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## **Socio-demographic Predictors of Political Participation among Women in Nigeria: Insights from Afrobarometer 2015 Data**

By Emeka Eugene Dim<sup>1</sup> and Joseph Yaw Asomah<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

Despite the important role that women generally play in development processes, they are disproportionately underrepresented in politics and leadership positions compared to men, as exemplified in the case of Nigeria. Using the Afrobarometer data of 2015, this study seeks to examine the socio-economic factors that predict women's political participation in Nigeria. The study shows that education, religion, place of residence, party affiliation, and geo-political zone predict political participation. Based on the beta values generated from the multivariate linear regression analysis, post-secondary education, South-Eastern geo-political zone, and party affiliation are the most significant predictors of women's political participation. The study particularly points to the impact of education, and the encouragement of women to become affiliated with political parties to make more influence in the Nigerian polity.

*Keywords:* Political Participation, Afrobarometer Data, and Women in Politics.

### **Introduction**

The importance of women's active political participation within democratic political contexts cannot be over-emphasized. Women's political participation typically ensures transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness of the political system at all levels of government in the general interests of collectivity (Kasa, 2015; Kasamo, 2012; National Democratic Institute, 2016; UN, n.d.; USAID, 2016). Research evidence, for instance, demonstrates that "women in politics raise issues that others overlook, pass bills that others oppose, invest in projects others dismiss and seek to end abuses that others ignore" (National Democratic Institute, 2016, p. 1). In particular, it enables women to address problems, including discriminatory laws, confronting them in society, as they can best articulate their needs and mobilize necessary political resources to meet those needs if they are reasonably represented in politics and decision-making processes generally (Kasa, 2015; UN, n.d.).

Despite this growing body of evidence showing the need for an increase in women's involvement in politics, women continue to lag behind men regarding political representation in both developed and developing countries alike, although this situation varies from one context to another (Inter-Parliament Union, 2017; National Democratic Institute, 2016; UN, n.d.). While women represent more than half of the world's population (Kasa, 2015), their representation in

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politics is below thirty percent globally, despite the improvement in women's political participation in the last two decades (National Democratic Institute, 2016, p. 1). As at June 2017, the world's average female representation in the legislature, for instance, is 23.3% based on seats held. In Sub-Saharan Africa, female representation in the legislative arm of government is 23.6% (Inter-Parliament Union, 2017).

In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, it was expected that the embrace of liberal democratization processes in most countries, including Nigeria, would open up more avenues for an increased women's political participation to fight for their interests. The representation of women in the government, in contrast, has been less impressive in the sub-Saharan African countries that have adopted a democratic political system. Knowing the determinants of women participation in politics can potentially be useful for a tailored action to help increase women's political involvement. Meanwhile, there is a paucity of consistent quantitative research, especially focusing on the predictors of women's political participation in the case of Nigeria.

Using Afrobarometer 2015 data, this paper investigates the predictors of women's participation in the Nigerian context. Nigeria is one of the countries with the lowest women's political participation. Based on membership in the legislature, for instance, the average female representation is 5.8%. Also, the current administration has only six women as ministers of states compared to thirty-one men who are ministers (Nagarajan, 2015). This poor representation of women is arguably in sharp contrast to the pre-colonial era when women were comparatively more involved in the traditional political system. Women's active engagement in local politics, for instance, enabled them to challenge indigenous leaders and played a pivotal role in Nigeria's resistance to colonialism (Fatile, et al. 2017). Women's participation in Nigerian politics, for example, can be useful for raising and addressing issues of high infant and maternal mortalities, domestic violence, child marriage, and child labour confronting Nigerian women and girls (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2017; UN Women, 2011).

