

GENDER EQUALITY AND INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE JUDICIARY SYSTEM OF BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study ascertains the leadership positions of women in the judicial system vis-à-vis their male counterparts (1998-2015). Three research questions and hypotheses were used in the study; limited to State High Court and the Customary Court of Appeal in Bayelsa State. The study employed survey design. It showed the ratio of women to men in the Judiciary leadership positions in Bayelsa State; beneficial to individuals, governmental, non-governmental, and philanthropic organizations. A total number of 56 Judges from both the High Court and Customary Court of Appeal and 56 members were selected using purposive sampling. The findings Chi-square quantitative techniques showed that male judges are 16.66 percent more than the female judges in the high court of Bayelsa State. The research question 2 indicates that the male counterparts are more both as Judges and Honorable Members of the Court of Appeal. The finding from research question 3 also reveals more males as Sectional Heads than women occupying this position. It shows a wide gap between women and men in leadership positions, which conforms the global perspective that there had been marginalization of women and low participation in leadership (political) and decision making platform, Thus, for gender equality and women to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, there is need for the

enforcement of the 35% participatory rights for Nigerian women in governance, to integrate women into notable leadership positions.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Integration, Judiciary System, Sustainable Development, Marginalization

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the issue of Gender Equality is one of the problems that has faced about half of the world's population and this is because the women more especially are faced with multifaceted problems such as: feminization of poverty and unemployment, lack of equality opportunity, limited access to education, multiple burden of domestic tasks, harmful traditional practices and violence against women Salami (2007) and Dauda (2007). Gender simply refers to the opportunity linked with being a male or female. This gender discrimination as opined by Anigwe (2014) has not really protected the rights of women. More so, this gender discrimination is not different in the Judicial system of government in Bayelsa State; who are the custodians of State laws, whose documented evidence should serve as a template for both the executive and the legislative arms of government in Nigeria.

Apart from other factors like: lack of education, religion, ethnic and culture; the failure of the legal System to enforce gender equality Laws has been seen as a major factor affecting the integration of women into leadership position in Nigeria.

At the international scene, women are increasingly being elected into political positions. This is shown in the 2016 global participation rate of women in national-level parliament which stood at 22.6% (Wikipedia). Integrating women into leadership position can empower women and achieve gender equality.

The Nigerian 2006 census showed that women constituted close to 50% of the entire population yet the gross gender gap of not integrating women in leadership position especially in respect to political representation and occupying sensitive management positions prevails, this is because of the continuous existence of gender inequality in Nigeria (Irons;2006, Okafor and Akokuwebe; 2015).

Statement of Problem

Is it possible to have sustainable development without gender equality? This is the question that over the years has not gotten a concrete answer because often times sustainable development is seen primarily from the angle of environmental sustainability. This narrow approach tends to

overlook the economic and ecological dimensions without adequately acknowledging the gender concerns. Achieving gender equality is vital to sustainable development and this has led to the post inclusion of the 2015 developmental agenda and sustainable development goals to include a gender perspective in the concept of sustainable development. In all societies, women and men play roles that are socially constructed but most frequently disparities exist which are to the disadvantage of women: this tends limit the progressive human race. Despite decades of effort, the overall progress is aimed at improving women's lives have been inconsistent. Women are still under represented in all levels government and other decision making environment, work place, home etc. Such limitation is linked with increased poverty among the women, especially in the rural areas and in most developing countries where women have little or no access to assets such as land, water, and ecological condition that give opportunities for improved live style. Although, gender inequalities affect mostly women and the society as a whole pays a price for them (Temesgen; 2008). The extent of women participating in sustainable development can still be viewed as being weak when compared with their male counterparts (Ironsi, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the gender equality in the Judiciary system of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. And to analyze the extent to which the integration of women in this sector of government has been covered. Specifically, this paper achieved the following objectives:

- (i) To examine the numeric nomination of women into leadership position (Magistrates and Judges) in the High Court.
- (ii) To evaluate the total number of women nominated as Judges and Honourable members in the Customary Court of Appeal.
- (iii) To ascertain the extent of gender equality among the sectional Heads in the Customary Court of Appeal in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used for the study:

1. To what extent have women been integrated into leadership positions as Magistrates and Judges in the High Court in Bayelsa State?
2. How many women have been nominated into leadership position as Judges and Honorable members in the Customary Court of Appeal in Bayelsa State?
3. Is there gender equality among the sectional Heads in the Customary Court of Appeal in Bayelsa State?

