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Factors Affecting Women Participation in the Electoral Processes in Anambra State, Nigeria

Ajeroh, Chigozie Adaugo; Prof. Olayemi Akinwumi; & Prof. Andrew Zamani

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.
Corresponding Author: chigozieajeroh@gmail.com
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Abstract

Despite efforts by the government, civil society, and international partners to protect women's rights and increased awareness of the need to address gender-based political violence, significant violence against women persisted during elections in Anambra State, particularly in areas with fierce political competition. The main objective of the study was to identify the factors affecting women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State. The study was anchored on the structural conflict theory in order to understand the impediments to effective women political participation and peacebuilding. the study adopted descriptive research design involving survey research and historical research designs. The population of the study is1,466, comprising of the population of women groups (umuada) in Anambra North, women groups in Anambra South and women groups in Anambra Central Senatorial Districts; influential community leaders in Anambra North, influential community leaders in Anambra South and influential community leaders in Anambra Central Senatorial Districts; All Progressives Congress (APC) Secretariat, Awka; All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) Secretariat, Awka; Labour Party Secretariat, Awka; Anambra State House of Assembly, Anambra State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social development, and Independent National Electoral Commission, Awka. The sample size of this study is 400, gotten through the use of Rakesh sample size formula. Data were collected using 5-Point Likert Questionnaire, in-depth interview and secondary sources. Data from questionnaire involved administering 400 copies of questionnaire to the respondents on a face-to-face basis, while data from in-depth interview was collected from interview of 14 respondents selected from the target population on the basis of their depth of knowledge and experience on the issues

under study. Data from secondary sources were collected from journals and related internet materials. Data from questionnaire relating to the objectives of the study, were analysed using weighted mean. Data from in-depth interview were analysed using narrative-analytic technique, while data from secondary sources were analysed using relational-content analysis. Major finding of the study is that there are multidimensional factors hampering women participation in the electoral processes in Anambra State, including poverty, electoral violence, marginalization and cultural factors. It is recommended, among other things, that given the multidimensional factors that hamper women political participation in Anambra State, the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development should urgently sponsor a bill in the National Assembly seeking to implementation of 35% of women participation in politics in the country to improve the number of women that participate in electoral processes in all the States of the federation, especially Anambra State.

Keywords: Women, Women Participation, Election, Electoral Processes, Structural Conflict

Introduction

Research on democratic systems indicates that women who are elected to political office have a significant influence on legislation and improve the lives of women. Women are frequently more inclined to seek inclusive policies, address constituent issues, and advocate for good governance in the areas of family welfare, health, poverty alleviation, and community well-being. They are also more likely to work toward policy agreement (Dittmar et. al., 2018). Research equally indicates that when certain factors are met, women in parliament are more likely to cross party boundaries, sponsor legislation, and obtain funds for their people (Anzia & Berry, 2011). Furthermore, data from over 125 nations indicate a correlation between lower levels of corruption, increase in the level of peace in the electoral process, and the representation of women in government (Kumar Jha & Sarangi, 2018).

Though many scholars such as Ilodigwe & Uzoh (2024); Ugwu (2024), Ikonne (2020); Onalu & Nwafor (2020), among other, have written on women participation in politics and peacebuilding, their studies did not focus on the identification of the perception of women on political participation in Anambra State. This created gaps in this area of the study requiring further investigation and analysis.

Women in Anambra State participate in politics as party members and mobilisers even though they represent large number of voters in the State. From 29th May 1999 to 29th May 2023, the women in Anambra State have been left at the margins of the electoral process as voters in the State despite their pivotal role in ensuring peacebuilding in the electoral process. With the marginalization of women in the electoral process as only 1 woman has become a Governor and Deputy

Governor since 1999 to date in the State, election rigging and violence has largely characterized the electoral process in the State (Onuoha, 2023).

The degree of women's political representation since 1999 may have been significantly impacted by the ongoing violence against them in politics. According to the research, during the 1999 and 2011 elections, women only obtained 3%, 4%, 7%, and 4.1% participation in the national parliament, respectively (Agunbande, 2023). However, in the parliamentary elections held in 2015, 2019, and 2023, respectively, 6%, 4.5%, and 3.6% of seats were gained (Adamu, 2023). Women's performance in elected and appointed offices in Anambra State is less than 6.7%. This percentage representation is among the lowest in both Africa and the world. Recent research has connected political violence with women's political participation, especially in terms of how political violence prevents women from participating in politics (Ugwu, 2024).

