

Media and Gender Inequality in Nigerian Politics

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of the media in promoting gender discrimination and inequality in Nigerian politics. It argues that the male domination of Nigerian politics, which reproduces gender inequality, is anchored on societal patriarchy as a cultural logic, but, orchestrated and reinforced by media stereotypical portrayal of female politicians as unequal with their male counterparts in the Nigerian political sphere. The study uses a corpus of sociological and media communication theories to advance the argument that the media reinforce the cultural-patriarchal social structure which 'narratives' women as subordinates, weak, inferior and subservient to their male counterparts; and this engenders gender inequality and affects how the society perceives women and their participation in politics. It examines media coverage of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria; with the aim to compare the level of coverage given to the female presidential candidate in contradistinction to the male candidates. It content analyzed two purposively selected national news papers in Nigeria – THISDAY and The Guardian. The study examined data generated from news mentions in these two newspapers for a specific period of 28 days in proximity to the election. It concludes that media role affected how the electorate perceives the female candidate in the election.

Keywords: Media, Gender, Inequality, Male Domination, Nigerian Politics

1.0 Introduction/Background

The struggle for equality and fair treatment of all persons has come a long way, with attendant consequences on the female gender in particular. The gender sphere has been a main site of contestation between males and females – especially with the dominance of men over women. Around 800 – 400 BC in ancient Greece, particularly in the city-state of Athens - considered the cradle of democracy - women were not allowed to participate in the *Polis*, being the center for public discourse concerning the affairs of the citizens. Consequently, women, slaves and foreigners were not considered equal to participate in the democratic process. This, in itself, prefaced the idea of civil inequality and gender discrimination.

The 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW, which became operational in 1981 in its Article 5 concerning sex role, stereotyping, and prejudice, states that all necessary measures should be engaged to “modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of inferiority or the superiority either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women” (CEDAW, 1979, p. 3). Nigeria ratified the 1985 provisions of CEDAW and its accompanying Optional protocol in 2004. But, the provisions of these laws are better observed in breach than in action. Furthermore, the country ratified the protocol to the African Charter on Human People's Right in 2005. Yet, again, it is observed more as an international obligation than with the intention to adhere to the principles and provisions of the charter. In mid-2000, a Bill seeking for the 'Abolition of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in Nigeria and other Related Matters' was considered at the National Assembly, but it was not passed.

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More specifically, the constitution of Nigeria provides for freedom of speech, assembly, and association for both male and female. The men and women also have equal rights to vote or to be voted for in an election (National Beijing + 20 Review, 2014).

The Nigerian constitution prohibits discrimination against any citizen based on sex, gender, age, tribe, etc. Nigeria has a Gender Policy that focuses specifically on women empowerment while also making bold commitments in the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination. But these provisions are in contradistinction and in contestation with the provisions of the Nigerian states that run independent statutory, customary and sharia laws, particularly in the Muslim dominated northern part of Nigeria, where the application of Sharia law is strong. This results in variations in the interpretation, adjudication and implementation of these laws at both the state and the federal government levels. The accompanying low level of education among the people coupled with the socio-cultural and religious burdens that pervade the society compound the situation.

In spite of these provisions, the socio-economic, cultural and religious sentiments that prevail in the society do not allow for the pursuit of equal rights between the genders in Nigeria. These sentiments, especially as recently reinforced by the media, are so strong and pervasive that the possibility of women participating fully in politics like their male counterparts is outlandishly constrained and sometimes makes it near impossible for them to participate. Having surveyed the issue of women inequality within a broader framework, let us now situate the issue of media and women in Nigerian politics.

1.1 Media, Women and Politics in Nigeria

Gender stereotyping is historical and universal. In Nigeria, it is made worst by the patriarchal nature of our cultural heritage and orchestrated by the communal nature of the socializing process. For Walby (1990, p. 20), “patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. Lerner (1986) asserts that in a patriarchal society men are perceived and seen to be strong, wise, and superior to women and hence they are expected to provide care, protection and leadership to the women. This position presupposes that men are more intellectually and emotionally balanced than women and hence should provide leadership. In most cases, patriarchal societies draw rationality from the bible where the men are supposed to be the head of the women just like Jesus Christ is the head of the church. The men point to the biblical injunction that the “husband is the head of the wife” (Ephesians 5:22) and that the “Wives submit to your husband as to the Lord (Ephesians, 5:22). However, the biblical injunction does not appear to be referring to human inequality, but, making reference to the men taking leadership responsibility; and also in reference to mutual respect. This is affirmed in Ephesians (5:22) “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”.

