



The Invisibility of Women's Organizations in Decision Making Process and Governance in Nigeria

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The exciting development in the recent political era was the increase in women's political participation globally. Women are becoming more engaged in varieties of institutional decision making processes and Africa appears to be leading in women's parliamentary representation. Since the re-birth of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, women have tried to gain access to decision making positions by contesting at various political levels and the representation of women's organizations on various policy debates has increased at local and national levels. However, their efforts appeared not to be greeted with much gains as the result seemed not very encouraging. What is problematic is whether the representation of women's organization in democracy and decision making in Nigeria was descriptive or substantive. Even when women's organizations were represented in decision making arena, it appeared that their influence was not much felt. Therefore, this paper investigated how visible and substantive were the roles played by women's organizations in decision making arena in Nigeria and whether their roles were appreciated. The paper utilized the descriptive survey research design to elicit and describe information. The findings revealed that the roles played by women's organizations in decision making arena was significant but not visible and unappreciated. It was therefore, recommended that women's organizations should do all they could to be more active in governance and encourage more women to be fully involved in decision making process in Nigeria to enhance national development.

Keywords: women's organizations, decision making, invisibility, descriptive, substantive, representation

INTRODUCTION

Historically and presently in Nigeria and Africa, women faced a lot of problems of inequality. Researchers gathered data on 217 countries in 2016 and the study revealed that 23 years of most women's lives were spent cooking, cleaning, child care and elderly parents' care while men were not involved in these family's care duties. Since the Nineteenth Century in Nigeria, women struggled against gender discrimination and gender based violence. Feminism and women's movements sprung up in Nigeria alongside the nation's fight for independence and improvement of citizens' quality life. Women's movements became prominent in Nigeria because of the attempt made by women to enhance equal rights and opportunities for women like men. The culture of patriarchy and male chauvinism deprived women of their rights. This led to exploitation and marginalization of women in private and public lives (Soriola, 2017). In the pre-colonial period in Nigeria, women participated in public life effectively and had access to national resources. Many women were rulers

of their communities in the likes of Queen Amina of Zazzau in Northern Nigeria, Ebele Ejaunu ruled the Igala Kingdom. Also, women controlled the affairs and had political influence among the Igbos, Ibibios, the Ijaws, Kalabari, Efik, Edo and Itsekiri. In Yoruba communities and riverine Igbo, both individuals and groups had high status and collective social and political influence through their organizations and representatives (Soriola, 2017). In post-colonial era in Nigeria, feminist movements were widely spread. The Federation of Nigeria Women's Societies (FNWS) was birthed in 1953. This group was able to assist women to enjoy political participation and representation in all legislative arms (Olojede, 2008 and Soriola, 2017).

Women's organizations have developed their activities in focal areas related to women's concerns. In view of the various activism by various women's movements and groups, women were represented in political parties, business and public life in Nigeria (Olojede, 2008; Soriola, 2017). Women have contributed meaningfully to the socio-economic and political development in the country. The political movements, activism and various affirmative actions that aimed at ending all forms of discrimination against women, have contributed toward the liberation of women in Nigeria from political exclusion Oluwole (2014).

Market women also asserted their rights in all areas of life. It was colonial rule that weakened the social, economic and political rights of women. Female representation in public sphere became deficient even though they got voting right in Southern Nigeria in 1950s and 1980s in the North. The Igbo market women in the East, protested against British taxation in 1929, which was called the Aba Women's Riots. Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, led women protests against excessive tax collection in Ogun State in 1948, about 20 years before the Aba Women's Riots. These protests were carried out in cities in Nigeria. The National Women's Union (NWU) founded in 1947, was the first national women's organizations with general debate covering all ethnic, religious and class issues. Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Gambo Sawaba were women leaders who were fierce advocates of women's rights and supporters of women's equality with men in Nigeria. These women leaders and their organizations, also, played outstanding roles in the fight for women's rightful place in the society. The activism of women led to the formation of the elite women's group that focused on charity, men's supremacy and anarchy in the society (Soriola, 2017).

To intensify the fight for women's rights, the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) was founded in 1959 to patronise all women's organization in Nigeria. The NCWS and the Women in Nigeria (WIN) were very important women's movements or civil society groups in Nigeria. The NCWS was an agent for checking authoritarian governments, strengthening women empowerment, reducing the social anarchical and unsettling effect of market forces. WIN and NCWS in addition, enforced political accountability, thereby increasing the quality of good governance in Nigeria. The aims of the NCWS were also, to awaken and encourage women in the realization of their responsibilities to the communities; ensure by all legal means,

that women were given every opportunity to play their part as full responsible members of the communities and encourage all affiliation of all non-political women's organizations in Nigeria among others (Olojede, 2008 and Soriola, 2017).

Women's movements existed before, during and after colonialism. Majority of them did not fit the definition of what could be called movements though, they saw themselves as one. The important thing was that they all attempted to serve the interest of addressing inequalities between women and men in the society (Madunagu, 2008). Though, women's movements till date have women at the center of all their activities, they had always focused on specific challenges that ailed women at any point globally. Some of these movements equated women's rights with the right to vote or be elected into public and political offices, others saw equal rights as the opportunity to enjoy all national resources or own properties or be properly educated (Uguwede, 2017).