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant equal integration in the relationship between female and male Magistrate and Judges Appointment into leadership position in the Bayelsa State High Court.

Ho₂: There is no significant equal integration in the relationship between the total number of female and male Judges appointed into leadership position in the Bayelsa State Customary Court of Appeal.

Ho₃: There is no significant gender equality in terms of those who occupy leadership position among the Sectional Heads in the Customary Court of Appeal in the Bayelsa State Judiciary

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study covered the extent of gender equality and the integration of women in the Judiciary system of Bayelsa State. The study was limited to State High Court and the Customary Court of Appeal in Bayelsa State. This work covered the Judiciary system since the creation of Bayelsa State from 1996-2015. Although, the Customary Court of Appeal was established in Bayelsa State in 2006.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses descriptive research design. The study population consists of twelve (12) Honorable Judges of the High Court, twenty eight (28) Magistrates of the High Court. Also thirteen (13) Customary Court of Appeal chairmen, twenty six (26) members of other Customary Court: four (4) members of the Customary Court of Appeal and Twenty Six (26) Sectional Heads in the Customary Court of Appeal. These made it a total of 109 members of both High Court and Customary Court of Appeal. A total number of 56 Judges from both the High Court and Customary Court of Appeal and fifty six (56) members were used for the purposive sampling technique.

The researchers developed an instrument titled Estimation of Numbers of Male and Female Judges/Magistrates in Bayelsa State Judiciary System (ENMFJMBSJS). ENMFJMBSJS instrument was validated by two experts in research and statistics. Their corrections and recommendations were made before the instrument was used in the study.

Simple percentages were used to analyze the research questions while Chi-square empirical analytical technique was used to analyze the research hypothesis.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question 1

To what extent have women been integrated into leadership position (Magistrate and Judges) in the High Court?

Table 1: Male and Female Magistrates and Judges in State High Court.

Gender	No. of Magistrates	%	No. of Judges	%
Female	15	53.6	5	41.67
Male	13	46.43	7	58.33

The result from table1 revealed that there are 53.6 percent of female magistrate while male magistrate are 46.43 percent. On the other hand, male judges are 58.33 percent while female judges are 41.67 percent. This shows that male judges are 16.66 percent more than the female judges in the high court of Bayelsa State.

Research Question 2

How many women have been nominated into leadership position (Judges and Honorable members) in the Customary Court of Appeal?

Table 2: Male and Female Judges and Honorable Members in Customary Court of Appeal

Gender	No. of Judges	%	No. of Hon. Members	%
Female	5	38.46	4	15.38
Male	8	61.54	22	84.62

Table 2 revealed that male judges are 61.54 percent, while female judges are 38.46 percent. This shows a difference of 23.08 percent of male judges over female judges at Customary Court of Appeal. Again, the table shows that honorable male members are 84.62 percent, while female honorable members are 15.38 percent. This indicates that the male honorable members are 69.24 percent more than the female honorable members.

Research Question 3

What is the difference of gender among the sectional Heads in the Customary Court of Appeal in Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Difference in Gender in State Customary Court of Appeal Sectional Heads

Gender	Number	%
Female	7	22
Male	25	78

The result in Table 3 shows that among the Sectional Heads in the Customary Court of Appeal, only twelve-two percentages are female while seventy-eight percentages are male. This implies that the level of gender inequality is still very high in the Customary Court of Appeal which shows a percentage difference of fifty six male sectional head over female sectional head.