The assumption is that, though other sociological and cultural factors contribute to the gender stereotyping which placed the women gender in a negative position of subservience and subordination to their male counterparts, and which by implication affects their full participation in politics, the media are noted to have entrenched and reinforced this patriarchal and unequal gender structure through: 1. The denial of fair media access to women in politics; 2. The institutional pattern of news framing that primes women as only concerned about family, kitchen affairs, entertainment, fashion, style and sex.

Historically, women played landmark political roles in Nigeria. For instance, during the pre-colonial times women played important roles in the administration of the state which was then based on royalty (Kolawole et al., 2012). In the then Bornu Empire, the women held royal positions as Megira (the Queen Mother) and the Gumsu (Wife of the Mai or King). The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turku, whose daughter Queen Amina grew up to become a warrior. Queen Amina built the walls of the ancient city of Zaria to prevent enemies from penetrating the frontiers (p.2). In Yoruba land the Obas ruled with the assistance of the women referred to as the Palace Ladies.

In the Fourth Republic (1999 – 2015) women participation in Nigerian politics improved. A document ‘National Beijing + 20 Review’ (2014) published by the Federal ministry of women affairs confirmed that “women’s engagement as aspirants to political office increased from 3.2 in 2003 to 7.58 during the last general elections in 2011, with 500 women actually winning their respective party nominations as candidates for the State and Federal Legislative houses”. It showed that “as at 2011, the country exceeded the 30% global threshold for women’s participation for the first time, as (sic) female ministerial appointees made up 31% of the Federal Executive Council” (p. 8).

To achieve this, the government had established some policy frameworks which encouraged more women to be engaged in politics, including the adoption of institutional advocacy and collaborations between government agencies and national and international civil society organisations. The establishment of the Nigerian Trust Fund is also a great encouragement as it offers technical and financial support to boost the women's moral to participate and be engaged in politics. The target is to reach a 35% women participation threshold, and the National Gender Policy provides the institutional policy framework to enable the achievement of this goal.

Irabor (2011), however, argues that, winning nominations to represent a political party does not equate to winning the actual election. He argued that the internal mechanisms of the political parties are structured in a manner that does not allow the women candidates to win the elections, even though they may have been picked by the various parties to represent them. To buttress his point, he argued that in the 2011 elections, only 1 out of every 14 women candidates won their elections, as against the 1 in every 7 elections for men. He concluded that, the problem is neither institutional nor in the candidates. This study agrees with Irabor. It posits that, the perception of women by the society as a group to be seen, but not to be heard in public, is part of the problem. This study argues that this problem is entrenched by the media, and that, it will require the media to adopt a new form of news reporting based on effective communication to solve it.

Researchers have identified several factors that militate against the application of the equality principle in all aspects of life in Nigeria, but not many of those studies have critically examined how the media reinforce this inequality against the female gender through limited access to the media and patriarchal framing of their stories and their reports; and how this results to exclusion and hence affects development process in Nigeria (National Beijing + 20 Review, 2014).

This paper investigates the role of the media in promoting gender inequality in Nigerian politics; it shows how the women are denied fair access to the media, and it also identifies media bias in the coverage of female news stories through the agenda setting, framing and priming processes that entrench the perception of patriarchy and gender inequality in the society.

This study adopts the theory of social constructionism, symbolic interactionism and feminist communication theory to argue that media framing of women in the Nigerian society constructs a reality that affects women participation in politics. The media construct women as weak, naturally suited for the kitchen, and subservient to men. They are also perceived as people created to nurse and nurture babies and husbands at home - in a society that is largely patriarchal. This perception constructed by media is the main cause of the sustenance of this problem in recent times. The paper further argues that the perception of women in Nigeria, which has constrained their full participation in politics, is not natural but socially constructed by the media. Specifically, the study uses media content analysis to evaluate and respond to the following research statements and invariably the accompanying research questions.