According to Ushe (2017), Nigeria was currently a hotbed of numerous feminist movements that fought for the advancement of the rights of women for decades. Despite the fact that laws have been passed to give women a better quality of life, the enforcement of these laws had been slow which had changed the shapes of women's movement struggle, region by region. The fight for the rights of women was not over in Nigeria. Thought, there were reasons pointing to success in the Southern Nigeria, some Islamic extremists in the North had continuously disrupted the progress of giving women equality with men in the country. Recently, a bill for gender equality of women with men in Nigeria was turned down by majority votes in the Senate. Several women's organizations and individuals are continuously putting on more efforts and working courageously toward women emancipation in Nigeria.

Women's organizations were organizations funded by women or men that were established for the enhancement of women's liberation, gender equality and social justice in the society (Olojede, 2008). They were organizations that believed that women's rights could be secured by addressing the broader issues of human rights of women and men in any oppressive society. These women's organizations included non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community based organizations (CBOs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and other organizations that had the political and social development of women at heart. Also, their main interest and focus were the upliftment and empowerment of women for self and national development. These women's organizations supported the overall growth and development of women leaders in their countries worldwide. Some of these women's organizations aimed to increase women's representation in government and they treated the increasing issues of gender gap in appointments (African Women Power Network Reviews, 2015). Women's organizations appeared really active in human rights' promotion, particularly, in advocacy, public awareness and monitoring, as well as, educational development. Although, women might have more difficulty in access to justice, women's organizations played very active part in this aspect by providing more direct support for women who were in need. Women's organizations were also active in traditional justice by making their voices heard, supporting

victims in trial processes and pushing gender equality in their activities.

Women's organizations did their job by organizing summits, training programs and other initiatives for grassroots women; women politicians; farmers; entrepreneurs; teachers; students and women in governance. They sought to empower more women and improved these women's chances of gaining access to standard education; improved health services and outcomes. These women's organizations promoted young women's leadership development. They equally aimed to eradicate barrier to women's public involvement and an end to violence against girls and women. They also built women's and girls' capacity to enhance their total development (African Women Power Network Reviews, 2015). Women's groups played crucial roles in mobilizations and protests in different aspects of citizens' empowerment movements. These women's organizations had also pushed for a greater consideration of women's concerns and participation in discussions at the international level (Swanee Hunt, 2009). Women's group had been in the forefront of addressing the most significant effects of trauma of violent conflicts and abuse. They provided psychosocial services and engaged in research and capacity building to eradicate the role that trauma played in increasing conflict (Schirch and Sewak, 2005).

Women's participation in political leadership was seen as their right since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in 1948. UDHR Articles 2 and 21 stipulate equality in enjoyment of political rights, free of discrimination due to a person's sex or other reasons. In most States in the Western part of the globe, the franchise of the right of women was not recognized in the initial wave of democratization, except in the United States of America, Britain and some European countries (Kassa, 2015). There was improvement in women's participation in politics and governance. Women were becoming more engaged in varieties of institutions from Local Government, Legislatures and the Executive and they appeared to be leading in women's parliamentary representation worldwide (Tripp, 2013). However, participation in politics generally, was men oriented and dominated while women's participation was not as encouraging as expected. According to Expert Group Meeting (2005), women were about half of the world's population and should, by right, be represented as such in politics. Females had different experiences from those of males and needed to be involved in discussions on policy making and implementation. Their different experiences meant that women did politics differently from men. Also, interests of men and women were conflicting, therefore, females' presence were needed in representative arena to support women's concerns and interests. Female politicians were role models for other women, despite their different political views or party membership and they were expected to attract more women to different political arena.

There were evidences of Women's solidarity of purpose to articulate the concerns of women when they attained certain levels of representation. Equal representation of women and men enhanced both transitional and consolidated democracies (EGM,

Ibid and Christensen, 2012). According to Laplante (2004), most of the time, women played major role in making sure that the health and other aspects of the psycho-social well-being of people were considered. Such interventions formed major parts of social and political change. Majority of females played different key roles as actors of change in their communities, especially, as teachers of change (Kirk, 2007). Women were also, more involved in the media by ensuring that their voices were heard and that the media reflected a more gender friendly perspective. Many local women's groups had made efforts to create Cyber Center where local women could have access to the internet in safe environments (Smith, 2010).

However, women seemed invisible in political positions generally. Women's glaring invisibility in politics appeared to be a world-wide phenomenon. The poor representation of women in politics was not recent (The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2000). The participation of women had been very low at the public policy and decision-making arena. Low women's involvement and lack of sufficient political knowledge about women's involvement had been part of the problems of politics (Awotash, 2010). Enhancing women's political representation could bring legitimacy to government and establishment of democracy in practical and real sense. A valid democracy could be questioned if women remain excluded or segregated from the political and public institutions in the society (Haque, 2003). According to Panday (2008), the level of women's involvement in government could have significant impact on the lives of the people in any operational political and public arena.

