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Newspaper Coverage of Women's Participation in the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract

In a representative democracy, which has been tested and achieved in varying degrees across Africa, elections are the means or a vehicle by which people make choices about who should represent them, as well as express preference for given policies. In Nigeria, elections are instruments of legitimisation for a political body. These cannot be achieved without a strong, fair, dedicated and responsible media. Promoting equitable, balanced and conflict-sensitive election reporting in Nigeria's print media is crucial. This study ascertained how well Nigerian newspapers reported women's participation in the 2011 general elections. Two Nigerian daily newspapers were studied: *The Punch* and *The Guardian* (December, 2010 and August 2011). A total of 464 stories were gathered, out of which only 62 stories were on women's participation. The minimal visibility and coverage of women political actors in Nigerian newspapers is well revealed with 90 percent of the stories found inside the pages of the newspapers while there were no stories on the back pages.

Introduction

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracies operate since the 17th

Century. Nigeria has a vibrant media which have been in existence for 150 years. There are public and private or independent media institutions operating in Nigeria cutting across both print and electronic platforms. Nigerian media as the Fourth Estate of the realm have a key role to play in educating and informing the Nigerian electorate on the electoral process, legal regimes for elections, party and candidate campaigns, voter registration, imperatives of violence-free polls, promotion of transparency and accountability in government and generally ensuring that Nigerians are kept abreast of events in the polity. The media have a key role in ensuring that citizens participate in the electoral process and that its outcomes are credible and acceptable to the populace. In a bid to strengthen the effectiveness of mass media in promoting balanced, conflict-sensitive reporting, a well informed citizenry, citizen engagement and accountability governance are essential.

According to Umechukwu (2004), women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies, women assume five key roles: mother, producer, home-manager, community organiser and socio-cultural and political activists. Over the years, there have been raging debates over the participation or desire of women in Nigerian politics. Some argue that for women, the social value, norms and beliefs, have glossed over their meaningful contributions and have placed them in a subordinate positions to men in the nation's political system. This gender division of labour in the political system is often traced to colonialism in Nigeria. The Western cultural notion of male superiority reflected in its relations with Nigerians.

The 1922 Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution disenfranchised women and limited the participation of adult males to the wealthy. This is not to say that there was no existing element of gender inequality in traditional state and stateless societies in Nigeria but that the colonial order made gender discrimination more

pronounced. In traditional Yoruba states, for example, women held high political offices such as the *Iyalode*, *Iyaloja*, *Iyalaje* and even the office of the *Oba*. However, at the establishment of the colonial order, women became estranged to these rights politically, but in the Yoruba Kingdoms they could still perform their traditional roles. The political enfranchisement of women in Nigerian politics seems to have been maintained on a superficial level of gender equity politically, because it is assumed that constitutionally there are no barriers to women participation. However, what exactly is/are the problems and prospects that women encounter in their quest to participate in politics?

The mass media provide perspectives, shape images of candidates and parties, and help highlight issues around which a campaign would develop. They define the unique atmosphere and areas of sensitivity with any particular campaign (Lang and Lang 1999). This article therefore seeks to find out how well Nigerian newspapers reported women's participation in the 2011 general elections. Participation here refers to activities and events involving women which influenced the electoral process in 2011.

Objectives

The study aimed to:

1. Ascertain the prominence given to the reports on women's participation in the 2011 General elections in Nigeria.
2. Find out the volume of coverage given by Nigerian newspapers to female candidates as against their male counterparts
3. See, between the *Punch* and *The Guardian*, which newspaper showed greater commitment to women's issues in 2011 general elections.
4. Find out the category of women in politics stories that had the highest report in the Nigerian newspapers.
5. Ascertain the slant or tone in which report of women's participation in the general elections was couched.

Research Questions

1. What was the prominence given to the reports on women's participation in 2011 general elections?
2. What was the volume of coverage given by Nigerian newspapers to female candidates as against their male counterparts?
3. Between *The Punch* and *Guardian*, which showed show greater commitment to the coverage of women's issues in 2011 general elections?
4. What category of stories had the highest report in the Nigerian newspapers?
5. What slant or tone was used to report women's participation in the 2011 general elections?

