Moreno-Jiménez, M.P., Rodríguez, M.L.R, & Martín, M.V (2013). Construction and Validation of the Community and Socio-Political Participation Scale (SCAP). *Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 16 (e42), 1–8.
- Nwankwo, B.E. (2003). *Gender-role belief, social dominance orientation, authoritarianism and ambivalent sexist attitude towards men*. M.Sc thesis submitted to Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Okpu, U. (1985) *Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigeria: 1960-1965*. Stockholm: Libertrick Press
- Olu-Adeyemi, L. (2017). Nigeria's Ethnic Pluralism: a Challenge to Political Participation and Nation Building. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, 22, 8, 25–34.
- Park, C. (2007). Religiousness/spirituality and health: A meaning systems perspective. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 30, 319–328.
- Pateman C. (1970). *Participation and democracy theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Phinney, J. (1992). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A new scale for use with adolescents and young adults from diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 7, 156-176.
- Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E. (2010). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Spence, J.T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp J. (1973). A short version of the

- attitude toward women scale (AWS). *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, 2, 219-220.
- Suleiman, I. (2017). The role of women towards political participation in Nigeria. *American Economic & Social Review Vol. 1*,(1), 15-44.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Social identity and inter-group relations*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of inter-group relations* (pp.7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Nigeria
- Worthington, E. (1988). Understanding the values of religious clients: A model and its application to counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*,35, 166-174.
- Worthington, E., Wade, N., Hight, T., Ripley, J., McCullough, M., Berry, J., Bursley, K., & O'Connor, L. (2003). The Religious Commitment Inventory-10: Development, refinement, and validation of a brief scale for research and counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50 (1), 84-96.
- Zinnbauer, B., Pargament, K., Cole, B., Rye, M., Butter, E., Belavich, T., et al. (1997). Religion and spirituality: Unfuzzifying the fuzzy. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36 (4), 549-564.
- Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., & Delli, C. M. (2006). *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.