Research Statements

1. The female presidential candidate of the KOWA party, Prof. Remi Sonaiya was not given enough media coverage compared to her male counterparts in the Peoples Democratic Party, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and the All Progressive Congress, General Muhammadu Buhari.
2. The extent of prominence given to the media coverage of the KOWA presidential candidate is negligible when compared with her colleagues in the election.
3. The media framing of the KOWA presidential candidate showed gender bias when compared to her male counterparts, and to that extent considered negative or unfavourable to her.

Research Questions

1. What is the frequency of media coverage of the only female presidential candidate Prof. Remi Sonaiya, in relation to her male counterparts, in the 2015 election in Nigeria?
2. How prominent is the media coverage of the only female presidential candidate in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria?
3. How did the media frame news reports, interviews or stories in their coverage of the female candidate in comparison to the male candidates in the 2015 presidential elections?

Other questions that this study will attend to in the discussion section include the following:

1. To what extent did the media employ patriarchal social structure to construct the female genders' participation in Nigerian politics?
2. Does the perceived construction of women gender as subordinate and subservient to the male gender affect their full participation in Nigerian politics?

The study applied the media content analytical method to examine the News and Political segments of two national newspapers – The Guardian and This Day. It examines the content of political stories in the 28 days of February, 2015. These newspapers were purposively chosen because of their wide circulation and their strong political news content. The dates were also purposively chosen because of the high level of political activities and news reportage during the period – which was very close to the presidential election that took place in March 2015. This study is very significant, because, the continual undermining of the female gender through patriarchal framing by the media affects their motivation to participate in politics and subsequently affects their contributions to the socio-economic and political development of the nation.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual clarification of terms

Generally, the media refer to the various means of communicating an idea from one person or group to the other or from one person or group simultaneously to a public audience. It includes the mass media of radio, television, newspapers, bill-boards, the internet, blogs, Facebook, tweet, etc. But, in this study, we refer specifically to the traditional mass media of newspapers. Media content influences and shapes the way we experience reality and also contributes to the shaping of gender roles and identities and how they are perceived and accepted in the society.

There is a big difference in how the media portray the female gender and the reality of the positive roles women can play in the society, including in the political decision making process. Gender equality in the media should refer to equal access and visibility through news and political reportage of both the male and female genders in Nigerian politics. In this study, the use of the term gender will not be regarded to mean sex or women generally as a homogenous group. Here, we refer to women who are in politics or aspiring to political career, and not just as political participants in the manner of casting votes or support a candidate. We refer to women who are involved in the political process and are engaged in political party formation. Women who are registered party members and who attend to political party meetings, who participate in defending the party's programmes or manifesto in public or in the media; and also those who make themselves available for party or government position either by appointment or by election.

To explain the concept of gender in contradistinction to the concept of sex is vital at this point. There is a general misconception, and in the process a misapplication of the concepts of sex and gender. Historically, the concept of gender as opposed to that of sex was not introduced in political and gender analysis until in the 1970s. Stoller (1964) was credited as the first scholar to distinguish between sex and gender, as he was also the first to characterise them into identifiable categories of sex, gender, gender identity and gender role. Oakley (1972), pointed out that gender is not a direct product of biological sex. He posits that sex is a function of the anatomical and physiological characterization which defines someone as male or female; while gender is a socially constructed categorization of masculinity and femininity. He argued that masculinity and femininity are not biological significations beyond their socio-cultural and psychological attributions, which are acquired in the socialization process of becoming a man and a woman, at particular periods and particular societies.

This implies that, while as sexuality and sexual attribution is natural and static, gender is socially and spatiotemporally constructed, and hence potentially mobile in character. Gender in this study then refers to gender role in the social and political space in Nigeria. On another point, gender rights here refer to the process of establishing the obligation, value and worth of the female genders to fully participate in Nigerian politics. It refers to the process of stimulating the Nigerian female gender to strongly access the provisions of the constitution for free participation in the political process through freedom of speech, association, assembly and other forms of expression in the Nigerian society. Gender stereotyping in the media is common and has been studied by researchers over the years. Stereotyping as a concept is evasive, complex and difficult to define. It is seen as beliefs adopted by people or groups concerning an object, person or group. They are not natural traits but simplifications and profiling of social roots, subjective but persistent and shapes perceptions, and are transmitted from generation to generation. There are all kinds of stereotypes mostly cultural and social.