The Concept of Political Participation

Political participation is an essential component that is required for ensuring the stability and legitimacy of every political system. Political participation is one of the fundamental ideas of a democratic society. It is critical for democracy because it involves a commitment to equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacity (Agbaje, 1999). Anifowose (2004) defines political participation as those voluntary activities such as holding public and party office, attending election campaigns, voting and exposing oneself to political stimuli.

Political participation encompasses the involvement in decision making by which individuals acting singly or through group organisation attempt to influence decision making or alter the manner in which power may be distributed and the principles by which it may be exercised in a particular society. Participation involves taking part in an event or activity. In this article, participation refers to women whose activities and events, influenced the electoral process either directly or indirectly.

Media and Elections

Elections can be a key element in both conflict resolution and conflict escalation. Therefore, free and fair elections are essential for democracy consolidation and conflict prevention. The professionalism of the media is crucial during election periods. To promote fair, safe and professional media election coverage, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) supports advocacy to encourage full, fair and efficient disclosure of information to journalists covering the elections; training to enhance professional election reporting; training on the safety of journalists and their right to work without threat; and the production and distribution of election guidelines reflecting principles of professional reporting during elections, journalists' rights, election processes and safety information, as well as briefing notes on international human rights law with emphasis on freedom of expression (Omenugha, 2007).

It is true that the media play an indispensable role in the proper functioning of a democracy. Discussion of media functions usually focuses on their watchdog role: by unfettered scrutiny and discussion of the successes and failures of governments, the media can inform the public about how effectively representatives have performed and help to hold them to account. Yet the media can also play a more specific part in enabling full public participation in elections, not only by reporting on the performance of government, but also in a number of other ways:

1. Educating voters on how to exercise their democratic rights.
2. Reporting on the development of the election campaign.
3. Providing a platform for political parties to communicate their messages to the electorate.
4. Allowing the parties to debate with each other.
5. Monitoring vote counting and reporting results.
6. Scrutinising the electoral process itself in order to evaluate its fairness, efficiency, and probity.

There is a bewildering variety of possible systems for regulating political advertising or free direct access coverage and reporting. This refers to that portion of election reporting that is under the editorial control of the parties or candidates themselves. There may be obligations on some sections of the newspapers to carry such material, and there will almost certainly be conditions that they must abide by if they do (Alemika & Omotosho, 2008).

Overview of 2011 Presidential Elections

In the 2011 general elections, an increased number of Nigerian women defied the odds, stepped into the murky waters of politics, aspired and contested for party primaries. Many lost, yet a significant number compared to previous elections won the party primaries and contested for elective positions in the various political parties. There were 3306 candidates with men accounting for 3004 (90.9%) and women 302(9.1%) (Nigerian national elections 2011). Even with this number of female aspirants, only a few emerged as candidates and fewer of them emerged as winners at the polls.

Unfortunately, the number/percentage of women who were successful at the polls in 2011 was less than the figure in 2007. Whereas, the 2007 figure was higher than the figure in the 2003 general elections; and the figure in 2003 higher than the figure in the 1999 general elections. In 1999, the overall percentage of women was 2%; in 2003, it was 4% and in 2007 it was 6%. Although the number of female candidates increased for most of the elective positions, there was only one female presidential candidate: Mrs Ebiti Ndok of the United National Party for Development. It is doubtful if she eventually voted given issues she had with the administration of justice system. It should be noted that Sarah Jubril was a presidential aspirant under the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). She lost at the party primaries.

There were four female vice-presidential candidates, namely: Rose Yakubu of the African Renaissance Party (ARP), Kadijat B. Abubakar of the Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP), Binutu Fela Akinola of Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH) and Bilikisu Ismo Magogo of the National Transformation Party (NTP).

Overview of the 2011 Gubernatorial Elections

Whereas, there are 36 governorship seats in Nigeria, fewer than 36 states were due for governorship elections at the April 26, 2011 governorship elections. This was due to the fact that some governors did not commence their term on May 29, 2007 as they had to wait for the courts to adjudicate on winners of the 2007 governorship election. The court's decision was pronounced some years after other governors took their oath of office. Consequently, the four year tenure started running on the day they took their oath of office which was not May 29, 2007. Amongst these States were Edo, Ekiti, Osun and Anambra States. Governor Peter Obi's second term as governor of Anambra State started running in 2010 because he took the oath of office as governor in 2006, in respect of the governorship election he contested in 2003, only after the Court of Appeal declared him winner of the election in 2006. He won a second term in the 2010 governorship election in Anambra State. Consequently, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) did not conduct elections in those states.