Nigerian women's low participation in politics, both at the voting and elective positional levels, is not without its attendant consequences. Several issues that affect women and children tend to be ignored in a Nigerian Parliament that is dominated by men who rarely address women's issues. Infant mortality in Nigeria is the tenth highest in the world (i.e. 71.2 per 1,000 as at 2016) (CIA, 2017). Nigeria has a female literacy rate of 49.7% as of 2015, a maternal mortality rate of 8.1 deaths in 1000 births as of 2016, 1 in 29 women faced a lifetime risk of maternal death (as at 2010), and the school life expectancy was 8 years for females (UNICEF, 2010; CIA, 2017). 25.3% of girls are engaged in child labour, 19.6% of females will be married by the age of 15, and 39% will be married by the age of 18, and 17% of girls aged less than 14 years have experienced female genital mutilation (UNICEF, 2013; NPC and ICF International, 2014). Additionally, about 3 in 10 women have experienced physical violence from their husband or partner, 1 in 10 married women (11%), have experienced physical violence in the past 12 months from their husband or partner, 7% of Nigerian women from age 15 to 49 have ever experienced sexual violence, while 5% of Nigerian women have been subjected to physical violence while pregnant (NPC and ICF International, 2014). Through women's political participation, these substantive issues that affect women in Nigeria, which often tend to be ignored or not attended to, would be revived with the appropriate tenor needed to address them. According to Michelle Bachelet, the UN Women Executive Director, "countries with more women in parliament tend to have more equitable laws and social programmes and budgets that benefit women and children and families" (UN Women, 2011). Women's participation in Nigerian politics can be useful in raising issues of infant mortality, maternal health, domestic violence laws, girl-child education, child marriage laws, child

labour laws, among other relevant social issues into the core discussion and narrative of the Nigerian legislature and society, in general.

Uncovering the significant predictors of women's political participation may help inform and drive the appropriate measures necessary to boost women's political involvement in Nigeria for the common good. Employing gender—which is underpinned by patriarchy—as a conceptual framework, and multivariate linear regression analysis, this paper seeks to answer this research question: What factors generally predict women's political participation in Nigeria? Although political participation takes different forms, including voting and contesting in elections (Cassese and Holman, 2016), this paper uses requesting for government action, contacting the media and government officials, as well as attending a demonstration or protest about public issues as measures of the dependent variable. On the other hand, based on the conceptual framework and the existing literature (Arceneaux, 2001; Cassese and Holman, 2016; Karl, 2001; Kasa, 2015; Kasomo, 2012; Lee, 1976), independent variables in this paper include education, party affiliation, religion, geo-political context, place of residence, rural and urban locations, and employment.

### **Conceptual Framework**

While sex revolves around biological differences between males and females, gender entails socially and culturally constructed distinct roles, attributes, and identities with varying implications for both females and males (Arceneaux 2001; Karl, 2001; Kasomo, 2012; Kittilson, 2016.; Lee, 1976; Leigh, n.d.; UN, n.d.). Gender typically defines the expectations of both males and females, and what each category can and cannot do based on cultural and religious values, which often inform formal legislative instruments considered discriminatory against female counterparts. According to Kasomo (2012, p. 57), “Gender is not only about roles but also about relations. What people say women are or men are or shall do, is related to the question of who set the rules and for what functions”. In most countries today, men have continued to dominate the political sphere and often set the rules of the game—laws, regulations, decrees, and policies – to better advance their interests compared to that of women. It may be recalled that women initially struggled to secure voting rights and the rights to run for political office whereas their male counterparts did not face any such restrictions in most places, including Athens where the concept and the practice of democracy originally emerged (Kasa, 2015).

An interaction of women's personal characteristics (including limited financial resources and education), deliberate discriminatory constitutional and institutional factors, and socio-cultural and religious beliefs hamper women's political participation (Arceneaux 2001; Karl, 2001; Kasomo, 2012; Kittilson, 2016; Lee, 1976; Leigh, n.d.; UN, n.d). The personal and attitudinal obstacles to political participation, such as women's limited self-confidence and low motivation for leadership positions (Arceneaux, 2001; Kasomo, 2012), may well be a function of the interaction of socio-cultural, religious, and institutional impediments. According to Arceneaux (2001), negative gender role attitudes against women affect their decision not to contest in elections based on the stereotype that it is inappropriate for them to do so. As Hill (1981, p. 160), for instance, observes, “Americans are socialized to believe that politics is men's work and not an appropriate pursuit for women.”