Increasingly, women's representation in politics and decision making arena seemed to be the demand for democracy and equality as well as civil rights. This had been guaranteed by the international organizations' (UN) agreements and other documents. It also facilitated more changes and paved way for more opportunities for women. It called for efficient, maximum and equitable utilization of human, financial, material and information resources by all (Ojulu and Melesse, 2014). According to The Focus Magazine (2018), treaties and activities had been put in place for the advancement of women and for them to take up their place in governance globally. The International Women's Day which was one of the international efforts for gender equality, was annually devoted to the encouragement of women for development at all levels. Also, the 1995 Fourth World Women Conference held in Beijing, China, typically emphasized full empowerment of women for equal opportunities with men. A global agenda designed at the Conference, identified 12 critical areas for action for the enhancement of women's integration into national development. It is worthy of note that Nigeria keyed into the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action with the birth of the 2006 National Gender Policy as well as the Millennium Development Goals which emphasized the need for women to be in power and participate in decision making processes. Increasing women's representation also nullified the issues of the legitimacy of the democratic process and decision making authorities. This allowed women to find solutions to some basic problems and needs in their communities. It also ensured transparency and fight against corruption. This resulted in good civil/political

leadership; accountability and responsiveness at all levels of governance. This equally led to political democratization process, good governance, promoted peace and democratic development in any country (Ojulu and Melesse, 2014). Every human being had the right to direct his/her life. This right was the source of the ideal of equal involvement of men and women in decision making process. The right stated that since women knew their situation better, they were expected to have equal participation with men in all decision making levels, governance and political arena as appropriate (Miranda, 2005).

Achieving equal participation in political decision making arena ensured a leverage function without which it was highly unlikely that a real integration of the equal dimension in government policy making would be possible. Thus, women's equal participation in political life could play a vital role in the general process of advancement of women, their families and households. Women's involvement in decision making arena was not only a need for simple justice or democracy but a criteria for the interests of women to be considered. Without the active involvement of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace in nations would not be achievable (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995; Christensen, 2012).

WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

Women appeared to have more descriptive representation in politics and decision making arena than substantive representation. However, descriptive representation of women is the widely acceptable share of seats in parliamentary and decision making arena showing political inclusion in the society for women. The descriptive representation is the representation which depend on shared characteristics and experience. That is representing someone because of gender or class such as representation of the women folk (Wangnerud, 2009; Awotash, 2010). However, substantive representation of women concerns the interest of women, gender equality and reason for the representation of women in political and decision making. If women are not substantively represented in politics, governance and decision making, certain interests and concerns that arise from the experiences of women would likely not to be adequately tackled in political arena that is filled by men only (Wangnerud, 2009). Equality between men and women could not be achieved simply by disregarding gender-related differences in societies (Phillips, 2007).

Many authors have itemized reasons for the descriptive rather than substantive roles of women in decision making arena. Kasomo (2012) opined that in African countries, including Nigeria, obnoxious social norms, political exclusion, economic lopsidedness, social and systemic practices dictated the tune of women participation in politics and their voice in decision making arena. Gray (2006) noted that many authors argued that the number of women in any political body was not important, what matters was their critical act or substantive role. United Nations (2000) indicated

that sex stereotype were part of the entrenched obstacles responsible for denigration of the role and the importance of women in the society including political participation and governance. Iloren (2015) opined that minor or descriptive representation of women in governance stemmed from the barriers that female political candidates usually face such as sex stereotyping, political socialization, lack of preparation for political activities and balancing of work and family. Shvedova (2005) listed the obstacles to women's participation in politics to include political, socio-economic, ideological and psychological barriers. Kabira and Nzioki (1995) indicated that several stories depicted women as disloyal, disagreeable, untrustworthy, stupid and even gullible, hence, their minor descriptive role in decision making processes. Kasomo (2012) asserted that women continued to be left out of official records and when recognized, they were addressed as people who needed welfare assistance rather than actors in the historical process which accounted for their under-representation in political life and most decision making processes. Kongolo (2009) observed that lack of government incentives and assistance, lack of resources, information, education, cultural values and discrimination against women were the most important factors contributing to their passive involvement in development and governance. According to Banerjee (2011), there were evidences that female politicians faced gender stigma from male members of the political parties which undermined the ability of women to reach or maintain leadership role. Page (2018) noted the challenges that hindered women's substantive political participation and recommended training for women candidates. Iloren (2015) recommended education, quota, legislation, financing, research, data improvement, grassroots women's empowerment movement as the way out of women descriptive representation in decision making and governance. In the same vein, Asiedu et al. (2018) noted the descriptive roles of women and recommended strengthening and advancing women political inclusion through education for aspiring women into politics and governance.