Hypothesis 1

Table 4: Computation of Chi- square (χ^2)

Gender	O_1	E_1	O_1-E_1	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
Male Magistrate	13	14	-1	1	0.0714
Male Judges	7	6	1	1	0.1667
Female Magistrate	15	14	1	1	0.0714
Female Judges	5	6	-1	1	0.1667
					0.4762

The result of the analyzes of data in table 4 above shows that the X^2 Calculated is 0.4762 is less than the X^2 table value is 3.841 at the degree of freedom 1 and the level of significance 0.05. Since the calculated value is less than the table value we shall not reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis not being rejected follows that there is no significant equal integration between the total number of male and female Magistrates and Judges integrated into the Bayelsa State High Court.

Hypothesis 2

Table 5: Computation of Chi- square (χ^2)

Gender	O_1	E_1	O_1-E_1	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
Male Judges	8	10	-2	4	0.4
Male Members	22	20	2	4	0.2
Female Judges	5	3	2	4	1.33
Female Members	4	6	-2	4	0.67
					2.60

The result of the analyzes of data in table 5 above shows that the X^2 Calculated is 2.60 is less than the X^2 table value is 3.841 at the degree of freedom 1 and the level of significance 0.05. Since the calculated value is less than the table value we shall not reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis not being rejected follows that there is no significant equal integration between the total number of male and female Honorable Judges and Honorable Members integrated into the Bayelsa State Customary Court of Appeal

Table 6: Computation of Chi- square (χ^2)

Gender	O_1	E_1	$O_1 - E_1$	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
Male	18	12.5	5.5	30.25	2.42
Female	7	12.5	-5.5	30.25	2.42
					4.82

The result of the analyzes of data in table 6 above shows that the X^2 Calculated is 4.82 is greater than the X^2 table value is 3.841 at the degree of freedom 1 and the level of significance 0.05. Since the calculated value is greater than the table value we shall reject the null hypothesis and accept the Alternative hypothesis this means that there is a significant difference in gender among the sectional heads in the Customary Court of Appeal. We have more men been appointed as sectional heads

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The results from the findings in research question 1 shows that male judges are 16.66 percent more than the female judges in the high court of Bayelsa State.

The research question 2 indicates that the male counterparts are more both as Judges and Honorable Members of the Court of Appeal.

The finding from research question 3 also reveals that we have more males as Sectional Heads than women occupying this position. Generally this indicates that there are mostly male lawyers in the leadership position when compared with their female counterpart in Bayelsa State Judiciary system. This could be attributed to gender inequality that seems to exist everywhere the world over especially in developing countries. This agrees with Oloko,(2002) that specific stereotypes affect women's and men perception of their abilities to the extent that men assess their own task abilities higher than women performing at the same level.

The findings in hypothesis 1 shows that despite the women magistrates out numbering the men there is still no significant equal integration between the total numbers of male and female Magistrates and Judges positioned in the Bayelsa State High Court. Research

hypothesis 2 shows that there is no significant difference on equal integration between the total number of male and female Honorable Judges and Members integrated into the Bayelsa State Customary Court of Appeal.

The findings in hypothesis 3 indicated that among the 25 sectional heads, a higher number are males. The finding from hypothesis 3 also showed that a significant difference exist between males in strategic position compared to the females. These results are in agreement with the study by Pande & Ford, (2011) that noted that Inspite of improvement in education attainment, professional development politics, it has not translated into significant increase in female leadership in politics and business. There is still continuous existence of gender inequality in Nigeria (Ironsi; 2006, Okafor and Akokuwebe; 2015).

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it could be concluded that: More women were made Magistrates while the Judges were mostly men both in the High Court and in the Customary Court of Appeal. Males were mostly made Judges, Honorable members and sectional heads than the female lawyers, this indicates that there is still an element of gender bias and inequality in the Bayelsa State Judiciary system, coupled with the fact that the serving Chief Judge (for over ten years) in Bayelsa State is a woman.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Women should be given same opportunity in terms of the number employed and occupying significant leadership position. More so, when qualified for that position like their male counterpart they should place as well. That is one way the gender inequality can be broken and they can contribute meaningfully towards sustainable development.
2. The 35% participatory rights for Nigerian women in governance should be enforced; since there is need for women to participate actively in the development of a nation through direct State intervention.
3. Women should be given political and economic autonomy by integrating them into leadership position which will invariably reduce to rating of gender inequality.

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