

IMPACT OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: STUDY OF ADAMAWA STATE 2023 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18036177>

| Article History | Abstract |
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| Original Research Article | <i>This study underscores women participation in politics: study of Adamawa State 2023 gubernatorial elections. The study employed three research objectives and research questions. The study adopted a quantitative research method of the descriptive survey design. The study employed 121 respondents using the Taro Yamane's formula of sampling. In collecting the data, the research used a closed-ended questionnaire. Frequency counts and simple percentages were the statistical technique used to analyze the data. The following are major findings from the study: that notable women in Adamawa State played significant roles in the politics of Adamawa State. That the major causes of low women participation in politics include; skewed religious teachings, barbaric cultural practices and poor educational qualifications. The study therefore recommended; equal rights and privileges for women and men in all aspects of political processes and formal education especially at the post senior secondary school level.</i> |
| Received: 02-11-2025 | |
| Accepted: 17-11-2025 | |
| Published: 23-12-2025 | |
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| Citation: Methodius Karfe, Yusuf Benedict Garba, Keyebya Denis Shamaki. (2025). IMPACT OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: STUDY OF ADAMAWA STATE 2023 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHS), Volume 1(10), 195-201. | Keywords: women, gender, politics, leadership, governance. |

INTRODUCTION

Across the world, women constitute slightly over half of the population and are central to economic, social, and political development. Despite this numerical strength, their participation in formal politics remains disproportionately low. Globally, women hold only 26.7 percent of parliamentary seats and 28 percent of ministerial positions (UN Women, 2023). This is far from the gender parity that international agreements such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) envision. The underrepresentation of women in political leadership is not due to lack of capacity or interest, but largely the result of structural barriers such as patriarchal cultural systems, economic exclusion, electoral violence, and institutional discrimination (NIMD, 2022).

In Africa, women have made significant progress, particularly in countries that deliberately implemented quotas or affirmative action policies. Rwanda is a global leader, with women occupying over 60 percent of parliamentary seats, followed by South Africa and Senegal with more than 40 percent representation (Inter-

Parliamentary Union, 2023). These cases show that when governments make deliberate efforts to break down structural barriers, women thrive in governance. However, West Africa overall still lags behind the global average. Cultural norms, weak gender policies, and reliance on male-dominated patronage networks have slowed women's progress. For instance, while Cape Verde records about 20 percent female parliamentary representation, Nigeria remains at the bottom with less than 5 percent (IPU, 2023).

Nigeria presents a contradiction. Women account for nearly 50 percent of the national population and around 51 percent of registered voters (Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC], 2019). Yet, this demographic power rarely translates into political influence. Women's representation in governance has consistently fallen short of both the 30 percent affirmative action target recommended by the Beijing Platform and the 35 percent benchmark set in Nigeria's National Gender Policy (2006). In the 2023 general elections, women constituted only about 10 percent of candidates across all positions. The

final outcomes were even worse: only 3 percent of Senate seats and 4 percent of House of Representatives seats were secured by women (Nkereuwem, 2023). This decline represents a 19 percent drop from the 2019 elections, positioning Nigeria among the bottom ten countries globally for women in politics.

The barriers to women's participation in Nigeria are multifaceted. Cultural stereotypes and patriarchal norms continue to view politics as a male domain. In some communities, religious misinterpretations discourage women from public leadership roles. The monetization of politics where campaigns are driven by high financial stakes, also disadvantages women, who typically face economic exclusion and have less access to political "godfathers." Electoral violence and intimidation, common during Nigeria's elections, further deter women from contesting. These barriers combine to reinforce women's marginalization, even though they consistently demonstrate political interest, with high levels of voter registration and mobilization (Ilo & Ikenra, 2009 and Odedina, 2025).

At the state level, the challenges mirror the national picture, though sometimes with even starker disparities. Adamawa State, located in Nigeria's northeast, is a socially conservative and male-dominated environment. Out of 58 elective offices across the state assembly, local governments, and national legislature, women occupy only five seats (National Democratic Institute, 2018). The Boko Haram insurgency, which has displaced over 136,000 people in the state, has further deepened women's vulnerability and reduced their access to political opportunities. Additionally, Adamawa's economy dominated by male-centered trades such as farming, cattle herding, and fishing reinforces traditional gender roles that limit women's participation in decision-making.

Despite these obstacles, women in Adamawa have shown resilience and increasing interest in political participation. More women are joining political parties, registering to vote, and contesting for positions. Honorable Wilbena Jackson of the Adamawa State House of Assembly notes that women's greatest strength lies in their ability to mobilize themselves and others, a trait that has been evident in the state's grassroots politics (NDI, 2018). This was particularly relevant in the 2023 gubernatorial election, where women's voices and votes shaped political debates even if their direct representation in candidacy was limited. Worthy of mention and of significance is the All Progressives Congress (APC) gubernatorial aspirant: Sen. (Engr.) Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed (Binani) whom was a symbol of women breakthrough in Nigerian politics despite all odds. She was also the only female gubernatorial flag bearer of a major political party in the country.