Socio-cultural and religious beliefs and values—which often inform formal legal and institutional frameworks—reportedly constitute the major obstacle to women's political participation (Kasomo, 2012). Traditional conservative ideas that suggest men should lead while women follow constrain women's political participation (Welch and Studlar, 1996.). In societies

in which patriarchal values are dominant, men tend to control the political sphere and enact laws that often serve their interests at the expense of women, as exemplified by Nigeria (Akpan, 2015; Kasa, 2015; Kasomo, 2012; Oluyemi, 2015; UN, n.d.). Kasa (2015) argues that patriarchy, which is the normalizing ideology, continues to define distinct roles for men and women in such a way that it favours men as usual. For instance, men are regarded as the heads and breadwinners of their families and can unilaterally make decisions for their families. The family plays a critical role in ensuring the continuity of keeping women in subordination through socialization of females to accept the superiority of males as natural truth.

In many sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria, gender often prescribes who get educated if family resources are limited, who gets employed and for what, who gets considered for inheriting family resources, and who gets appointed or elected for certain key positions. Kasa (2015), for instance, observes that women are poorer, less educated, and more excluded from positions of authority supported by the discriminatory legal framework and patriarchal socio-cultural values and beliefs to keep women in subordinate roles. In the Nigerian context, socio-cultural and religious patriarchal values, childbearing, limited financial resources, restricted access to powerful political networks, and the typical use of political thuggery impede women's political participation (Nnaji, 2009; Fatile, et al. 2012; Ogbogu, 2012; Samuel & Segun, 2012; Falada, 2014; Olufuunke, 2014; Fatile, et al., 2017). Nevertheless, a quantitative research that concentrates on the predictors of women's political participation is virtually absent. This paper intends to contribute to filling this gap.

Based on insights from the conceptual framework and the empirical literature (Cassese and Holman, 2016; Hill, 1981; Karl, 2001; Kasomo, 2012; Lee, 1976; Leigh, n.d.), this paper focuses on education, party affiliation, employment, religious affiliation, place of residence, rural and urban areas, and geo-political context as independent variables. Leigh (n.d.), for instance, finds that religion, education, population size, and Protestantism are significant predictors of women's political representation. Of all these variables, Leigh (n.d) finds that education is by far the most significant predictor of women's political representation, given that education can change the negative socio-cultural and political orientations about women's place and leadership abilities in society. It can also help women to gain the relevant knowledge for the pursuit of their political interests. Similarly, Karl (2001) shows that education, employment and remuneration, and religious and cultural beliefs are significant predictors of women's political representation.

On the other hand, the effects of geo-political context, place of residence, rural and urban locations, and party affiliation are mixed (Karl, 2001; Leigh, n.d.; UN, n.d.). Leigh (n.d.), for instances, finds that party affiliation is no longer a determinant of women's political participation in contrast to other findings by Kittilson (2016). Political affiliation can open doors to political connections and resources, including training and financial, to boost women's political participation, particularly when their party is in power. Moreover, Leigh (n.d.) observes that there is no relationship between urbanization and women's political participation. Leigh (n.d.), however, observes that geographical locations are significant predictors of women's representation.

In addition, discrimination against women feeds into the economic realm where women are often consigned to low-paid jobs and mostly dependent on their husbands to survive in the end. Women's limited access to financial resources impedes their political participation. Research evidence indicates that financial constraints are one of the major obstacles to women's political participation (Kasa, 2015, UN, n.d.). Employment is useful for getting professional experience, developing a network, growing self-confidence, and earning and saving money on their own,

which can be used for the purpose of running for a political office. Employment is, therefore, a significant predictor of women's political participation.

Also, religious affiliation is an important predictor of women's political participation. Although religiosity or religious attendance generally increases political participation among men and women, it impacts each category differently. Voter turnout, for example, is higher among religious women than men while religious men tend to be more involved in politics than their female counterparts (Cassese and Holman, 2016).