In this study we refer to culturally rooted stereotypes with social and economic implications and consequences. Stereotypes are not always negative. Sometimes they can be positive - as they help us comprehend certain complexities in the social world, reduce uncertainties and provide a sense of security. Gender stereotype, as referred to in this study, promotes unequal relationships that affect the emotions of the female gender and promotes asymmetrical motivations for them to be their best, or for them to fully participate in politics.

The social perception ascribed to women privileges a worldview constructed from a patriarchal structure which affects them from their youth, their choice of toys, subjects in school, profession to choose and practice, and eventually their role in decision making and participation in life. These stereotypes are shaped by the media (European Commission document, 2010).

2.2 Theoretical review and framing of the study

In framing this study, a corpus of media theories were reviewed, which include – agenda setting and framing theories - to explain how the media frame the female gender as subservient in the political process. The study also applies another corpus of sociological theories - social constructionism, symbolic interactions and feminist communication theory- to support the media theories in explaining this phenomenon of media construction of the female gender and the constraint it places in their strive to participate in Nigerian politics.

The paper argues that the influence of the media as a socialising agent is powerful, especially among the less media savvy members of the public. In Nigeria, news reports in the newspapers are considered factual and authentic, just by merely being reported in the newspaper. This plays strongly in the realm of the agenda setting theory of the media with its cousin, the framing theory.

Agenda setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) refers to the idea that media coverage of any issue positions such issue as important. The theory implies that the media have a large influence on the audiences, in terms of what stories to consider newsworthy and how much prominence and space given to them. A more considerable attention is paid to any story that appears in the media. The conception of such story by the audience is that, if it were not important it will not be considered for usage by the media. It makes people pay more than a casual attention to it. On the other hand, framing, an extension of agenda setting, is the idea that the way the media reports a particular incident influences how it is interpreted by the audience.

The theory of symbolic interactionism and social constructionism negate this media entrenchment of patriarchal stereotyping of the female gender. The theories explain that gender and the meaning embedded in it is socially constructed. Symbolic interactionism conceived by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) implies that human interactions and the meaning derived from every day lived experience is based on the use of symbols, particularly, as contained in languages. According to him, without symbols there would be no human interaction and no human society. *The Social Construction of Reality*, published in 1996, sparked the idea of the theory of social constructionist. The basic premise of the theory refers to “the processes by which events, persons, values and ideas are first defined or interpreted in a certain way and given value and priority, largely by the media, leading to the construction of larger pictures of reality” (McQuail, 2010, p. 101). The theory summarises that society is a social construct rather than a fixed reality. That media and communication provide the materials for the construction of reality. This theory connects to the idea of symbols as an instrument of meaning making and construction of reality. It also connects to the argument that inequality based on patriarchal structure is a social construct, and that the mass media are the major instruments for this construction. To this end feminist communication theory also explains how the media entrenches this patriarchal narrative.

These are theories that focus on women and their experiences in relation to communication production, especially by the media, on the communicative strategies used to oppress women (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009) particularly in framing their participation in politics in the light of negative and subservient perception. Most of the theories relate to how language, which is man-made, has been biased since centuries against the female gender, to promote masculine ideologies. They also look at access to the public sphere, and by extension examine who controls the public sphere, and who determines a voice to the public sphere. It argues that understanding how organisations, in this case media organisations, construct particular identities for men and women is very important. Also, to understand how women struggle to maintain their balance and their efforts to participate in a hegemonic political structure and political environment that privileges the male gender over the females including “profit and power over social justice and sustainability (p. 391) is important in understanding how the media undermine women in politics.