There were 348 governorship candidates who contested elections for governorship seats across the Federation. Thirteen (3.7%) out of the 348 governorship candidates were women and they contested in 10 states namely Benue, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Kano, Kebbi, Kwara, Oyo and Plateau. Their names and parties were: Emilia Uba Omaliko, African Democratic Congress (ADC); Victoria Azaber Pausu, All Progressives Grand Congress (APGA); Dame Gloria Obi, African Democratic Congress (ADC); Princess Esther Nwodo-Agbo, People's Redemption Party (PRP);

Nkechi Offor, African Liberation Party (ALP); Scolastica Emerole, Action Party of Nigeria (APN); Okoronkwo Precious, Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP); Ihemadu Nkemdika, Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH); Hajia Musa Yakassi, Action Party of Nigeria (APN); Hauwa Mohammed, African Democratic Congress (ADC); Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora, Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN); Dada Fatima, Mega Peoples Progressive Party (MPPP); Paullen Tallen, (Labour Party). None of these women was successful at the elections which means that to date, Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor of a State except for the brief period that Deputy Governor Dame Virginia Etiaba held office for Governor Peter Obi of Anambra State when he had some political challenges that led to Dame Virginia Etiaba being sworn in as governor.

Consequently, there was generally an increase in the number of male governorship candidates that had women as their deputies. At least, four parties in Lagos State chose women to contest as deputy governors. In 1999, only Lagos State had an elected female deputy governor, Mrs. Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor although she was later removed and replaced by a man, Femi Pedro as a result of party intrigues probably informed/influenced by patriarchal tendencies.

In 2003 the number of deputy female governors increased to two (5.5%), in 2007 it increased to 6 (16.6%). The 2011 general elections produced only a female deputy governor, Mrs Adejoke Orelope Adefulire of Lagos State who contested under the platform of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Some of the female candidates contested against heavy weights. A case in point is Plateau State where Paullen Tallen (Labour Party) contested against political heavyweights such as Joshua Dariye who was governor from 1999 to 2006, Ibrahim Mantu who was once Deputy Senate President, Fidelis Tapgun and the incumbent, governor Jonah Jang. Senator Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora (ACPN) who contested for the governor's seat in Kwara State had ethical and

religious issues to contend with in addition to contesting against the PDP's candidate which also pitched her against her brother, the then incumbent governor of the State.

Overview of National Assembly's Elections

Female candidates constituted 9.1% of the total number of candidates who contested election into the National Assembly in the 2011 general elections across all the political parties. Quite a number of women won tickets for the National Assembly and the various State Houses of Assembly. In Lagos State, all the female candidates from ACN won at the polls in the election into the National Assembly and the State House of Assembly. Women contested for only Seven (17.5%) seats out of the 40 seats in the Lagos State House of Assembly. Adamawa State which had 23 women vying for political offices managed to produce only three female winners: Hajiya Aishatu, Mrs Wale Fwa and Mrs Wilbina Jackson.

Out of the 109 Senators who emerged winners at the 2011 polls, only seven (6.4%) were women. The successful candidates were Nkechi J. Nwaogu, Mrs. Helen U. Esuene, Nenadi Usman, Aisha Jummai all of PDP. Others include Christiana N.O. Anyanwu, Joy Emordi both of APGA and lastly Chief (Mrs) Oluremi Tinubu of ACN. The notable losers included Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, Senator Daisy Danjuma, and Kema Chikwe. The decrease in the percentage of female candidates that won at the polls is disturbing given the increase in the number of women who contested. The figure dropped significantly when compared to the performance of women in previous elections.

In the 2007 general elections, nine (8.25%) female candidates won the senatorial seats. They were Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora (Kwara State), Christiana Anyanwu (Imo State), Zainab Kure(Niger State), Grace Bent (Adamawa State), Joy Emodi (Anambra State), Eme Ufot Ekaete (Akwa Ibom State), Patricia Akwashiki (Nasarawa State), Iyabo Obasanjo- Bello (Ogun State),

Nkechi Justina Nwaogu (Abia State). In the 2003 elections, there were four (3.67%) female senators whereas in the 1999 general elections, there were only three (2.75%) female senators namely: Chief (Mrs.) Florence Ita-Giwa who won on the platform of ANPP representing Cross River State South Senatorial District; Mrs. Stella Omu who won on the platform of PDP from Delta State and Hajiya Khairat Abdul Razaq (now Hajiya Gwadabe) who also won on the platform of PDP representing the Federal Capital Territory.