This paper hypothesizes that education, employment, party affiliation, place of residence, geographical zone, and religious affiliation are significant predictive variables of women's political participation. It suggests that these independent variables shaped by the socio-cultural and structural factors are more likely to translate into either opportunity for increasing women's political representation, or sources of women's political underrepresentation. In this paper, party affiliation is a measure of an encouragement of women's involvement and their acceptance in the political life of Nigeria. Education can be a measure of women's preparation for the public sphere, including political representation, outside of the private sphere (i.e. household), and willingness to reverse the negative stereotypes about women's place and role in the Nigerian society. Gainful employment is used as an indicator of female empowerment, including financial independence from men. Geographical locations—a place of residence, and rural and urban settings—typically define the extent of the willingness of Nigerian society to accept liberal positions about women's roles and leadership abilities. The type of religious affiliation, such as Christianity or Islam, is a measure of whether the adherents hold conservative or liberal views towards male and female roles, and for that matter, political participation. Religious affiliations with less conservative attitudes are more likely to be associated with a high level of women's political participation.

## **Methods**

### *Participants and Procedure*

This study used the Afrobarometer surveys which are nationally representative probability samples representing adult Nigerians (i.e. 18 and above). The data was collected from the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2014 to the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2015. The margin of error for the data collection was +/- 2 at 95% confidence level. The response rate for the study was 69.5%. The survey involved a clustered, stratified, and multi-stage area probability sample to pick respondents across the different primary sampling units across the country. The sampling frame used for the survey was the 2006 population and Housing Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Data was collected on various issues ranging from socio-cultural to political opinions and behaviours, through which the analysis of this study was possible. The fieldwork was conducted by Practical Sampling International. Only female respondents in the Afrobarometer data of 2015 were analyzed in this study.

### *Measures*

The outcome variable for this study is political participation, which was measured using several questions. Respondents were asked: *Have you done any of these things during the past year: Join others in your community to request action from the government? Contact the media? Contact a government official for help? Attend a demonstration or a protest march?* Responses included: "No = 0", "No, but would do if had the chance = 1", "Yes, once or twice = 2", "Yes, several times = 3", and "Yes, often = 4". Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to create a

scale for political participation. The analysis from the EFA showed that the four questions representing respondent's political participation tapped into a single underlying latent construct as the factor scores were extracted for analysis. The Kaiser Meyer Okin (KMO) score for this construct was 0.80. Positive values on the political participation scale indicate higher levels of participation while negative values indicate lower levels of political participation.

The main independent variables for this study include education, employment (occupation), party affiliation, place of residence, geographical zone, age, and religious affiliation, which were drawn from the 2015 Afrobarometer data (Round 5). These predictive variables were coded as follows: age, occupation (*Unemployed* = 0, *Self-employed* = 1, *Privately employed* = 2, *Government employed* = 3), educational attainment (0 = *No/informal school*, 1 = *Primary Education*, 2 = *Secondary Education*, 3 = *Post-secondary Education*, 4 = *University Education*), place of residence (1 = *Urban*, 2 = *Rural*), and religion (0 = *Muslim*, 1 = *Christian*). Variables like geopolitical zone (1 = *North Central*, 2 = *North East*, 3 = *North West*, 4 = *South East*, 5 = *South South*, 6 = *South West*), and political affiliation, i.e. attachment to a political party, (0 = *Non-partisan*, 1 = *Party affiliated*).

### *Data Analysis*

Descriptive frequency distributions were used to present the independent and outcome variables. Bivariate linear regression was used to ascertain the association between the socio-demographic variables, control variables, and political participation. The independent variables found to be associated with political participation at the bivariate level were used to achieve the multivariate regression model. Multivariate linear regression was used to examine the predictors of political participation. The beta values were generated from the multivariate linear regression to show the variables that have the highest impact on political participation. Personal weights ('withinwt') were used for all personal-level estimates, while sampling weights (pweights) were applied to regression analysis. STATA version 11 was used as the statistical software for the data analysis.