About 52 Prevention of Violence Against Women (PVAW) incidents were recorded in Anambra state in the lead-up to the gubernatorial election in November 2021. Nevertheless, the decrease in women's involvement in the gubernatorial contest was attributed to violence against women, which included threats, hate speech, assault, extortion, intimidation, attempted murder, and psychological trauma. It is projected that women's fear of assault, intimidation, and death will cause them to cast fewer ballots in the country's 2023 elections (Samuel et. al., 2023). Though there was still a lot of violence overall, there were times when women's organizations and civil society organizations were better suited to stop these violent acts (Olsson, 2022), many women continued to suffer significant hazards despite the fact that these advancements were not consistent. The persistence of violence in spite of these efforts demonstrated how widespread gender inequality is and how hard it is to change deeply embedded political structures. Despite efforts by the government, civil society, and international partners to protect women's rights and increased awareness of the need to address gender-based political violence, significant violence against women persisted during elections in Anambra State, particularly in areas with fierce political competition (Ugwu, 2024).

It is thought that women's perspectives and values may improve and enrich peacebuilding in Anambra State. Nonetheless, it has been determined that women can play a crucial part in the process of peacebuilding, but this has not largely improved the level of peacebuilding in the Anambra State given the low number of women that have assumed political positions in the State. Nevertheless, with the way and manner women have participated in voting during from 1999 to 2023, efforts at enhancing peacebuilding, especially with respect to reduction in electoral violence, thuggery and rigging of election in Anambra State have continued to dwindle (Onuoha, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to interrogate the perception of women on political participation in Anambra State.

Conceptual Review

This chapter focuses on the examinations of the basic concepts in the paper including participation, political participation and electoral processes. The idea here is to situate the concepts within the context of the paper.

Concept of Participation

According to Fayomi & Adebayo (2018), participation is the sincere sense of belonging to something. In a democracy, one of the main ways to ensure or revoke permission and hold the ruling class accountable is through participation. Participation may also be seen as organized attempts made by individuals to impact public policy decisions; these efforts are meant to give previously excluded groups more power over resources and regulatory institutions. However, unlike the study by Awofeso & Odeyemi (2014), the study by Fayomi & Adebayo did not demonstrate how women participation in the electoral processes influences political engagement among electorates in Anambra State or demonstrate that political participation is a voluntary activity.

According to Awofeso & Odeyemi (2014), participating in politics allows citizens, particularly electorates, to notify public authorities about their preferences and concerns and to put pressure on them to act. Despite the fact that political engagement is essential to democracy, not everyone of Nigeria's eligible electorate exercises their right to do so. The percentage of Nigerians who do not vote in elections varies depending on the date, location, and conditions as well as the kind of voting. This is supported by the observation that some individuals in Nigeria who are of voting age, that is, have reached the age of eighteen, discuss politics more than they cast ballots or join political parties or assist with campaigns. Nevertheless, the foregoing did not cover the gender perspective to political participation, which is important in the understanding of the phenomenon of women participation in the electoral process in Anambra State.

Political Participation

Awofeso & Odeyemi (2014) observed that political participation refers to the altruistic endeavors undertaken by members of a community to choose their own laws and regulations, as well as to actively or passively engage in the formulation of public policies that affect them personally or as a whole. Political engagement seems to entail that an individual must freely engage in activities like campaigning, voting in elections, and competing for office in order to be classified as an active political participant. Participation levels include instruction, delegating authority, manipulation, and citizen control. However, the Awofeso & Odeyemi did not define political participation as something that may be influenced by women electorates or demonstrate how women participation in the electoral process can affect peacebuilding among electorates in Anambra State. Voting in elections, participating in referendums, becoming a member of a party, participating in trade union activities, and becoming a part of interest groups are all examples of political engagement, according to the author. This indicates a modest relationship between Kelly's (2019) & Paush's (2014) research on the identification of activities that highlight political engagement. This demonstrates that all Nigerians who cast ballots or take part in trade union activities, elections, referendums, or protests are politically engaged whether they are males or females. Nevertheless, unlike the research by Umezurike & Danfulani (2015), which is essential for a viable democracy in

Nigeria, Paush (2014)'s definition of political engagement did not address traditional and unconventional components of political involvement or participation.