The activities of some women in politics and governance appeared not to be different from those of their male counterparts especially in the area of corruption and abuse of power. According to UNDP (2008), corruption was misuse of entrusted power for private gain. Hossain et al. (2010) agreed that there was little to be gained by assuming that female gender generated higher probity. Women politicians and public officials were not necessarily less corrupt than men. Never the less, increasing the number of women was likely to improve the gender responsiveness of government which was critical in order to alleviate the effect of corruption on women. On the issues of the relationship between gender and corruption in politics and governance, the focus was on whether having more women in public offices could curb corruption. Some people argued that women in power were less prone to corruption because they were innately socialized to be less corrupt than men (Ibid). UNIFEM (2008), examined gender in perception and discovered a statistically significant differences between men and women in almost all regions of the world including Nigeria, with women generally perceiving higher

level of corruption than men. Moreover, women were more intolerant of corruption and more affected by corruption in public spheres, especially, in developed regions and established democracies. Dollar et al. (1999), found out a correlation between low levels of corruption and more women in government. Asiedu et al. (2018) agreed that including women in political processes, engendered political benefits. Increasing the number of women in parliament, curbed corruption, improved policies outcomes and promoted the inclusiveness of minority groups in public spheres. In the same vein, Swamy et al. (2001) and UNIFEM (2010), opined that at least, in the short and medium term, more women in public life would lower the level of tolerance for corruption and that gender tolerance to corruption existed globally. World Bank Report (2001) indicated that firms owned or managed by men were likely to give bribe than those owned or managed by women. Also, having more women in parliaments or private management correlated to lower level of corruption. It could be deduced from the above, that women in power could not be ruled out of engaging in abuse of power or corruption, but corruption and abuse of power were more common among men decision makers than women.

Despite government's efforts at enhancing increased involvement of women at political/decision making arena, women were still at subordinate position and still had low status at all levels of the society. Their involvement in policy formulation and decision making process appeared low and insignificant. If women lack economic, political, legal and social empowerment, the hope of achieving democracy and prosperity could be lost. The manifestation of democracy which gave rise to varied opinion and involvement of women and men could not be enhanced by excluding the women group. Therefore, democracy would grow and develop effectively if people were given equal support to exercise their democratic rights (Kassa, 2015). Hence, women could experience benefits equally with their male counterparts. Increased involvement of women on equal terms with men at all levels of decision making was key to the achievement of equality and development, peace as well as democracy. It also encouraged incorporation of women's perspectives and experiences into decision making that could enhance satisfactory solutions which might have other benefits and solutions that were better and appropriated for political, legal and economic problems (Kassa, 2015). However, in view of the foregoing, the aim of the study was to investigate how visible and substantive were the roles played by women's organizations in decision making arena in Nigeria and whether their roles were appreciated.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

It appears that women's organizations have tried to be involved in and encouraged women's full representation in politics and governance. It also seems that women's organizations tried to play major roles in advocating appropriate representation of women in governance. However, it appears that women's

organizations were still invisible in decision making arena and governance in Nigeria. In view of these, this paper investigated the invisibility of women's organizations in decision making process and governance in Nigeria, implications of these and challenges. Consequently, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i) What roles do women's organizations play in governance in Nigeria?
- ii) Can women's organizations influence policies on women's rights in Nigeria without being present in decision making arena?
- iii) Are women's organizations meeting the expectations of those that they were professing to represent?
- iv) What are the different approaches used by these women's organizations to bring about women's descriptive and substantive representation in democratic governance in Nigeria?
- v) What are the relationship between women's organizations and government in Nigeria?
- vi) Are the perceptions of these women's organizations positive to women's issues in the Nigerian society?
- vii) What are the strategies put in place by women's organizations in Nigeria?
- viii) What are the giant strides taken by women's organizations to successfully bring about fair and equal representation of women in decision making in Nigeria?
- ix) What are the implications and challenges of women's organizations' involvement in decision making processes in Nigeria?

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to investigate the role of Women's Organizations in Governance in Nigeria.

Specific Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i) identify the roles that women's organizations play in governance in Nigeria;
- ii) examine whether women's organizations were meeting the expectations of those that they were professing to represent;
- iii) investigate the different approaches and strategies used by women's organizations to bring about women's descriptive and substantive representation in democratic governance in Nigeria;
- iv) examine the relationship between women's organizations and government in Nigeria;
- v) identify the giant strides taken by women's organizations to successfully bring about fair and equal representation of women in decision making in Nigeria;
- vi) examine the implications and challenges of women's organizations' involvement in decision making processes in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive research design of the survey type was employed to elicit and describe information on the invisibility of women's organization in decision making process and governance in Nigeria. The design was descriptive because it involved collection of data to describe phenomenon as they existed in the field and there was no manipulation of variables involved in the study. The research was a survey type because it covered a large area. The term survey research distinguished the study from experimental research. In descriptive survey, the researcher is concerned with describing existing phenomena in order to highlight its relevance to given situations.

Population and Sample

The population for the study was drawn from the staff of women's organizations in South Western States, Nigeria. The States in South Western Nigeria are Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo. A total of 100 and fifty respondents from women's organizations, who were willing to participate, were chosen as the sample for the study. The respondents for the study comprised Managing Directors/Chief Executive Officers, Executive Officers, Programme Officers, Assistant Programme Officers, Finance Managers, and Secretaries from women's organizations.