The economic and developmental benefits of including women in politics are well documented. Women's participation leads to more inclusive policymaking, greater attention to education, healthcare, and social welfare, and improved governance outcomes (Ogbogu, 2012). At the national and state levels, Nigeria cannot afford to continue excluding half of its population from decision-making, especially as the country grapples with security challenges, economic reforms, and governance crises. Adamawa, as a microcosm of Nigeria, demonstrates both the challenges and the potential of women's political participation.

Therefore, this study focuses on the impact of women's participation in politics with specific attention to the 2023 Adamawa gubernatorial election. It examines how structural, cultural, and economic barriers continue to limit women's political visibility, while also highlighting the emerging opportunities for their empowerment in Nigeria's democratic landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Despite international commitments to gender equality, women in Nigeria and particularly in Adamawa State continue to be significantly underrepresented in politics. In Adamawa, patriarchal norms, religious conservatism, economic marginalization, and insecurity from insurgency compound one another, leaving women largely excluded from leadership roles. For example, between 2019 and 2023, women's representation in areas like Mubi-North, Yola-North, and Numan local councils remained minimal (Wazakari & Yakubu, 2023)

At the national level, financial hurdles, political violence, and systemic biases such as party gatekeeping are well-documented barriers to women's political participation (Odedina, 2025; Africa Renewal, 2024) Even though Nigerian women make up half the population and are active voters, they represent just around 4 percent in the House of Representatives and less than 5 percent in the Senate (Africa Renewal, 2024)

The gap lies in the contradiction between women's demonstrated political engagement and their minimal representation in governance. While women actively register, vote, and mobilize communities, these contributions rarely translate into leadership positions. This exclusion weakens Nigeria's democracy and denies Adamawa State the developmental benefits that women's political participation could bring, including more inclusive policies and responsive governance. This study, focused on the 2023 Adamawa gubernatorial election, seeks to explore the causes and consequences of this persistent exclusion.

Research Questions

The following research questions were put forward in order to guide the study towards successful achievement.

- i. What is the level of women's participation in the 2023 Adamawa gubernatorial election?
- ii. What socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers affect women's participation in politics in Adamawa State?
- iii. How does women's political participation influence governance, inclusiveness, and democratic development in Adamawa State?

Objectives of the Study

This study objectives of the study are:

- i. To assess the extent of women's involvement in the 2023 Adamawa gubernatorial election.
- ii. To identify the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional challenges that hinder women's participation in politics in Adamawa State.
- iii. To examine the impact of women's political participation on governance, inclusiveness, and democratic development in the state.

Philosophy of the Study

The guiding philosophy of this study is Positivism. Positivism is based on the belief that reality is objective and can be measured using observable facts. Since the study aims to measure women's participation, levels of representation, and factors influencing political involvement through quantifiable data, it fits into the positivist approach. Positivism allows the researcher to remain detached, rely on numbers, and test hypotheses objectively (Creswell, 2014).

Methodology of the Study

The Survey design was employed which is quantitative research method. This methodology focuses on numerical data, statistical tests, and measurable outcomes. It allowed the study to assess the level of women's participation and the impact of cultural, religious, and socio-economic barriers in Adamawa State.

Table 4.1: Did women actively participate in the 2023 voter registrations?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 82 | 67.8 |
| No | 39 | 32.2 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 82 (67.8%) of the respondents agreed that women actively participated in the 2023 voter registrations while 39 (32.2%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.2: Did women show any significant interests in the 2023 elections?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 80 | 66.2 |
| No | 41 | 33.8 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Population of the Study

The population of this study was the entire people of Adamawa State with an estimated population of 5.7 million people (NPC, 2023).

Sample size and Sampling Technique

Using the Taro Yamane's formula, with a 9.1% margin of error at 95% confidence level, the sample size of 121 respondents was drawn from a population of 5.7 million people of Adamawa State.

The Taro Yamane formula is given as:

$$n = N / (1 + N * e^2)$$

Calculation

$$\text{Population (N)} = 5,700,000$$

$$\text{Margin of error (e)} = 0.091 (9.1\%)$$

$$e^2 = (0.091)^2 = 0.008281$$

$$N * e^2 = 5,700,000 \times 0.008281 = 47,201.7$$

$$1 + N * e^2 = 1 + 47,201.7 = 47,202.7$$

$$n = N / (1 + N * e^2) = 5,700,000 / 47,202.7 = 120.8$$

The calculated sample size is approximately 121 respondents.

Method of Data collection

The study employs primary method of data collection which was structured questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents across Adamawa State using the sample size calculated with Taro Yamane formula. The questions were a closed-ended which was made of sections A – D.