### **Results**

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of the various independent and outcome variables of the study. Most of the respondents (53%) were self-employed, about 34% were unemployed while about 13% of the respondents were privately or government employed. For educational attainment, most of the respondents (51%) had attained secondary education, 17% have attained a primary education, 17.5% have attained a post-secondary education, 9.9% have no or informal education, and 4.5% have attained a university education. About 56% of the women were rural dwellers and 44% were urban dwellers. 61.5% of the respondents were Christians and 38.5% were Muslims. In terms of geo-political zone, more respondents were gathered from the North-West and South-West of Nigeria (22% each). 14% of the respondents were from the North-Central, 13% were from the North-East, 13% were from the South-East, and 16% were from the South-South. 34% of the women were not partisan while 66% were affiliated with a political party.

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of independent and dependent variables**

Variables	N	Percent	Variables	N	Percent
<b>Socio-demographic variables</b>					
<b>Occupation</b>			<b>Educational attainment</b>		
Not employed	408	34.46	No/Informal	118	9.86
Self-employed	622	52.53	Primary	204	17.04
Privately employed	113	9.54	Secondary	612	51.13
Government employed	41	3.46	Post-secondary	209	17.46
			University	54	4.51
<b>Place of residence</b>			<b>Religion</b>		
Urban	526	43.91	Muslim	916	38.50
Rural	672	56.09	Christian	1,463	61.50
<b>Mean Age = 30.44; Range 18 - 87 years</b>					
<b>Control variables</b>					
<b>Geo-political zones</b>			<b>Political affiliation</b>		
North Central	172	14.36	Non-partisan	402	34.04
North East	153	12.77	Partisan	779	65.96
North West	268	22.37			
South East	152	12.69			
South South	188	15.69			
South West	265	22.12			

\* N = Population in Thousands

Table 2 below shows the bivariate relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The results reveal that variables like age, education, religion, occupation, place of residence, political affiliation, and geo-political zones have an association with women's political participation. Age was positively associated with political participation; older women participated more politically than younger ones. Women with a primary education and post-secondary education participated more in politics than women with no or formal education. Christian women participated more in politics than Muslims. Self-employed and privately-employed women participated more in politics than unemployed women. Women living in rural areas participated in politics more than women that live in urban areas. Women who had a political affiliation participated in politics more than women who do not have a political affiliation. Women who live in North-West, North-East, South-East, and South-West participated less in politics than women in the North-Central.



**Table 2: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis independent and dependent variables**

Variables	b[s]	CI Lower	CI Upper
<b><u>Socio-demographic variables</u></b>			
<b>Age</b>	0.006 [0.003] *	0.000	0.012
<b>Education</b>			
No/informal school (RC)			
Primary education	0.261 [0.123] *	0.012	0.502
Secondary education	0.199 [0.108]	-0.013	0.056
Post-secondary	0.341 [0.123] **	0.100	0.582
University degree	0.214 [0.158]	-0.095	0.523
<b>Religion</b>			
Muslim (RC)			
Christian	0.186 [0.059] **	0.071	0.301
<b>Occupation</b>			
Not employed (RC)			
Self-employed	0.171 [0.059] **	0.055	0.287
Privately employed	0.284 [0.112] *	0.064	0.504
Government employed	0.262 [0.185]	-0.102	0.625
<b>Place of residence</b>			
Urban (RC)			
Rural	0.163 [0.056] **	0.053	0.272
<b><u>Control variables</u></b>			
<b>Party affiliation</b>			
Non-partisan (RC)			
Partisan	0.234 [0.057] ***	0.122	0.346
<b>Geo-political Zone</b>			
North Central (RC)			
North East	-0.317 [0.110] **	-0.533	-0.101
North West	-0.365 [0.101] ***	-0.564	-0.167
South East	-0.406 [0.103] ***	-0.607	-0.204
South South	-0.175 [0.103]	-0.380	0.031
South West	-0.304 [0.094] **	-0.488	-0.119
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 <b>CI</b> = Confidence Interval			
b - coefficient                      s - standard deviation			