Gender theories cut across four major spectrum – liberal feminist, Marxist/socialist, radical and cultural feminism. Although there are others like ecofeminism and black feminism, these four mentioned earlier are more common. Basically, liberal feminism argues for the equality of both men and women. It posits that equality can be achieved by incremental legal and social reforms. It sees politics from an individualistic perspective and seeks for social reform in the society instead of revolution. Radical feminism is opposed to this incremental change through social and legal reforms. They, like the socialist and Marxist feminists, believe in the revolutionary change of the patriarchal structure that breeds the operation in the male and female gender relations. They are more interested in the root cause of the oppression which to them is the gender relations occasioned by the patriarchal structure of the society. On the other hand, while as the Marxists/Socialists agree to some extent with the Radical feminists, they disagree on the cause of inequality between the male and female genders. They argue that the cause of inequality between both sexes will be located in the public and private spheres of a woman's life. They argued that women can only be liberated and inequality eliminated by working to end the economic and cultural sources of women oppression. They advanced the Marxist argument that women inequality is a function of capitalism. On the other hand cultural feminism propounds that the male and female genders are naturally and fundamentally different, especially by their psychological and physiological composition. They argue that the women are endowed with special attributes that make them more functional than the men including the duty of childbirth. They further argue that by nature they are a kinder, gentler, articulate and passionate beings than men. So, to this extent, they argue that they should be incorporated more into politics, governance and public life to use their God given nature to enhance the value of mankind.

2.3 Empirical literature review

Ross and Carolyn (2006) in their work *Gender and Media* see “women's relationship to media as uneven and contradictory, characterised by feminism becoming deeply embedded in media messages and the industries that produce them, but, at the same time, women as subject remaining marginalised and misrepresented in media content, and women professionals remaining outside production apparatuses” (p. 19). They also frown at women's exclusion and misrepresentation in media content, professions, and policies. This study is instructive and revealing. However, its focus is Eurocentric and did not take consideration of media and gender relationship in politics in the sub-Saharan region or in Nigeria particularly.

In a similar study focusing on gender and politics with reference to Nigeria, Kolawole, Abubakar, Owonibi and Adebayo (2012) argued that the equality of the male and female genders in Nigeria will facilitate national economic development. They posit that presently, the female gender are being oppressed and emasculated from politics by their male counterparts, thereby excluding them from fully participating in the political discourse, including on those issues that are prominently female related. The study highlighted the role of women in pre-colonial Nigeria politics, where they contributed effectively to the sustenance of the Kin groups (p.1). Pre-colonial Nigerian economy, they submit, was basically at a subsistence level in which Nigerian women participated fully in supporting their husbands in the farmland – thereby promoting production of agricultural products.

Azuh, Egharevba and Azuh (2014) in their study on gender discrimination and national policy assert that “women participation in Nigerian politics is crucial to the development of Nigeria” (p. 1), especially since women constitute a sizable number of the population, neglecting them means losing the valuable contribution they can make in the society.

In his empirical study on “Engendering local governance for sustainable development in Nigeria” Olasupo (2006) established the fact that women are marginalised in all tiers of governance in Nigerian politics. He identified some factors that led to this marginalisation, some of which he highlighted as the general belief that women should play a subsidiary role in the family based on the traditional thinking that traditional societies are organised according to clear gender division of responsibilities based on the hierarchical structure in which the male gender is superior and superordinate to the female gender - seen as inferior and subordinate.

However, following the argument of the liberal feminists, the conclusion reached by this study does not assuage the struggle for gender rights. From the legal and constitutional point of view there do not seem to be any provisions that particularly discriminate the female gender from participating in politics, nor is there any law discriminating the girls not to have access to education or to get any job in the labour market. The problem, in my view, has always been social, cultural and religious.

While as Azuh et al.'s study calls on the media to expose all evils of discrimination, they did not take into consideration the role of the media in perpetuating this discrimination through framing, and their portrayal of the female gender in politics. Unfortunately, there are few studies in this area of research. This study undertakes this task as its main goal.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Media Content Analysis of Women Participation in Politics

This study examined two major nationally circulated newspapers in Nigeria. The newspapers are purposively chosen. They are the *The Guardian* and *THISDAY*. The study examined the editions for the month of February 2015 which comprised of 28 days from February 1 to 28. The study compared the media coverage of the only female presidential candidate in the 2015 election in Nigeria, Prof. Remi Sonaiya of the KOWA party, with the media coverage of the other two dominant presidential candidates, Dr. Good luck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, and General Mohammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress, APC. The study used media content analysis to underscore the range of coverage in the following areas:

1. Frequency of coverage (How many times the name of the candidate appeared or was mentioned on the headline of the story)
2. Framing of the story (positive or negative - that is in favour or against the candidate)
3. Prominence – the specific pages on which the stories appeared (cover page, back page, news page, politics/policy page, features, interviews and news-extra).