Lastly, political engagement describes how eligible Nigerians participate in their nation's administration, either directly or indirectly. There are two categories of political participation: traditional and non-conventional. They claim that while unconventional political participation is related to public protests, civil disobedience, political disputes, community development, and strike actions, conventional political participation is concerned with involvement in political campaigns, public hearings, recalls, referendums, running for public office, and voting in elections (Umezurike & Danfulani, 2015). Considering the aforementioned, political participation is defined as the act of eligible women in Anambra State directly or indirectly, conventionally or unconventionally, influencing policy in their communities or in society at large through political campaigns, public hearings, election representation, formation of political groups, membership in civic organizations, influencing others to vote for a candidate, donning party badges, contacting elected officials, joining political parties, occupying buildings, and boycotting products.

Women Participation in the Electoral Processes

Before delving into the examination of the concept of women participation in electoral process, it is vital to understand the concept of election. Ugochukwu (2015) opined that elections in themselves also present rule of law challenges. For example, electoral management bodies are under obligation and are justly expected to apply the legal framework for elections in an even-handed manner to avoid the danger of being charged with bias or lack of independence; changes that can erode the credibility of the electoral process. Moreover, how elections are handled may be helpful in identifying weakness of the legal system within which they are held. In some jurisdictions, it is given that elections produce fair and just outcomes and that the results when declared would be acceptable to all, but an insignificant percentage of those who contested are usually satisfied with electoral outcomes, especially in Anambra State. This may not necessarily be the case in other areas. Post-electoral disputes and recriminations form critical part of Nigeria’s electoral realities. Often, several cases are filled after elections fraud and manipulation of votes. In those cases, all manners of breaches and short-comings are catalogued. It is not yet clear why this is so. Whether the complaints relate to incidences of electoral fraud and manipulation or an effect an unyielding character among political office seekers who find it difficult to swallow the bitter pill of electoral defeat is still nebulous. The unrelenting quest by politicians to reverse electoral returns through the judicial process makes it necessary to pay close attention to the election disputes resolution framework within the layer of electoral management mechanism. Though the foregoing is vital in the understanding of the electoral process, it did not cover participants in the electoral process and peacebuilding, which is vital in the understanding of women participation in the electoral process and its implications for peacebuilding in Anambra State.

Ume (2015) noted that participants in the electoral process should be aware of what mechanisms are available to resolve their grievances as part of political and voter education

activities prior to the elections. There has to be faith and belief that the election disputes resolution process is fair and allows equal access to all those aggrieved in the application of its procedures. The foregoing is important in the understanding of the nexus between electoral process and peacebuilding, which is needed in this study, but this is not largely helpful in the understanding of the meaning of women participation in the electoral process. Therefore, women participation in the electoral process is defined, in this study, as the process in which women choose their leaders through voting or contest for elections themselves in order to occupy political positions at the federal level of government, state level and local government level, with a view to ensuring post-election peace and harmony in Anambra State.

Empirical Review

With respect to the perception of women participation in politics, Ilodigwe & Uzoh (2024) appraised the impact of gender inequality and stereotypes on female participation in politics in Anambra State. Three goals served as the basis for this study, which drew its conclusions from the literature review. According to the study, the historical context in which women are viewed, socialization, media portrayal, institutional impediments, and cultural norms and beliefs are some of the factors that contribute to gender disparity and stereotypes against women in political involvement. This study also drew attention to the fact that preconceptions and gender inequality have resulted in low political engagement among women, so limiting their potential and unrealized contributions to social, cultural, and economic advancement. The study also showed that a number of strategies, such as grassroots activism, educational programs, and governmental intervention, may be employed to reduce preconceptions and female disparity, but this did not cover the factors that affect women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State, which is the focus of this study.