The drop in the number of successful female contestants is worrisome. Senator Grace Bent from Ilesha, Osun State, South West Nigeria but married to an indigene of Adamawa State and elected into the Senate in 2007 under the platform of PDP, could not pick the ticket at the party primaries in 2011. First timers such as Prof. Dora Akunyili could not sail to the senate as she lost to Dr. Chris Ngige while Ms Jumoke Akinjide also lost in Oyo State.

However, another first timer Chief (Mrs) Oluremi Tinubu won the Lagos Central Senatorial seat under the platform of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Chief (Mrs) Oluremi Tinubu is the wife of one of the chieftains of ACN, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. It is believed that any candidate in Lagos State contesting under the platform of ACN should consider the election a walkover because Lagos is a profound and traditional stronghold of the ACN. Does this actually give room for the most suitable aspirant to vie in party primaries, win the primaries and contest election given the influence of 'god-fatherism' in Nigerian politics? Female performance in the House of Representatives election was not different from that of the Senate. A significant drop of successful female candidates was also recorded.

Out of the 360 available seats, women won only 19 (5.27%). This is an abysmal drop in the light of the success recorded in 1999, 2003, and 2007 where the figures were respectively 27 (7.5%), 21 (5.8%), and 19 (5.3%). Worst still is that some of the identified change agents especially as regards the tenacity with which they supported the Violence Against Persons

(Prohibition) (VAPP) Bill before the National Assembly, lost at the polls. A case in point is Honourable Binta Garba. Notable winners include Honourable Beni Lar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) who is the daughter of Chief Solomon Lar, the Governor of Plateau State during the Second Republic and also one of the chieftains of the PDP.

Theoretical Foundation

Agenda-setting theory, first developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their Chapel Hill study holds that the mass media set the agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues. The agenda-setting theory states that the media (mainly the news media) determine the issues that the public consider as important by the pattern of news presentation. Thereby the issues focussed upon by the media become the issues that the public accepts as important for attention and discussion.

The agenda setting role of the media is expected to explain the mode of operation of the print and broadcast media in Nigeria. Agenda-setting, in its simplest form, holds that the media dictate what the people think about, not what the people think. It states that the agenda of the media were basically the agenda of the people. The media set the agenda for what the people should think about, and the order of importance of these thoughts. The agenda-setting theory focuses on the cognitive, indirect effects of the mass media. This theory has led mass communications researchers to study how media news coverage affects an issue's salience. However, the press does more than bring these issues to a level of political awareness among the public. Agenda-setting means that the priorities of the press to some degree become the priorities of the public (Baran and Davis 2003).

Method of Study

The method adopted in this study is content analysis research

design. Content analysis is a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). The study population comprised *The Punch* and *The Guardian* Newspapers published between December 2010 and August 2011. The sample was 288 issues of the newspapers under study. Sixteen (16) issues were selected per month for each newspaper. The sixteen issues were arrived at by selecting four papers per week for the study using simple random sampling and multiplying the four papers by four weeks in a month. The 16 issues were multiplied by nine (9) months under study to arrive at a total of 144 issues per newspaper again multiplied by the two newspapers to give a total of the 288.

The two newspapers used for this study were selected for the following reasons:

1. They are national newspapers owned and run by Nigerians.
2. They appeal to both the masses, the political class, have wide readership.
3. They are available in the market nation-wide to all levels of consumers/Nigerians.
4. The copies of these newspapers were also available to the researcher for the purpose of this study.
5. The newspapers uphold a considerable measure of professional/ethical practice.

The unit of analysis included any article or story that focused on women participation in the 2011 general elections. They were measured for frequency of reports, prominence, quality of reports, tone of reports and source of reports. Frequency was determined by the occurrence of the coverage of women in politics as against other women issues and political reports. The newspaper's stand could be favourable, unfavourable or neutral. Favourable reports occur when the news stirs up positive

reactions, while unfavourable reports occur when the news content stirs up negative reactions. A neutral report however, occurs when an indifferent reaction is elicited.