The purposive random sampling technique was utilized for the selection of the respondents from women's organizations in the six (6) South Western States in Nigeria.

Research Instrument

The data for the study was collected through a self-designed instrument. The research instrument designated 'Invisibility of Women's Organization in Decision Making Process and Governance in Nigeria Questionnaire (IWODMPGNQ)' was administered on all the research respondents in the study areas. The instrument comprised 10 Sections. Sections A, comprised of the respondents' personal data while Sections B–J contained items which elicited information on the specific objectives 1–9. The instrument contained fifty items in all. The 9 Sections, B to J of the research questionnaire contained both closed and open ended questions as evident on the copy of at the **Appendix I**.

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, it was subjected to criticism by the Director of the Center for Gender and Development Studies, Ekiti State University and experts in the Department of Texts and Measurement of the same University. Thereafter, their comments were incorporated into the modification of the items on the instrument in order to meet the face and content validities as appropriate.

The fact that an instrument is valid does not mean instant reliability of such instrument. Reliability is the measure of accuracy, stability and internal consistency of a measuring instrument. The reliability of the instrument was carried out using the test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered twice within an interval of 3 weeks on 20 staff of women's

organizations who were not included in the sample for the study. The scores from the 2 sets of responses were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula in order to obtain the reliability co-efficient of the instrument. The value of 0.76 was obtained. This co-efficient was adjudged to be high enough for the reliability of the instrument.

Administration of the Instrument and Data Analysis

The data for this study was collected by the researcher with the aid of trained research assistants. The research instrument was administered on willing respondents from women's non-governmental organizations in the six South Western States of Nigeria, through their States' Ministries of Women Affairs. The researcher made follow up visits to facilitate proper completion of the instrument. The researcher's personal contact with the respondents enhanced better understanding of the items in the instrument. This also helped to reduce the difficulty of retrieving the instrument. The completed copies of instrument were retrieved, examined to ascertain whether they were appropriately completed. The data collected were scored and subjected to statistical analysis. The descriptive aspect of the study was analyzed using frequency counts and percentage scores. Pearson Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used to test and ascertain the reliability of the instrument. To affirm a more united, unitary and homogenous text in the narration about the outcomes of the study, mean scores were further employed to verify the results of the study obtained from frequency counts and percentages.

Ethical Consideration and Consent Procedures

The study was carried out in accordance with the recommendation and approval of the Office for Research and Development (ORD) of Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti. All the respondents/subjects gave written informed consent. The protocol and methodology was approved by the Office for Research and Development (ORD) of Ekiti State University. Also an approval for the study was given by the researcher's Unit, the Center for Gender and Development Studies of Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, through a letter Ref. No. CGDS/RS/170/10. This letter was for further action by the Ekiti State Ministry of Women Affairs, Social Development and Gender Empowerment that has direct link with all the State Ministries of Women Affairs in Nigeria. The Ministry also issued letters of introduction and approval through Ref. No. AD/620/7 in 6 copies, one per State, to the Ministries of Women Affairs in the Six (6) South Western States in Nigeria where the women's organization respondents were drawn.

RESULTS

Distribution of Socio-Demographics

The study respondents were 150 which comprised 50 males and 100 females. Thirty-nine (39) percent of them were in the 31–40 age range, twenty-five (25) percent were in the 41–50 age range, twenty-five (25) percent were below 31 age range and eleven (11) percent were 50 and above age range. The study

respondents comprised 53 (34%) Assistant Programme Officers; 46 (31%) Programme Officers; 31 (21%) Executive Officers; 9 (6%) MDs/CEOs; 6 (4%) Secretary and 6 (4%) Finance Manager.

Roles Played by Women's Organizations in Governance in Nigeria

Women's organizations played significant roles in governance in Nigeria as indicated by 80% of the respondents while 59% of them indicated that the roles played by women's organizations in decision making process and governance in Nigeria were not visible. Ninety (90) percent indicated that women's organizations' roles in governance were important. However, women's organizations were not able to wield any influence in democratic governance in Nigeria as indicated by 57% of the respondents. Also, 53% opined that the roles played by women's organizations in governance were not appreciated in Nigeria. In order to affirm a more united, unitary and homogenous narration about the study outcomes, mean scores were utilized to verify the results of the study. Using a cut off mean of 1.50 as rating scale, items 1, 2 and 6 on **Table A2** (Appendix II) had mean scores of 1.87, 1.80, and 1.91 which were above the cut-off point. This implies that women's organizations played significant roles in governance, but they were unable to wield much influence. Also, the mean scores of 1.43, 1.41, and 1.47 respectively for items 3, 4 and 5 were below the cut-off point and this indicated that the roles played by women's organizations in Nigeria were neither visible nor appreciated. These results are homogenous with the ones obtained when frequency counts and percentages were earlier employed in this study.