Ikonne (2020) examined the traditional methods of resolving conflicts, the degree to which western civilization has undermined these methods, the impact that the decline in the power of traditional conflict resolution agents has had on conflict resolution and social order, and the methods for bolstering traditional conflict resolution methods in order to improve social order in Ubakala. Data were generated using a variety of techniques. In addition to twenty-four (24) in-depth interviews (IDIs) conducted in Ubakala, a questionnaire was utilized to gather data from 504 respondents in the city. Simple percentages/distribution tables, charts, the chi-square statistic, ANOVA with SPSS 20.0, and content analyses were used to examine the data. According to the findings, the decline in the traditional agents of social order and conflict resolution, masquerade cults (Ekpo Unions), married first daughters (Umuada), traditional rulers/village heads (ndieze na ndinzenaozo), and age grades, has a significant negative impact on maintaining law and order, peacefully resolving cases of physical violence, abortion cases, and teenage pregnancies, respectively. Therefore, it was suggested that in order to improve community growth and security, as well as to strengthen the fabric of our communities, we should restore the changed social framework that is the foundation of our existence and revitalize and reinforce our republican character, but this did not cover the factors that affect women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State, which is the focus of this study.

Ugwu (2024) investigated political violence and women's participation by assessing the impact of the 2023 Nigerian elections on women political engagements. This study focused on the ways that these forms of violence, physical threats, intimidation, cyberbullying, and systematic disenfranchisement, affect women specifically, their involvement in the political process, and the tactics they used to get through the hostile political environment. The study's theoretical underpinning was the Feminist Security Studies (FSS) theory. Journal papers, newspaper publications, textbooks, social media reports, and election monitoring reports were among the secondary sources from which the study's data came. According to the study's findings, women's political involvement in the 2023 elections was significantly reduced by political violence. The study concluded with policy recommendations emphasizing the necessity of stronger legislative frameworks, more security, and better assistance to establish a more secure and welcoming electoral environment for women in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the study did not cover the factors that affect women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State.

Onalu & Nwafor (2020) examined factors responsible for women low participation in political leadership in Akwa South LGA of Anambra State focusing on practice considerations for Nigerian-based social workers. Data from respondents (N=574) was gathered via a questionnaire. To analyze the quantitative data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized, involving binary logistic regression and chi square analysis. The results indicated that women's engagement in political leadership and decision-making was influenced by their age (81.6%), financial position (69.5%), place of residence (58.0%), and degree of education (62.6%). It was concluded that leadership centers should be established in each LGA in the State, which will be in charge of instructing both men and women in leadership techniques, but this did not extend to the factors that affect women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State.

Osuchwkwu & Udeze (2015) studied promoting women's participation in conflict resolution in Nigeria through information accessibility focusing on Anambra State. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII) were used to sample thirty-five (35) women who were selected from the Umuada group, the women's wing of the town union, and the student union. It was found that women actively participate in a variety of community groups for their own well-being and the advancement of the community. Findings also showed that the tremendous hardship that women endure during times of conflict, as well as their inherent fortitude and ability to handle difficult situations. Results revealed how they employ advocacy and communication with religious leaders, elders, and other stakeholders to avoid confrontations, but this did not extend to the factors that affect women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State.

Theoretical Framework: Structural Conflict theory

Structural conflict theory is adopted in this study. Structural conflict theory has many variants, but this study adopted conflict theory by Marx Weber. The conflict theory by Marx Weber, a German sociologist is focused on the existence of multiple layers of conflict existing in all

societies. Marx Weber believes that conflicts arise as a result of the nature of the economic structure and social institutions. Marx Weber strand of structural conflict theory claims that conflicts in the society are connected to the issue of competition over scarce or limited resources, hence Weber agree with Karl Marx on the role scarcity of resources play in triggering conflict in different societies. Weber equally noted that in addition to economic inequalities as pointed out by Marx as the major cause of conflicts in the society, inequalities of power as well as the social structures in the societies are responsible for conflicts. Marx Weber is of the view that the diverse groups in the society are constantly affected or influenced on the basis of education, gender, and race. However, Weber was of the view that the way and manner people react to inequality is moderated by class differences and rates of social mobility. The foregoing is also reinforced by the perceptions of acceptability (legitimacy) of those in power by the people. Marx Weber equally believes that the power of religion is crucial in transforming classes into status groups, and has the same impact on territorial communities which are under particular circumstances that make legitimacy a central focus for efforts at domination of one group by another group. Marx Weber equally believes that conflicts transcend the beliefs of Karl Marx because some forms of social interactions such as beliefs and solidarity between individuals and groups within a given society can neutralise conflicts. In this manner, the reaction of an individual to inequality might differ from one person to another depending largely on the groups in which they belong whether they bestow legitimacy on those in power or not (Robinhood, 2020).