Table 3 below presents the multivariate linear regression analysis of the socio-demographic variables, control variables (party affiliation and geo-political zone) and political participation in two models (i.e. Model 1 and Model 2). Model 1 is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and it explains 4.4% of the variations in political participation. Educational status, religion, occupation, and place of residence were associated with political participation. For education, women with a post-secondary education were more likely to participate in politics than women with no formal or informal education. Christian women were more likely to participate in politics than Muslim women. Also, self-employed women were more likely to participate in politics than unemployed

women. Women dwelling in rural areas were more likely to participate in politics than women dwelling in rural areas. Using the beta values, post-secondary education (0.152) and rural dwelling (0.125) were the most significant predictors of political participation.

Model 2 is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and it explains 7.8% of the variations in political participation. Model 2 examines the socio-demographic variables analyzed in Model 1 and controls for party affiliation and geo-political zones of the respondents. When the control variables are introduced, educational status, religion, occupation, place of residence, party affiliation, and geo-political zone were associated with political participation. For education, women with secondary and post-secondary education were more likely to participate in politics than women with no or informal education. Christian women were more likely to participate in politics than Muslim women. Rural women were more likely to participate in politics than urban women. For the control variables, women who had party affiliations were more likely to participate in politics than women who are not affiliated with any party. Women from the North-East, South-East, South-South, and South-West were more likely to participate in politics than women from the North-Central. Using the beta values, postsecondary education (0.168), coming from the South-Eastern zone (0.157), and party affiliation (0.135) were the most significant predictors of political participation.

**Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis independent and dependent variables with beta values**

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	b	[s]	( $\beta$ )	b	[s]	( $\beta$ )
<b>Age</b>	0.005	[0.003]	(0.050)	0.005	[0.003]	(0.058)
<b>Education</b>						
No/informal school (RC)						
Primary education	0.218	[0.060]	(0.091)	0.227	[0.122]	(0.095)
Secondary education	0.198	[0.109]	(0.113)	0.225	[0.106]	(0.129) *
Post-secondary	0.345	[0.125]	(0.152) **	0.382	[0.122]	(0.168) **
University degree	0.217	[0.164]	(0.047)	0.231	[0.161]	(0.050)
<b>Religion</b>						
Muslim (RC)						
Christian	0.138	[0.022]	(0.077) *	0.234	[0.076]	(0.130) **
<b>Occupation</b>						
Not employed(RC)						
Self-employed	0.156	[0.066]	(0.089) *	0.130	[0.067]	(0.074)
Privately employed	0.219	[0.117]	(0.072)	0.168	[0.120]	(0.056)
Government employed	0.190	[0.174]	(0.040)	0.105	[0.164]	(0.022)
<b>Place of residence</b>						
Urban (RC)						
Rural	0.221	[0.055]	(0.125) **	0.169	[0.057]	(0.096) **
<b>Control variables</b>						
<b>Party affiliation</b>						
Non-partisan (RC)						
Partisan				0.248	[0.056]	(0.135) ***
<b>Geo-political Zone</b>						
North Central (RC)						
North East				-0.274	[0.107]	(0.104) *
North West				0.187	[0.106]	(0.089)
South East				-0.406	[0.113]	(0.157) ***
South South				-0.253	[0.112]	(0.104) *
South West				-0.261	[0.102]	(0.124) *
Number of observation	1,139			1,123		
Wald chi2 (5)	4.80			5.43		
Prob > chi2	0.0000			0.0000		
Adj. R-sq	0.0438			0.0779		

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

**b** - coefficient    **s** - standard deviation     **$\beta$** -beta values

## Discussion

This paper sought to analyze the significant socio-economic and political factors that predict women's political participation. It hypothesized that education, party affiliation, geo-political zone, religion, employment, and place of residence predict women's political participation. First, the analysis confirms the hypothesis that education is a significant predictor of women's political participation. Women with a minimum of secondary education are positively associated with political participation than those without formal or informal education. This finding is consistent with previous observations (Karl, 2001; Kasa, 2015; Leigh, n. d).