Level of the Influence of Women's Organizations on Policies on Women's Rights in Nigeria Without Being Present in Decision Making

Fifty nine (59) percent of the respondents opined that women's organizations would not be able to influence policies on women's rights in Nigeria if they were not present in decision making arena. Eighty one (81) percent indicated that women's rights would not be favorably considered if women's organizations were not present in decision making arena. Fifty one (51) percent opined that the level of influence of women's organizations on policies on women's rights was low in Nigeria while (54) percent indicated that the influence of women's organizations in decision making arena and governance was also low. Utilizing the cut-off mean of 1.50 as rating scale, items 1 and 2 on **Table A3** had mean scores of 1.41 and 1.19 which were below the cut-off point. This indicates that women's organizations would not be able to influence policies on women's right and the rights of women will not be favorably considered in Nigeria without being present in the decision making arena. However, for items 3 and 4 on the same **Table A3**, a cut-off mean of 2.00 as rating scale was used and the mean scores of 1.60 and 1.59 were obtained which were below the cut-off point. This implies that the level of the influence of women's organizations on policies on women's right and their influence in decision making arena cum governance were low

in Nigeria. These results are homogenous with the earlier result obtained from frequency counts and percentages.

Level at Which Women's Organizations Were Meeting the Expectation of Those They Were Professing to Represent in Nigeria

Fifty-three (53) percent of the respondents opined that women's organizations were not meeting the expectations of those that they claim to represent in decision making arena in Nigeria. Sixty three (63) percent opined that the level of the influence of women's organizations on policies on women's rights in Nigeria was low, 27 and 10% indicated that women's organizations' influence were moderate and high, respectively. Employing the cut-off mean of 1.50 rating scale, item 1 on **Table A4** had mean score of 1.47 which was above the cut-off point. This shows that women's organizations were not meeting the expectations of those that they claim to represent in Nigeria. Furthermore, using the cut-off mean of 2.00 as rating scale, the result for item 2 had the mean score of 1.47 which was below the cut-off point. This shows that the level of the influence of women's organizations on policies on women's right was low. These results are unitary outcomes with the results obtained earlier using frequency counts and percentages.

The Different Approaches Used by Women's Organizations to Bring About Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Democratic Governance

Seventy four (74) percent of the subjects opined that the level of representation of women in political appointment and governance was low in comparison to men in Nigeria as against 26% for moderate and 0% for high levels, respectively. The approaches used by women's organizations to bring about women's descriptive and substantive representation in political appointment in comparison to men included mobilizing, sensitizing, educating, building capacity of women to context for political positions, organizing rallies, advocating for the Beijing Declarations on women rights, lobbying and persuading government to involve women in democratic governance. With a cut-off mean of 2.00 as rating scale, the mean score for item 1 on **Table A5** was 1.27 and this was below the cut-off point. This implies that the level of women's representation in political appointment and governance was low when compared to men's level of political appointment in Nigeria.

The Relationship Between Women's Organizations and Governments in Nigeria

Sixty (60) percent of the respondents revealed that there was no partnership between women's organizations and government in Nigeria as against 40% who opined otherwise. In the same vein, 63% noted that the level of engagement/collaboration between women's organizations and government regarding women's right issues in Nigeria was low. Utilizing the cut-off mean of 1.50 rating scale, item 1 had mean score of 1.40 which was below the cut-off point. This shows that there was no encouraging

partnership between women's organizations and governments in Nigeria. Also, using a cut-off mean of 2.00 as the rating scale, the result indicated that item 3 on **Table A6** had mean score of 1.48 which is below the cut-off point. This shows that the level of the engagement cum collaboration between women's organizations and governments on women's right issues was low in Nigeria. These results are homogenous with the earlier results earlier obtained using frequency counts and percentages.

Level of Positivity of the Perception of Women's Organizations to Women's Issues in Nigerian Society

Eighty (80) percent of the respondents indicated that the level of perception of women's organizations toward the involvement of women in decision making in Nigeria was high as against 20% for low. Also, eighty (88) percent opined that the level of perception of women's organizations toward gender equality in Nigeria was high as against 12% for low level. Sixty-six (66) percent believed that women were not the enemies of women in the political arena in Nigeria as against 34% who opined otherwise. Fifty nine (59) percent indicated that the level of positivity of the perception of women's organizations to women's issues in Nigeria was moderate, 24% for high and 17% for low levels, respectively. With a cut-off mean of 1.50 for rating scale, items 1 and 2 on **Table A7** had mean scores of 1.80 and 1.88, respectively which were above the cut-off point. This implies that the perception of women's organizations toward the involvement of women in decision making and gender equality was high in Nigeria. However, the cut-off mean for item 3 was 1.34 which was below the cut-off point. This implies that women were not the enemies of women in the political arena in Nigeria. Moreover, employing the cut-off mean of 2.00 as rating scale, the result indicated that item 4 had the mean score of 2.07 which was above the cut-off point. This shows that the level of the positivity of the perception of women's organizations in Nigerian society was not low but moderate and fair. These outcomes are homogenous with the results earlier obtained from frequency counts and percentages.

