

Gender Imbalance in Political Reporting in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

This study examined imbalance in political reporting as it pertains to how Nigerian newspapers cover activities of male and female aspirants in general elections. The study adopted the qualitative discourse analysis approach in looking at the coverage of male and female candidates in the build up to the November 16, 2013 governorship election in Anambra State, with data from select newspapers. The objectives were to determine the volume of coverage given to the male and female aspirants by the newspapers; to ascertain the story types by which the activities of the male and female aspirants were presented; and to ascertain the sources of stories on the male and female aspirants. The study was hinged on the Agenda Setting Theory. It was found that the volume of coverage was laudable, but it was lopsided in favour of the male aspirants. The newspapers used different story types, including Straight news, Opinion Articles, Feature Articles, and others. It was also crystal clear that the newspapers did not give adequate coverage to the female aspirant as much as the male aspirants enjoyed. The study concluded that the discrimination of newspapers against women in their reporting is a fact, and that there is need to change the ugly trend. The study recommended that the media must put on the garb of an "activist-media" that is vibrant and unbiased in order to shape the democratic process in Nigeria by positively influencing the thinking and actions of the electorate when it comes to voting in elections.

Key words: Election, Female, Gender, Imbalance, Male Political Reporting

Introduction

Gender imbalance in several facets of life has been at the front burner globally that it is assuming status of crime against women. Demand for gender equality is often associated with equal opportunities for both sexes to education, quality healthcare, equal employment, decision-making, and freedom. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) guarantees that, just by the virtue of being human beings, individuals have inalienable rights. The document reflects international consensus, since it was drafted by representatives from eight countries, namely: Australia, Chile, China, France, Lebanon, America, Britain, and Russia (Robertson & Merills, as cited in Guanah, 2014). This became the first instance of the international recognition of economic and social rights as human rights, and not merely as a subset of other rights (like labour rights) (Niamh, 2009).

Women still face various systematic barriers and gender inequality. Women empowerment has continued to be a central theme in global treaties, conventions and declarations because of the propensity of women to act as catalyst for global development. These are expressed in many international, regional and domestic legal documents which are aimed at addressing issues relating to breach of women's and children's rights, especially within Africa. These include African Charter on Human and People's Rights adopted in 1981, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol, Democracy and good governance 2001, and the main partnership for Africa development (NEPAD) adopted in July 2001. Although Johannes (1991) opines that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been criticized for being gender biased, yet Cerna and Wallace (1994) mention that there are still several other articles that offer "general" protection for women, such as, among others, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which obligates state parties to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and Women and Children's Rights (Women Aid Collective- WACOL, 1997).

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. In its 30 Articles it specifically defines what constitutes discrimination against women and set up an agenda for national

action to end such discriminations (Committee On Elimination of Discrimination Against Women-CEDAW, 1979). The Convention took into consideration the over thirty years of feminist advocacy within the United Nations (UN) system, and there was a determined step to include a global commitment to women's equality in all aspects of human endeavours in international law (Niamh, 2009).

Cerna and Wallace (1994) observe that upon all the various international legal instruments that aim at eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of the sexes, traditional African culture often permits certain practise that are detrimental to women. And these are often borne out an ideology which attributes superior value to males over females. Geraldine (2007) adds that women in Africa are especially subjected to certain breaches of basic human rights, abusive patriarchal custom as well as inequality in the almost every sector of the society. Such treatment may also include their being forced to adorn black clothing without taking a bath for a long period, to cutting their hair and even being forced to eat from broken plates and cook with broken pots (Oyeniya, 2010). On her part, Egbemode (2007) adds that some traditions demand that a woman mourns the death of her husband for a period before she resumes normal everyday activities, and in some cases the widow is expected to remove all kinds of jewelries and stay in-doors. At times she is made to swear that she did not kill her husband even when it is obvious that the husband died of old age. She may even be "banished" to her parents' home during the mourning period. She could be told to sleep outside in the cold or cover her head with ashes until the period of mourning is over. Cultural beliefs and values like the foregoing often make the gender equality reasoning weak (Oluyemi-Kusa, 2006).

Women make up more than half of the Nigerian population, yet over ninety percent (90%) of them have suffered one form of discrimination or the other (Olojede, 1996). Gender equality is essential in achieving sustainable developments as dictated by the Millennium Development Goals` (MDGs) third goal, which is to promote gender equality and empower women. Also, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which came into effect in January 2016 to replace and accelerate the progress already achieved under the Millennium Development Goals talks about gender inequality. Specifically, according United Nations Development Programme-UNDP (2016), Goal 5 of the SDGs addresses the issue of gender equality, and aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Women are said to constitute half of the world's population, and have in no small measure contributed to the development of society, yet they suffer all manners of discrimination, inequality, exclusion and violence (Olojede, 1996). Okeke (2013) opines that gendering is one of the reasons why developing nations are still under developed, because they have refused to empower this 50% of their population who are women.