Second, the results indicate that religion is generally a significant predictor of women's political participation, as documented in previous studies (Cassese and Holman, 2016; Leigh, n. d). The analysis shows that Christian women are positively associated with higher political participation than Islamic women. While both Christianity and Islam may reinforce the traditional perspective about distinct roles for both men and women, the analysis indicates that Christianity is less conservative regarding attitudes towards political participation than Islam. Muslim women should be more encouraged to be involved in politics. Future research, however, should include an analysis of the effect of the traditional religion on women's political participation.

Third, the results indicate that employment is a significant predictor of women's political participation as observed in previous studies (Karl, 2001; Kasa, 2015). Contrary to the priori expectation that all those employed (self-employment, and employment in both public and private sectors) would be linked to higher political participation compared to the unemployed women, the analysis shows that only self-employment is a statistically significant predictor of the dependent variable. The reason may be that self-employed women are more confident, more assertive, and wealthier, and have a greater sense of self-efficacy than women employed in the private and public sectors.

Fourth, the analysis supports the idea that geo-political zone is a significant predictor of women's political participation. Women from the North-East, South-East, South-South, and South-West are less engaged politically than women from the North-Central. This finding may reflect variations in the geo-political characteristics, including women's access to education, and employment, and the liberal attitude towards women's equality. While this observation is consistent with Leigh's (n.d.) findings, it is contrary to Karl's (2001) work. The differences in findings might be due to the variations in the measures of the dependent variable.

Fifth, the results indicate that the place of residence, like the geo-political zone, is a significant predictor of women's political participation. Neighborhood characteristics, including attitude towards education, the quality of education, and the richness of the social network, can impact women's political participation. This observation contrasts Karl's (2001) finding regarding the impact of place of residence on the dependent variable. The variations in the measures of the dependent variable may account for this inconsistency.

Sixth, consistent with Leigh's (n.d.) finding, the results fail to confirm the priori hypothesis that urban areas are associated with increased women's political participation based on greater access to quality education and employment opportunities, for instance, as compared to the rural settings. However, the analysis shows that rural areas have a positive relationship with increased women's political representation. This unexpected finding may be due to the increased access to education and the Internet in the rural areas, and the variations in the measures of the dependent variable in this study.

Finally, this study confirms the hypothesis that party affiliation is a significant predictor of women's political participation. Women affiliated with political parties were more likely to

participate in politics than women not affiliated with any political party, as some previous findings have demonstrated (Kittilson, 2016). This observation, however, contradicts findings by Leigh (n.d.) and Karl (2001) that party affiliation is not a significant predictor of women's political participation. The variations in the study contexts might be responsible for the inconsistency in the findings. In contexts where all political parties do not have affirmative measures to increase women's political participation, party affiliation is not likely to have any effect on the dependent variable. Overall, on the basis of the beta values, this paper shows that at least post-secondary education (0.168) is the most significant predictor of women's political participation, as documented in Leigh's (n.d.) work, followed by the South-Eastern zone (0.157), and party affiliation (0.135).

## **Conclusion**

Employing gender—which is driven by patriarchy—as a conceptual framework, and multivariate linear regression analysis, this paper was intended to answer this research question: What factors generally predict women's political participation in Nigeria? The analysis shows that education, religion, party affiliation, geo-political zone, employment, place of residence, and rural dwelling are statistically significant predictors of women's political participation in Nigeria. Education, however, emerged as the most important predictor of women's political participation. On the whole, attention should be focused on these predictive variables, for example, facilitating women's access to education, and encouraging women's political affiliation to help increase their political participation.

The participation of women in Nigerian politics is germane to the overall growth of the democratization and improvement of the human condition in the country. Through women's political participation, substantive issues, including maternal and infant mortalities, gender inequality female genital mutilation, child marriage, and wage inequality, which affect women would be revived with the appropriate tenor needed to address them. Political equality in the Nigerian gender sphere would involve creating the requisite substructure and environment that would enable women to adequately access political opportunities and actively compete in the polity without hindrance or obstructions.

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