For the purpose of responding to the research questions, the stories were coded with numbers allocated to each story to indicate frequency – indicating how many times the name of a particular presidential candidate was mentioned on the headline of the story, irrespective of whether it is in his/her favour or not. Then, the researcher examined the tonality or framing of the question to determine whether it was in favour of the candidate or against the candidate. This is also coded and numbers allocated to indicate how many stories were framed positively or negatively for the candidate. For the purpose of this study the researcher coded only positive stories. Negative stories were left out because they would not add any value to the goal of the study.

The tables below indicate the coding schedule as manifests from the two newspapers. For clarity, the researcher prepared one table each for the two newspapers to indicate how the three parties were covered by *THISDAY* newspaper and the *Guardian* respectively. This manifest content of the two newspapers were used to respond to the research questions, and subsequently conclusions drawn to demonstrate that the media are implicated in denying access to the female politicians in Nigeria; and that the media use framing to reinforce the patriarchal social structure that recreate and sustain inequality in Nigerian politics.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: THISDAY Newspaper

Date Feb. 2015	Frequency G. Jonathan	Frequency M. Buhari	Frame G. Jonathan	Frame Buhari	Prominence G. Jonathan	Prominence M. Buhari	KOWA R. S.
1.	4	5	3	3	4	3	Nil
2	Nil	6	Nil	3	Nil	6	Nil
3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
4	3	3	2	1	3	3	Nil
5	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
9	8	2	6	2	8	2	Nil
10	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
11	4	2	2	2	2	2	Nil
12	1	5	Nil	2	1	5	Nil
13	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil
14	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
15	3	Nil	2	Nil	3	Nil	Nil
16	Nil	2	Nil	1	Nil	2	Nil
17	1	1	Nil	Nil	1	1	Nil
18	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
19	3	2	-	1	3	2	Nil
20	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
21	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil
22	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
23	10	3	3	23	10	Nil	Nil
24	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil
25	1		1	Nil	1	Nil	Nil
26	2	2	Nil	2	2	2	Nil
27	1	2	1	2	1	2	Nil
28	5	2	4	1	5	2	Nil
29							
30							
Total	46	40	24	44	44	35	0

Table 2: Guardian Newspapers

Date Feb. 2015	Frequency G. Jonathan	Frequency M. Buhari	Frame G. Jonathan	Frame M. Buhari	Prominence G. Jonathan	Prominence M. Buhari	Other KOWA
1.	1	6	1	2	1	6	Nil
2	1	1	1	-	1	Nil	Nil
3	2	4	2	2	1	3	Nil
4	8	5	4	3	4	5	Nil
5	4	2	4	1	4	2	Nil
6	3	1	2	1	2	1	Nil
7	2	1	2	1	2	1	Nil
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	Nil
9	3	1	2	Nil	2	1	Nil
10	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
11	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
12	3	2	2	2	3	2	Nil
13	Nil	2	Nil	1	Nil	2	Nil
14	1	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil	Interview
15	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	Interview
16	4	1	2	1	4	1	Nil
17	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	Nil
18	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
19	4	2	1	1	4	1	Nil
20	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	Nil
21	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	Nil
22	7	1	2	Nil	4	1	Nil
23	4	2	2	1	3	1	Nil
24	2	3	1	Nil	2	3	Nil
25	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	Nil	Nil
26	3	Nil	2	Nil	1	Nil	Nil
27	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
28	2	2	2	2	2	2	Nil
29							
30							
Total	63	39	36	19	49	35	2

RQ1: What is the frequency of media coverage of the female presidential candidate, in relation to her male counterparts, in the 2015 election in Nigeria?

As indicated in the table above, the total frequency of media coverage for the three parties in both newspapers is 190. Out of this number PDP had 109 which represents 57.0% of the total coverage, APC had 79 which represents 41.5% of the total while KOWA had 2 which represents 1.0% of the total media coverage of the three presidential candidates in the two newspapers over a period of 28 days; before the 2015 presidential elections. This indicates that the female presidential candidate was not given enough access to the media or her activities were not adequately covered in the media compared with her male counterparts in the other two parties. This confirms the research statement that the female presidential candidate of the KOWA party, Prof. Remi Sonaiya was not given enough media coverage compared with her male counterparts in the Peoples Democratic Party, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and the All Progressive Congress, General Mohammadu Buhari.