According to Oyesomi (2011), a total of 7,160 candidates participated in the April 14 and 21, 2007 general elections, out of which there were 628 women. A breakdown shows that there was just one female presidential candidate out of a total of 25 candidates; five women ran as Vice Presidential candidates. Moreover, 474 candidates contested for governorship in the thirty six states, with only 14 women running for the office of Governor while 21 women ran as Deputy Governorship candidates; 799 candidates contested for Senate out of which 59 were women; 2,342 candidates contested for House of Representatives seats, 150 were women; a total of 5,647 candidates contested for the positions in the Houses of Assembly of which 358 were women. Ninety-four finally emerged as winners, to wit, 6 deputy governors, 9 senators, 27 national representatives, and 52 in various state Houses of Assembly. The April 2007 elections also brought about the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives, in the person of Honourable Patricia Olubunmi Etteh (International Republican Institute-IRI, 2008).

Part of democracy is building a sound society that will encourage a good number of women to participate in politics, however it is disheartening and regrettable that the mass media that are supposed to be the "watchdog" of the society and encourage women to take part in politics are culpable in accentuating the misrepresentation of women, and the discrimination against women by underreporting them. Woods (2005) is of the opinion that due to the way the media pervade our lives their misrepresentation of gender may distort how we see ourselves and what we perceive as normal and desirable for men and women.

Today in Nigeria, contents of the mass media are riddled with 75% of political stories bothering on politicians and their activities, this development alarmed a ace broadcaster Edmund Obilo, whom Gbolagunte (2014) quotes to have observed that it is a “great pity, politicians, not media men set agenda in Nigeria” now. Nwabueze (2011, p. 339) corroborates this stand when he says:

In today`s world, the air we breathe is politics. We breathe politics, eat it and feel it even in our closets. Everything we eat, wear, and identify with, every person we associate with or work with, are affected by politics

The mass media provide perspectives, shape images of candidates and parties, help highlight issues around which a campaign would develop, and define the unique atmosphere and areas of sensitivity with any particular campaign (Lang & Lang, 1996). Newspapers deny the electorate from forming their opinion on who to vote for in elections when they underreport some aspirants, especially women, or when they give them complete coverage blackout; this assertion is corroborated by Isah (2005) who declared that this would not enable the women folk to play crucial and sustainable roles in societal development through active and direct participation in policy making strategic plan implementation. Grabber (1985, p. 5) asserts that:

Besides calling attention to matters of potential public concern, the media also provides cues to the public about the degree of importance of an issue. Matters covered prominently by the media on the front page with big headlines and pictures or as a major television or radio feature are likely to be considered most important coverage.

Similarly, McQuail (2005:50) states that “the media should act as a channel that helps to make the society aware of itself as well as by reflecting in their contents”. The mass media have enormous powers that the individuals or corporate organisations that control them or enjoy their coverage use these advantages in manipulating and attracting social, economic cum political favours. Olukotun (2010) opines that unequal information power confers the capacity to those advantaged by it not just to set the agenda of public discourse but to rig it by skewing it in particular directions favourable to the owners of media or those who enjoy elaborate coverage by the media. This must have made Okeke (2013) to ask questions like: How do the mass media portray women in the society? Are woman given equal representation like their male counterparts or is there an atom of patriarchy in the media?

The problem this study attempts to tackle is that of determining if newspapers that are assumed to be unbiased in their reportage encourage gender imbalance in their coverage. Hence the objectives of the study are to determine the volume of coverage given to the male and female aspirants by the newspapers; to ascertain the story types by which the activities of the male and female aspirants were presented; and to ascertain the sources of stories on the male and female aspirants. Therefore, the discussion that follows aims at reviewing the gender balance in political reporting; as it pertains to how Nigerian newspapers cover activities of male and female aspirants in general elections.