Prominence was determined by the placement of each item of women's participation in 2011 general elections on the pages of the newspapers. Front page appearance signifies that the news stories are the most important for that day while those that appear on the back page are regarded as semi important. The inside story pages are counted as least important stories and they usually appear from page 2 to the page before the back page.

The source of a report could be identified, which refers to sources either within the Nigerian print media industry or news agencies. They could also be unidentified which implies that the stories were written without a by-line.

For the quality of the report, it could be very high which means those reports adjudged by the reporter as excellent in quality with regards to the content and language or presentation of reports. High quality are those reports that are seen as very good with regard to the content, language or presentation of reports. Low quality on the other hand refers to those reports adjudged to be poor while very low quality are those with very poor content, language or presentation of reports.

The instrument of data collection for the study was the coding sheet which contained the parameters of analysis. Coding sheet is a peculiar instrument in content analysis. Content analysis in respect to this research was designed to compare media content to the real world i.e. coverage of media in issues related to women participation in 2011 general elections in Nigeria. This technique is used to obtain data from the manifest content of the newspapers thereby describing communication content.

Results

A total of 288 issues from *The Punch* and *The Guardian*

newspapers were sampled and these gave rise to 464 reports or news items on the 2011 general elections. From these reports, *The Punch* reported only 24 items on women as against 227 for men while *The Guardian* reported a total of 38 issues on women as against 175 issues reported on men. This implies that for the study period of nine months (December 2010 – August 2011), the two newspapers reported only 62 issues on women out of 464 issues on the 2011 general elections.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution Table on 2011 General Elections Coverage

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Punch</i>	251	54
<i>The Guardian</i>	213	46
Total	464	100

A total of 464 stories were reported on the 2011 general elections by the newspapers with *Punch* leading with a total of 251 stories.

Table 2: Coverage of Men/Women in 2011 General Elections

Frequency	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total	Percentage
Women in politics	24	38	62	13
Men in politics	227	175	402	87
Total	251	213	464	100

The Punch newspaper had a higher percentage of coverage on the 2011 general elections than *The Guardian* newspaper and lower percentage on women's participation in election.

Table 3: Distribution of Women in 2011 general election according to the Content Categories

Story type	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total	Percentage
News stories	14	19	33	53
Feature stories	6	8	14	23
Editorial	0	0	0	0
Opinion articles	0	0	0	0
Personality profile	5	7	12	19
Cartoon	0	0	0	0
Pictures	1	2	3	5
Total	24	38	62	100

As could be seen from Table 3, news stories were the most used format while there was no editorial, opinion articles, or cartoons.

Table 4: Distribution of Women's Participation in 2011 General Elections According to Slant Given

Slant/tone	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total	Percentage
Favourable	9	16	25	40
Unfavourable	6	7	13	21
Neutral	9	15	24	39
Total	24	38	62	100

Reports that presented or supported public opinion on the issues raised in the report were classified as favourable and the reports that did not support the public opinion on the issues raised thereby generating a negative perspective towards the issues were classified as unfavourable. However, the reports that presented women and men's participation equally were classified as neutral.

Table 5: Distribution of Women's Participation in 2011 General Elections According to Prominence

Prominence	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total	Percentage
Front page	2	4	6	10
Inside page	22	34	56	90
Back page	0	0	0	0
Total	24	38	62	100

From the table above, there was no story on Women's participation in 2011 general elections on the back page of the two newspapers.

Table 6: Distribution of Women's Participation in 2011 General Elections According to the Quality of Report

Quality	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total	Percentage
Very high	2	7	9	15
High	20	29	49	79
Low	2	2	4	6
Very low	0	0	0	0
Total	23	38	62	100

From the table above, most of the reports were of high quality in terms of content and language of presentation.

Discussion

The presentation and analysis of the data above show the level of coverage the Nigerian press gave to women's participation in the 2011 general elections. It is obvious that the Nigerian newspapers did not give women's participation the desired coverage it deserved compared to the coverage of their male counterparts. For the study period of nine months, 464 stories were gathered out of which only 62 were on women's participation and 402 on men.