According to Brown (2019), just like Karl Marx, Marx Weber started his theory of conflict by raising questions that led to his acceptance of the fact that all classes are economic in character and origin. However, Weber noted that stratification is beyond economically determined positions. A very crucial assumption of the conflict theory by Marx Weber is that human relationships as well as social structures experience inequalities of power. In this manner, groups as well as individuals essentially develop more power and reward than others. In view of the foregoing, those groups as well as individuals that benefit from a particular structure of the society tend to work in order to maintain and perpetuate those structures as a veritable means of retaining and enhancing their power.

Strength and weaknesses of the Theory to the Study

Structural conflict theory by Marx Weber is relevant to this study the because it helps our understanding of the fact that the inability of some individuals, especially the bourgeoisie class who are stakeholders in the electoral process in Anambra State including those elected or appointed into public offices in the state is responsible for the challenges confronting the realisation of peacebuilding in the State. The strength of the conflict theory to this study further lies in the fact that poverty, inequality, economic exploitation, help our understanding of the increase in the spate of electoral violence, vote-buying as well as the difficulty encountered by women in participation in the electoral process in Anambra State. Nevertheless, structural conflict theory is weak in explaining cultural factors that hamper women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State.

Research Methodology

The population of the study is1,466, comprising of the population of women groups (umuada) in Anambra North, women groups in Anambra South and women groups in Anambra Central Senatorial Districts; influential community leaders in Anambra North, influential community leaders in Anambra South and influential community leaders in Anambra Central Senatorial Districts; All Progressives Congress (APC) Secretariat, Awka; All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) Secretariat, Awka; Labour Party Secretariat, Awka; Anambra State House of Assembly, Anambra State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social development, and Independent National Electoral Commission, Awka. The sample size of this study is 400, gotten through the use of Rakesh sample size formula. Data were collected using 5-Point Likert Questionnaire, in-depth interview and secondary sources. Data from questionnaire involved administering 400 copies of questionnaire to the respondents on a face-to-face basis, while data from in-depth interview was collected from interview of 14 respondents selected from the target population on the basis of their depth of knowledge and experience on the issues under study. Data from secondary sources were collected from journals and related internet materials.

Data from questionnaire, relating to personal data of the respondents, were analysed using absolute frequencies, percentages, while data from questionnaire, relating to the objectives of the study, were analysed using weighted mean. Weighted average = $\frac{\text{Sum of Products}}{\text{Number of Respondents}} = \frac{\sum fw}{\sum f}$. The decision rule is that weighted average value from 1.00 to 2.49 is unagreeable, while weighted average value ranging from 2.50 to 3.49 is considered as neutral. Also, weighted average value ranging from 3.50 to 5.00 is agreeable (Jatau, 2019). Data from in-depth interview were analysed using narrative-analytic technique, while data from secondary sources were analysed using relational-content analysis.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Data on the factors affecting women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State are presented as follows:

Table 1: Impact of Poverty on Number of Women Disenfranchised from Political Participation in Anambra State

Responses	Anambra North (F)	Anambra South (F)	Anambra Central (F)	W	W × F (Anambra North)	W × F (Anambra South)	W × F (Anambra Central)
Strongly agree	57	48	27	5	285	240	135
Agree	51	52	78	4	204	208	312
Undecided	15	7	3	3	45	21	9
Disagree	8	6	3	2	16	12	6
Strongly disagree	5	9	6	1	5	9	6
Total	136	122	117	15	555	490	468
Weighted mean= sum of products/number of respondents					4.08	4.02	4.00

Source: Field survey (February, 2025) SA= strongly agree, A= agree, U=undecided, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree

Findings from Table 1 show that with weighted mean of 4.08, 4.04 and 4.00, poverty increases the number of women disenfranchised from political participation in Anambra North, Anambra South than in Anambra central. This further shows that the more the number of the more the number of women that are poor and economically-disempowered, there more there is increase in the number of women disenfranchised from political participation, which may also increase the level of political violence in Anambra State.