RQ2: How prominent is the media coverage of the female presidential candidate compared to her male counterparts in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria?

There were a total of 165 stories captured under these categories - that is, stories that appeared on the front pages, back news pages, news pages, news-extra pages, politics/policy pages, features and interview pages of the two newspapers. Out of the total number, the candidate of the PDP recorded 93 mentions representing 56.4% of the total mentions in both publications, APC recorded 70 mentions, representing 42.4% of the total mentions in both publications, while as the female candidate of the KOWA party recorded 2 mentions representing 1.2% of the total mentions in both publications. There is an indication based on the above data that the presidential candidate of the KOWA party received very negligent coverage of just two mentions out of the total of 165. This also corresponds with the research statement that the extent of prominence given to the media coverage of the female presidential candidate is negligible to be compared with her colleagues in the election.

RQ3: How did the media frame news reports, interviews or stories in their coverage of the female candidate in comparison to the male candidates in the 2015 presidential elections?

There were a total of 123 positive mentions of the candidates in the two newspapers. Out of this number the PDP candidate had 60 positive mentions representing 48.8% of the total mentions, the APC had 63 positive mentions representing 51.2% while the female candidate of the KOWA party had zero - since the only two mentions she had in the Guardian framed her negatively. This also confirms the research statement that the media framing of the female presidential candidate showed gender bias when compared with her male counterparts and to that extent considered negative or unfavourable to her.

Discussion

The discussion on this paper is done thematically based on the following themes – Frequency, Framing and Prominence.

Frequency: In Nigeria, media have, to a large extent, become commodified. In this case the amount of money the candidate is ready to budget for media exploitation also determines the level of media exposure available to the candidate and his/her campaign. The candidates of the PDP and APC are known to have invested heavily in their media campaigns. Both parties are known to have hired foreign media consultants and PR strategists to execute their campaigns. APC hired AKPD, while as PDP worked with LEVIC for a certain period of time during the elections (Shapiro, 2014). These are U.S communication outfits and they do not come cheap. On the other hand, KOWA was a new and not very rich political party. KOWA could not match the level of media budget expended by the two big parties. These may have affected the access to the media by the KOWA presidential candidate. But even at that, the media being the fourth estate of the realm should offer her enough access to express her views and positions on her party's agenda and manifestoes. A paltry two interview slots in the Guardian was a clear expression of denial to media access.

Framing: Following the agenda setting theory, the media to a large extent determine, if not 'what people think' but what 'they think about' (Cohen, 1963). In analysing the interaction between the interviewer and Prof. Sonaiya, the KOWA candidate, you will notice the role of framing in the interview. For instance, the reporter/interviewer asked her, "Are you not a bit afraid initially seeing as you are the only female contesting for the

post of presidency” (The Guardian, Sunday, February 15, 2015, p.57). A question like this is part of the media framing that presupposes that as a female she should not have dared to tread in a man’s world. It was a way to confront her effrontery for making a decision to run for the presidency as a woman. This kind of framing reinforces the belief by the society that such exalted position is a man’s affair and not for women, thereby creating inequality in the political terrain. Again, the reporter asked her, “How do you see the involvement of women in politics? Have they been given enough opportunity in the political space? Again, the framing of this question implies that the political space is dominated by the men and if the women want to share in it, they require to ask from the men. Prof. Sonaiya in response said, “I believe women should claim that space for themselves, not sit there and be waiting to be given opportunity in the political space” (The Guardian, Saturday, February 14, 2015). The idea that the political space is a male domain is a patriarchal social belief that is strengthened and reinforced by the media through framing of stories and interviews as we can see in this case.