The Strategies Put in Place by Women's Organizations in Nigeria

Seventy seven (77) percent of the subjects indicated that the strategies used by women's organizations in Nigeria to enhance women's involvement in decision making arena included advocacy, sensitization, mobilization and capacity building for women, while 23% listed other strategies. Fifty-two (52) percent indicated that the level of effectiveness of the strategies put in place by women's organizations in Nigeria to enhance more women vying for political posts was low, 42% for moderate and 6% for high level of effectiveness, respectively. Employing a cut-off mean of 2.00 as rating scale, the result showed that item 1 had the mean score of 1.54 which was below the cut-off point. This implies that the level of effectiveness of the strategies put in place by women's organizations to encourage more women to vie for political posts was low in Nigeria. This result is unitary with the earlier result obtained using frequency counts and percentages.

Giant Strides Taken by Women's Organizations to Successfully Bring About Fair and Equal Representation of Women in Decision Making Arena in Nigeria

Eighty two (82) percent of the respondents opined that the giant strides of women's organizations to bring about fair and equal representation of women in decision making arena in Nigeria included more and intensive advocacy, sensitization, mobilization, capacity building, workshop, training, empowerment and support for women vying for elective posts and dialoguing with government while 18% indicated other giant strides.

The Implications and Challenges of the Involvement of Women's Organizations in Decision Making Process in Nigeria

Fifty five (55) percent of the subjects indicated that the benefits/ advantages of the involvement of women's organizations in decision making process in Nigeria included improved development for women and the nation; less infringement on the rights of women and the girl-child and good image for Nigeria in the international communities, while 45% opined other advantages. Eighty four (84) percent indicated that there were no disadvantages for the involvement of women's organizations in decision making process in Nigeria, while 16% named women's insubordination to their husbands and family conflicts as the disadvantages. Forty-nine (49) percent listed lack and inadequate funding/resources as the challenges faced by women's organizations for their involvement in decision making process in Nigeria, 22% mentioned lack of support for women by family members and government, while 29% listed other challenges for women.

The study showed that women's organizations played important and significant roles in governance in Nigeria. However, the study also indicated that women's organizations were not able to wield much influence in democratic governance and that the roles played by women's organizations in decision making arena was neither visible and nor appreciated. This agrees with The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2000) which noted that women's glaring invisibility in politics was not a recent trend. The implication of the finding is that, though, women's organizations were seen as playing significant roles in governance, their roles were not yielding the benefit of high women representation in governance and thus they and their efforts were not seen as visible nor appreciated. The study further revealed that women's organizations were not meeting the expectation of those that they were professing to represent in decision making arena and that their influence in governance was low. This is unconnected with the low representation of women in decision making arena and governance which was expected to improve. If women's representation in governance had increased, then it would have been seen as resulting from the efforts of women's organizations in decision making arena.

The study also showed that women's organizations would not be able to influence policies on women's rights if they were not present in decision making arena. Women's rights would

not be favorably considered if women's organizations were not present in governance and also, the level of the influence of women's organizations in governance was low. This finding is in concurrent with the earlier findings of Fourth World Conference on Women (1995); Expert Group Meeting (2005), and Christensen (2012) who noted that the equal involvement of women and men enhanced democratization, governance and that women's equal participation in decision making was a necessary condition for the interest of women to be taken into account and for the goals of equality, development and peace to be actualized. This could imply that women's rights could grossly be denied and discriminated against if women were not available to protect their own interest at decision making arena. The gender that dominates governance will pay more attention to issues that serves their interests while the interests of the gender with less representation in governance could suffer. The study further revealed that the level of women's representation in political appointment and governance was low in comparison to men. This study agrees with Awotash (2010) who opined that women's involvement at the public and decision making levels had been very low. The study collaborates Kassa (2015) who opined that despite efforts at enhancing increased involvement of women in politics and decision making arena, women were still at lower level in governance and occupied subordinate status in the society. However, the finding is in contrast with an earlier finding of Tripp (2013) which found out that women were becoming more engaged in political participation. The implication of the finding of the present study, may not be unconnected with gender discrimination due to cultural factors, patriarchy, sexism and lack of support for women in leadership positions. Importantly, women lacked the financial resources to contest elections and they seemed to feel inferior to adequately compete with men politically.

The study showed that the level of partnership between women's organizations and government in Nigeria was low. However, it was believed that women's organizations at times met with government through the Offices of First Ladies and Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs to discuss issues of women and children. At times, they were also involved in some government functions to implement government policies. The partnership was not seen to be strong enough. Be that as it may, the level of engagement/collaboration between women's organizations and government regarding women's right issues was also low. This could be as a result of government's failure to cooperate with women's organizations. This was reflected in the refusal of government to implement fully, neither the Nigerian Gender Policy of 35% representation of women in politics nor the Beijing Affirmation Platform for Action of 30% women's political representation and appointment in governance. There was also no political will on the part of some women and they were not ready for full political participation. The study also revealed that the level of positivity of the perception of women's organizations in Nigerian society was moderate. However, their perception toward gender equality and involvement of women in decision making arena was high. Women were not also seen as enemies of women in the political arena. This is in concurrent with African Women Power Network Reviews (2015) that opined that

women's organizations aimed to increase women's representation in governance and that they addressed the increasing concerns of the gender gap in elective positions and appointments. The implication of this could be that though the positivity of perception of women's organization to women's issues was moderate, the level of women's representation in decision making arena did not match and was not yielding the expected outcome.