Table 2: Impact of Marginalization on Women Political Participation in Anambra State

Responses	Anambra North (F)	Anambra South (F)	Anambra Central (F)	W	Anambra North W × F	Anambra South W × F	Anambra Central W× F
Strongly agree	40	61	45	5	200	305	225
Agree	73	34	51	4	292	136	204
Undecided	9	10	5	3	27	30	15
Disagree	12	16	9	2	24	32	18
Strongly disagree	2	1	7	1	2	1	1
Total	136	122	117	15	545	504	463
Weighted mean = sum of products/number of respondents					4.01	4.13	3.96

Source: Field survey (February, 2025) SA= strongly agree, A= agree, U=undecided, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree

Findings from Table 2 show that with weighted mean of 4.13, 4.01 and 3.96, marginalization of women reduces the number of women that contest for elective positions in Anambra South, Anambra North and Anambra central of Anambra State respectively. The implication for the finding is increase in the number of women that actively participate in politics in the Anambra North, Anambra South and Anambra Central Senatorial Districts requires reduction in the level of marginalization of women in the electoral processes in the State.

Table 3: Impact of Electoral Violence on Number of Women that Vote in Anambra State

Responses	Anambra North (F)	Anambra South (F)	Anambra Central (F)	W	W × F (Anambra North)	W × F (Anambra South)	W × F (Anambra Central)
Strongly agree	39	34	30	5	195	170	150
Agree	67	59	51	4	276	236	204
Undecided	10	9	3	3	30	27	9

Responses	Anambra North (F)	Anambra South (F)	Anambra Central (F)	W	W × F (Anambra North)	W × F (Anambra South)	W × F (Anambra Central)
Disagree	12	10	4	2	24	20	8
Strongly disagree	8	10	29	1	8	10	29
Total	136	122	117	15	533	463	400
Weighted mean = sum of products/number of respondents					3.92	3.80	3.42

Source: Field survey (February, 2025) SA= strongly agree, A= agree, U=undecided, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree

Findings from Table 3 show that with weighted mean of 3.92, 3.80 and 3.42, electoral violence reduces the number of women that actively participate in voting in Anambra North and Anambra South more than it does in Anambra Central. The implication for the finding is that the more the increase in the number of women that experienced violence during elections, the more there is reduction in the number of women that actively participate in the electoral processes and the more there is election rigging in Anambra State.

Table 4: Impact of Lack of political Awareness among women on the Political Participation in Anambra State

Responses	Anambra North (F)	Anambra South (F)	Anambra Central (F)	W	W × F (Anambra North)	W × F (Anambra South)	W × F (Anambra Central)
Strongly agree	66	53	46	5	330	265	230
Agree	42	42	56	4	168	168	224
Undecided	8	10	4	3	24	30	12
Disagree	11	12	6	2	22	24	12
Strongly disagree	9	5	5	1	9	5	5
Total	136	122	117	15	553	492	483
Weighted mean = sum of products/number of respondents					4.07	4.03	4.13

Source: Field survey (February, 2025) SA= strongly agree, A= agree, U=undecided, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree

Findings from Table 4 show that with weighted mean of 4.13, 4.07 and 4.03, there is lack of adequate awareness among women and this hamper their political participation in Anambra State in all Senatorial Districts of Anambra State. The implication for the finding is that the more the increase in the number of women that are politically-aware in Anambra State, the more there is increase in the level of democratic consolidation in the State.