Method of Data Analysis

This research used descriptive analysis of frequency counts and percentages and used tables to present the data.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Questionnaire Analysis

From the above table, it reveals that 80 (66.2%) of the respondents agreed that women showed significant interests in the 2023 elections while 41 (33.8%) of the respondents refused to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.3: Have women significantly contested in all levels of political positions?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 75 | 62.0 |
| No | 46 | 38.0 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 75 (62.0%) of the respondents agreed that women significantly contested in all levels of political positions while 46 (38.0%) of the respondents refused to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.4: Do religious practices/teachings cause low political participation of women?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 86 | 71.0 |
| No | 35 | 29.0 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 86 (71.0%) of the respondents agreed that religious practices/teachings cause low political participation of women while 35 (29.0%) of the respondents refused to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.5: Does Gender-Based Violence cause low political participation of women?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 76 | 62.8 |
| No | 45 | 37.2 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the table above, it shows that 76 (62.8%) of the respondents agreed that Gender-Based Violence cause low political participation of women while 45 (37.2%) of the respondents refused to agree to the question.

Table 4.6: Does some cultural practices cause low political participation of women?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 71 | 58.7 |
| No | 50 | 41.3 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 71 (58.7%) of the respondents agreed that some cultural practices cause low political participation of women while 50 (41.3%) of the respondents refused to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.7: Does lack of early access to education cause low political participation of women?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 82 | 67.8 |
| No | 39 | 32.2 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 82 (67.8%) of the respondents agreed that lack of early access to education cause low political participation of women while 39 (32.2%) of the respondents did not agree.

Table 4.8: Does high cost of running political activities hinder women from participating in politics?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 69 | 57.1 |
| No | 52 | 42.9 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 69 (57.1%) of the respondents agreed that high cost of running political activities causing low political participation of women while 52 (42.9%) of the respondents did not agree.

Table 4.9: Did women's voices and votes shape political debates in the 2023 elections?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 82 | 67.7 |
| No | 39 | 32.3 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 82 (67.7%) of the respondents agreed that women's voices and votes shaped political debates in the 2023 elections while 39 (32.3%) of the respondents did not agree.

Table 4.10: Have women participations in the 2023 elections now influenced governance?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 87 | 71.9 |
| No | 34 | 28.1 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 87 (71.9%) of the respondents agreed that women participations in the 2023 elections now influence governance in Adamawa State while 34 (28.1%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

Table 4.11: Have women been considered in political appointments after the 2023 elections?

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 89 | 73.5 |
| No | 32 | 26.5 |
| Total | 121 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the above table, it reveals that 89 (73.5%) of the respondents agreed that women are now been considered in political appointments after the 2023 elections while 32 (26.5%) of the respondents refuse to agree as indicated in their responses.

agreement with other gender sensitive scholars whom feel women are denied opportunities but when given the chance, can outperform the men (Oloyemi, 2016) and Adedeji (2009) whom stated that democracy entails holistic decision making.

The findings of the study in relation to research question 2 were enriching. The study found out numerous challenges women face in trying to get involved in politics, some of the challenges found out included; lack of economic (money) power which is a vital tool in Nigerian politics; ranging from party primaries to general elections. Gender based violence which most times is backed by some religious teachings and cultural barriers which deny women access to public appearances and excludes them from participating in decision making processes. The findings of this study is in consonance with the studies of Illoh and Ikenna, 2009 & Oloyedi, (2016) whom revealed the ego

displayed by men while suppressing women and high cost of elections. More so, Odedina (2025) revealed that the monetization of politics where campaigns are driven by high financial stakes, also disadvantages women, who typically face economic exclusion and have less access to political “godfathers.”

Research question three looked at how women's political participation influence governance, inclusiveness and democratic development. The study found out that women's voices and votes shaped political debates in the 2023 elections thereby influencing there consideration for political positions both elective and by appointments. Ogbogu (2012) showed agreement with the above findings while stating that women's participation leads to more inclusive policymaking, greater attention to education, healthcare, and social welfare, and improved governance outcomes

Conclusion

Despite the large population of the female gender, they suffer undue marginalization in almost every angle beginning from the family to the larger society. There must be a deliberate effort by religious leaders, traditional leaders and the government to mobilize for the emancipation of the female gender in occupation of political offices and being part of decision-making process.

Recommendations

From the findings of this research study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Gender equity in the political participation is a vital facet of any democratic governance. Women should have equal opportunities and the same rights as men to be able to fully participate in all levels of the political processes of any community.
2. The findings indicated that Nigerian women still do not have the same access and are not able to exercise the same equality rights as men. The study is also recommending that laws that will provide equal rights and opportunities to both women and men in all aspects and levels of the political processes of Nigeria should be enacted.
3. The study is also recommending for gender sensitivity training for men, women, and children. This kind of training would be of benefit to both men and women in eliminating stereotypes and creating open-mindedness.
4. The study is also recommending for the support of the effective participation of women at all levels of government, especially in leadership. Women need to be provided opportunities to participate by increasing their participation in all levels of governments and providing funding for them to

participate in the political process because election financing was a key concern and expressed as a barrier for seeking elected positions.

5. Education is determined to be the most effective way to enhance Nigerian women's political awareness and effective participation. Therefore, there is need to address the attitude of both men and women toward formal education at the higher level beyond secondary school.

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