The finding of the study showed that the approaches used by women's organizations to bring about women's descriptive and substantive representation in democratic governance included sensitization, mobilization, capacity building for women and rallies. They also included lobbying government to support women empowerment and advocating for the International Declarations on Women's Rights and other actions and programs to improve the lots of women. The study revealed that the level of effectiveness of the strategies put in place by women's organizations to enhance more women vying for political post in Nigeria was low. The study also indicated that the giant strides of women's organizations in Nigeria included intensive and aggressive advocacy, sensitization, mobilization, capacity building, workshop/training, empowerment and support for women vying for elections, dialoguing with government and other interventions that could assist women leadership. The study showed that the benefits/ advantages of the involvement of women's organizations in decision making in Nigeria included enhanced women and national development, less infringement on women's and the girl-child's rights and good image for Nigeria in the international communities. This is in line with Ojulu and Melesse (2014) who agreed that the involvement of women in decision making ensured transparency, fight against corruption, enhanced accountability, political commitment, good and responsiveness of government, meeting basic needs and addressing basic problems of communities and national development. The study also revealed that there were no disadvantages for the involvement of women's organizations in decision making. This could be as a result of the fact that women's organizations' involvement in decision making process will yield more prospects and development for women and the nation. The study indicated that the challenges faced by women's organizations for their full involvement in decision making process in Nigeria included lack and inadequate funding/resources, lack of support for women by family members and government.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that women's organizations played important and significant roles in governance in Nigeria. However, the roles played by women's organizations in decision making arena and governance were neither visible nor appreciated because, despite their key roles, there was no matching increase in the involvement of women in governance and political appointments in Nigeria. Thus, women's organizations were not meeting the expectation of women that they professed to represent in governance. The study also concluded that women's issues would suffer if

women's organizations were not present in decision making arena to adequately influence policies on women's rights, concerns, interests and higher representation of women in governance. It was concluded that women's representation in political appointments and governance in Nigeria was low compared to men due to gender discrimination against women, sexism in favor of men as a result of cultural and religious factors. Other factors were inadequate resources available to women in a country where money politics thrived, lack of family and government support. The study concluded that there was low level of engagement and partnership between women's organizations and government which further hindered increase in women's participation in governance and decision making arena. It was also concluded that the positivity of the perception of women's organizations to women's issues was moderate. Women's organizations supported gender equality, women's involvement in decision making and women were not the enemies of women. The study concluded that the effectiveness of the strategies put in place by women's organizations for increase in women's involvement in politics and governance in Nigeria was low. However, the study also concluded that the participation of women's organizations in governance in Nigeria would enhance the development of women and improved national development. Women's and girl-child's rights would not be infringed upon and that there would be fairness and enhancement of gender equality. The study therefore, recommended that women's organizations should be forceful in their representation in decision making arena and do all they could to be more active in governance, encourage more women to be fully represented in governance, so that they would be deemed as more visible in decision making processes in Nigeria. It was also recommended that women's organizations should embark on more intensive advocacies, sensitization, capacity building programs, empowerment, intensive activism, forming more aggressive women groups that would refuse to vote for men in elections, more rallies and protests, lobbying/engagement with government and support women to vie for more elective positions. These could encourage more women's interest in the political process and governance in Nigeria. The study recommended that parents should give adequate and equal educational opportunities to their female children to empower

them like their male counterparts for equal participation in governance in the future. Government should also give more encouragement for women's increased representation in governance and decision making arena to enhance self and national development.

SUGGESTION FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher of this study could not carry out the study in all the six (6) Zones in Nigeria. It is suggested that other researchers could carry out the same research in any of the other five Zones of the country namely, North Central; North West; North East; South East and South.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CA is the sole author of this manuscript. She is qualified for authorship of the manuscript. She thought out and designed the work, gathered (involving designing, printing, distribution and collation of questionnaires) and interpreted the data for the work. CA also drafted and critically reviewed the content. She was also the one who gave approval for the publication of the content of this manuscript by submitting it to Frontiers team. CA agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work by ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. She organized the data base. MVA performed the statistical analysis and she wrote the first draft of the manuscript. CA also wrote sections of the manuscript. MVA did the revision. CA read the manuscript and approved the submitted version of the manuscript. She took the primary responsibility for communication with the journal and editorial office during the submission process, throughout peer review and during publication. She is also responsible for ensuring that the submission adheres to all journal requirements including but not limited to details of authorship, study ethics and ethical approval. CA also did the final submission.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00040/full#supplementary-material>

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