The findings also show that of the 62 news items, 56 (90%) were on the inside pages, six (10%) were on the front page while there were no news items on women on the back page. Moreover,

the data analysed also indicate that nine (15%) news items were unfavourable as against 29 (47%) that were favourable and 24 (38%) that were neutral.

The format of report presentation left much to be desired as the two newspapers concentrated more on news stories, paying less attention to facts behind the news. Opinion articles, editorials which could have given, facts and figures behind the news were not given serious consideration. However, *The Guardian* rated higher between the two newspapers under study. It gave the highest frequency of reports in terms of news stories and features while *The Punch* presented more photo news (see Table 3).

Conclusion

The findings of this study supports the observation that women's participation in the 2011 general elections was not adequately covered. The media need to re-orient and re-position. They shape our mind set.

It was also observed that the reports on women were more of news stories and this suffices to say that the media reported women's participation in the 2011 general elections more as straight news reports. Features, which give an in-depth treatment of the news behind the news were relatively low and this implies that the readers were not given an in-depth analysis or broader perspectives of the issues regarding women's participation in the general elections.

Also, there was no editorial in both newspapers which was not expected as editorials give readers the stand of the newspaper house on the issue given the fact that women turned out en masse to participate in the elections. It is our view that the subject of imbalance in reporting men and women issues should be tackled. The print media need to be more gender sensitive if they are to contribute in addressing this lopsidedness.

The Nigerian newspapers did not place high priority on the issue as many of the stories were placed in the inside pages of

the newspaper. It is noted that the print media in their agenda setting role, place stories that are notably important on the front page of the newspaper. However, women's participation in the Nigerian 2011 general elections occupied only 10% of the front page newshole. This suggests that the two newspapers did not count women's participation in elections as important.

The study also shows the stories were of high and sometimes very high quality in both language and presentation. In addition, most news stories analysed were by in-house sources. This is a welcome development in the print media. It indicates that the Nigerian media are reducing their reliance on foreign news agencies for news of local significance.

Recommendations

A wise saying goes thus: "The largest room on earth is the room for improvement." For newspapers to play a positive and meaningful role in reporting women's participation during elections there is a need for reorientation in news coverage and reportage. Women in politics whether during electioneering or not must be on the agenda of the media coverage of national issues. It must also be a critical part of the curricula of higher institutions of learning to encourage continued discourse in this area. The students should also be trained on gender sensitivity and how the media shape the perception of men and women.

The media are encouraged to air their opinions on women's issues especially when the turnout is high as witnessed in the last general elections. Editorials allow newspapers to share their opinions on national issues. It is stimulating to perceive different views of women's participation in politics. It is indeed interesting and different to see editorials on women during elections and on women in general.

It is commendable that the media made sure most news items on women's participation in 2011 general elections were favourable and of high quality. This should be a continued effort and can even

be improved upon. The media have the potential to build or destroy through the power of words and pictures. Ashimi (2008) agrees: "the ability of the media to make or mar the image of women in the society cannot be denied or underestimated. In fact, the United Nations document recognising the media as a critical area for women listed the media as one of the ten obstacles to women advancement."

Importantly, female stereotypes due to cultural, religious, moral and societal beliefs as portrayed in the media should be curbed as they keep women's voices out of the media or sometimes, present caricatures of women. Women are not only wives, cooks or mothers but people with dreams, visions and foci. Their one-centered deed in life is not just to have a family as most media tend to portray, but self accomplishment and actualisation. The media are encouraged to engage in vigorous free debate, while tempering passionate reporting with the need to respect the truth and adhere to international standards of journalistic integrity. Media outlets should act in a non-partisan manner and remember their responsibility to provide the most accurate and unbiased information to the Nigerian electorate. To this end, media outlets must take seriously the need to avoid inflaming already tense situations with unbalanced, biased or partisan reporting. The media must also recognise their role in mobilising and inspiring women to achieve greater heights. They should be "instigated" to take up greater responsibilities such as official appointments; managerial positions supervisory roles, etc. The media should ginger women to gather confidence and the qualities required for such positions.

In all, the media must become agenda setters on the issue of women in politics. To do this, media professionals should undergo specialised training, workshops, and conferences on how to handle specialised (gender) reporting.

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