The way the reporter/interviewer above framed his questions demonstrates clearly, that, he/she presupposes that Professor Sonaiya, the presidential candidate of KOWA Party, being a woman, should have been scared of the terrain trod by men or a path that is a domain for men only. Again, the reporter’s question extends that presupposition by emphasising the fact that, she was the only woman in a race meant for men. So, the concern is not much of her mental capacity or her experience for the position, but for her being a woman. Also, the use of the word ‘afraid’ presupposes that the interviewer sees the presidential race as something beyond the range of a woman. Therefore, her venturing into it should ordinarily cause her to fear. The implication therefore is, “why are you not ‘afraid’ to venture into this man’s world?” It could be implied here, that, this may be one of the reasons the media do not seek out the female candidates for coverage. They may not see her as a strong contender, and hence, of no point wasting their time either to seek for her response on serious national issues or even running issues-related interviews with her.

Professor Sonaiya’s response to the interviewer on another question concerning the low level of women participation in politics confirms that the way the media portray and frame women in politics discourages them from full participation. The question is “Have they been given enough opportunity in the political space? She responded and said, “I believe women should claim that space for themselves, not sit there and be waiting to be given opportunity in the political space”. Like this researcher explained earlier, there is no law or regulation inhibiting women from appropriating the political space or participating in politics in Nigeria. But, they are constrained by the socio-cultural environment that tells them this is a man’s pre-occupation. “Your own preoccupation should be at home and in the private. For you to even venture into this space, you need to be allowed or given the opportunity to do so”.

Human beings are symbol bearing animals. The theories of social constructionism, symbolic interactionism and feminist communication theory all point to the fact that human beings construct meaning through language and language is symbolic. Utterances generated by the speaker are polysemic in the ears of the hearer as he/she tries to make meaning out of them. The meaning generated by the listener does not depend on the speaker or on the utterance itself, it depends on the background of the listener as shaped by his/her socio-cultural background.

Prominence: In terms of prominence – that is the position where the stories appeared, it was obvious that the two big political parties benefitted from their stories being exposed on the very prominent pages of the two publications including front page, news page, features/special profile, political news pages and back page. In the case of KOWA presidential candidate, she had only two interviews which were conducted on Saturday and Sunday of the Guardian. Obviously, these interviews were prominent but far too insignificant, considering the frequency of two appearances only.

Following the result of the content analysis, it could be observed that the female candidate of the KOWA party was marginalised by inadequate media coverage which made her almost negligible, and by implication, portrayed her participation in the presidential election as inconsequential.

According to the agenda setting theory, the media to a large extent determine, if not 'what people think' but what 'they think about' (Cohen, 1963). If the KOWA presidential candidate was not adequately covered by the media, if the people did not think about her, how then would she be considered as a serious contender to the position? One of the reasons the media did not consider her a serious candidate must have been as a result of their perception of politics as a 'man's world' and hence did not see her as a fit for the position.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

This study is a preliminary examination of how the media cover the female gender in Nigeria politics through under-reporting, denial of access to the media space and also through framing of their stories and interviews. Following the agenda setting theory, the media to a large extent determine, if not 'what people think' but what 'they think about' (Cohen, 1963).

This paper argues that, the mass media frame their stories through a patriarchal structure which subordinates the female gender in Nigeria and position them as subservient and inferior to their male counterparts. This way of treating the female gender affects their emotions and their confidence within the society and makes them shy away from fully participating in politics. This exclusion of the female gender in politics affects the overall development of the country.

Recommendation

1. The Nigerian media system need to be restructured to enable them appreciate the contemporary view of the role of the media in the society, which includes the creation of awareness for equality and non-discrimination of any group on the account of gender, colour, age, sex, ethnicity or even religious or political proclivities.
2. The Nigerian journalist needs to be retrained to understand his/her social responsibility in relation to developmental journalism which is directed towards the promotion of social cohesion and cultural development on the basis of equality and awareness of the ethos that promote life's advancements and not those that are retrogressive and inhibiting.
3. Political orientation and awareness campaign of the populace including the female gender on the need for meaningful participation in the public sphere or in the polity, to enhance national development.
4. Policy pronouncements that will compel the media houses to provide equal access to the women as much as they do to their male counterparts to enable the women to express themselves, concerning their political pursuits and persuasions.
5. A socio-cultural awareness campaign that educates the people about the challenges inherent in the pursuit of a patriarchal society, in this modern time, as it inhibits the development of the human person and the society at large.
6. There is also the need for a mass media literacy campaign to help the entire society to understand how to read and interpret media content appropriately.

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