Table 5: Effect of Godfatherism on Women Political Participation in Anambra State

Responses	Anambra North (F)	Anambra South (F)	Anambra Central (F)	W	W × F (Anambra North)	W × F (Anambra South)	W × F (Anambra Central)
Strongly agree	52	54	70	5	260	270	350
Agree	51	43	31	4	204	172	124
Undecided	4	4	3	3	12	12	9
Disagree	19	15	8	2	38	30	16
Strongly disagree	10	6	5	1	10	6	5
Total	136	122	117	15	524	490	504
Weighted mean = sum of products/number of respondents					3.85	4.02	4.31

Source: Field survey (February, 2025) SA= strongly agree, A= agree, U=undecided, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree

Findings from Table 5 show that with weighted mean of 4.31, 4.02 and 3.85, godfatherism hamper effective women political participation more in Anambra South and Anambra Central respectively than it is in Anambra North. This shows that the level of undue influence by wealthy individuals on who emerges as a political party's flag bearers is high in Anambra State. The implication for the finding is that the lower the influence of god-fathers, the more the level of women participation in politics and the more the level of peacebuilding in Anambra State.

When the respondents were asked to identify and examine the factors that affect women political participation in Anambra State from 2015 to 2023 by the researcher, majority of in-depth-interview participants noted that given that women are the most vulnerable when election violence occurs, the level of participation in politics in Anambra State is minimal. Even with the large number of women who registered to vote, fear of attacks make many of them to develop political apathy. Women suffer from cultural factors such as roles assigned to them as women in Igbo society. Fixing [political meetings at night equally reduce the level of women participation in electoral process in Anambra State (Field survey, February 2025).

Findings from questionnaire on the perception of women on political participation in Anambra State showed that with weighted mean of 4.08, 4.04 and 4.00, poverty increases the number of women disenfranchised from political participation in Anambra North, Anambra South than in Anambra central. Also, with weighted mean of 4.13, 4.01 and 3.96, marginalization of women reduces the number of women that contest for elective positions in Anambra South, Anambra North and Anambra central of Anambra State respectively. With weighted mean of 3.92, 3.80 and 3.42, electoral violence reduces the number of women that actively participate in voting in Anambra North and Anambra South more than it does in Anambra Central. In addition, with weighted mean of 4.13, 4.07 and 4.03, there is lack of adequate awareness among women and this hamper their political participation in Anambra State in all Senatorial

Districts of Anambra State. Finally, with weighted mean of 4.31, 4.02 and 3.85, godfatherism hamper effective women political participation more in Anambra South and Anambra Central respectively than it is in Anambra North. Findings from in-depth interview showed that fear or attacks and cultural limitations are among the factors that limit women active participation in the electoral process in Anambra State.

Findings from previous studies on the factors that affect women participation in electoral processes from our questionnaire and in-depth interview are slightly related to the findings of this study in terms of variables studied, but differ largely from it in terms of depth of issues covered. Findings by Ilodigwe & Uzoh (2024) drew attention to the fact that preconceptions and gender inequality have resulted in low political engagement among women, so limiting their potential and unrealized contributions to social, cultural, and economic advancement, which is slightly related to the findings of this study. Ugwu (2024) showed that women's political involvement in the 2023 elections was significantly reduced by political violence, which is largely related to the findings of this study. Findings by Onalu & Nwafor (2020) indicated that women's engagement in political leadership and decision-making was influenced by their age (81.6%), financial position (69.5%), place of residence (58.0%), and degree of education (62.6%), which is different from the findings of this study. Findings by Osuchwkwu & Udeze (2015) showed that women actively participate in a variety of community groups for their own well-being and the advancement of the community. Therefore, based on the findings from questionnaire and in-depth interview, our research proposition we accept that there are multidimensional factors that hamper women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to interrogate the factors affecting women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State from 2015 to 2023. The study raised question: What are the factors affecting women participation in electoral processes in Anambra State? Findings led to the acceptance that there are multidimensional factors hampering women participation in the electoral processes in Anambra State, including poverty, electoral violence, marginalization and cultural factors. In view of the foregoing, it is concluded that unless the cultural, economic and political impediments to women political participation are adequately mitigated, electoral violence would continue to characterize the electoral processes in Anambra State.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion from this study, it is recommended that:

Given the multidimensional factors that hamper women political participation in Anambra State, the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development should urgently sponsor a bill in the National Assembly seeking to implementation of 35% of women participation in politics in the country to improve the

number of women that participate in electoral processes in all the States of the federation, especially Anambra State.

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