Agenda setting theory and Gender-based Political Reporting

The agenda settings theory of the press as posited by McCombs and Shaw (1972) is the theoretical framework for this study. The theory concerns people`s actions because what they discuss, think and worry about is inspired and directed by what the mass media choose to publicise. The concept of agenda setting is linked to Walter Lippmann (1922); he opines that the mass media created images in the mind of audience members. Cohen (1963) opines that the media may not always be successful in telling people what to think, but they are usually successful in telling them what to think about. This view, according to Wilson, Esiri and Onwubere (2008), was supported by Lang and Lang (1996) who reinforced this notion that the mass media force attention to certain issues and that they constantly present objects, suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about and have feelings about.

However, it is to the credit of McCombs and Shaw (1972) who confirmed the reality and functionality of the agenda setting theory having carried out an enduring research during the United States of America's Presidential election in 1968. The duo established a strong relationships between the emphases placed on different campaign issues by the media and the judgments of the electorate as it relates to the importance of various campaign topics.

According to Izuogu (2009), agenda- setting theory refers to the media's capacity to cause an issue to be elevated in importance in the mind of the public through repeated focus or coverage. Anyadike (2009) proposes that the basic principle in the agenda-setting theory is the ability of the mass media to restructure the audience thinking and perception of events. Littlejohn (1999) further stresses that considerable evidence has accumulated that editors and broadcasters play an important part in shaping our social reality as they go about their day-to-day task of choosing and displaying news.

Anorue, Obayi and Onyebuchi (2012) see the foregoing as meaning that the media, through its news selection, establish not only issues of public importance, but also determine how much importance to attach to a given issue. According to Severin and Tankard as cited by Ekeli (2006), the agenda setting (function) theory explains the capacity of the mass media to select and emphasis certain issues and thereby cause these issues to be important. Most of the time and relevantly too, the agenda settings function is carried out through the process of gate-keeping. The term "gate-keeping", according to McQuail (2005), describes a phenomenon which had long been noticed and studied in the context of election campaign and the main issues of the day are reflected in what the public perceives as the main issues.

Mass communication campaigns also have a crucial role to play in setting agenda for professional, administrative and political leaders and decision makers' (Marcus, Owen, Forsythe, Cavill and Fridinger 1998). Amobi (2013) posits that the media, in addition to being agents of socialization, are believed to be main setters of public agenda. They choose what they consider important enough for the society to at least think about. Consequently, it may not be out of place to consider the media powerful enough to change the imbalance in gender relations. The agenda-setting theory of media effect calls for a gender sensitive media because the way women are portrayed in the media invariably becomes what society will take as their accepted roll.

According to Akpoveta (2007), the mass media, through continuous and constant broadcast and publication of an issue tend to direct public attention towards that issue. The media can, therefore, evolve a lot of factorized articles written in the people's dialect to direct the people's attention in their locality that need development. The theory states categorically that, though the media may not change a person's point of view on a particular issue, they may change the person's perception on what is important (Agbo and Fab-Ukozor, 2000). Newspaper, as a purveyor of news and events, help individuals to formulate opinions on a particular situation or person (Orhewere, 2006),

The media are so powerful that Paletz and Entman (1981) pointed out that much of what adults learn about the government, its institution and members, members' activities, their strength and weakness among other things, stem from the media. Newspapers, alongside other media, are therefore agenda setters on the issue of electioneering and politics as a whole. Contributing to how the agenda setting theory works, Folarin (as cited in Guanah, 2014,p. 20) is of the opinion that "the mass media predetermine what issues are regarded as important at a given time in a given society".

As Marshall McLuhan (1968, p. 204) puts it, the press can colour events by using them in a particular way, or refusing to use them at all. Newspaper has the ability to tell people what to think about, and this includes the political activities of both the male and female aspirants in the build up to the 2013 governorship election in Anambra State.

The Media and Political Education

The media are so important in the society that a one-time President of America, Thomas Jefferson, spoke about the inevitability of the mass media when it comes to politics and governance. Guanah (2014) cites Abati as affirming that Jefferson placed the media on a higher pedestal than governance when Jefferson said:

The basis of government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and was it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter (p. 31).

The fact that writers like Klapper (1960) feel the mass media have limited effects does not take away the reality that the mass media contents have effects on people, that is why Nwuneli (1985), citing Ball Rokeach and De Fleur, said people still depend on the mass media to learn, to show feeling and to readjust their lives..

No doubt the media have one of the most significant roles to play before; during and after any election, hence the media need to take the time to underline their role in ensuring credible elections in Nigeria by being responsible in their activities. This is in line with the thought of Guanah (2010) who observes that the Nigerian mass media, like in other parts of the world, is seen as the fourth estate of the realm, coming after the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary and by virtue of this, the mass media is saddled with enormous responsibilities in the society.

Free choice is crucial to the exercise of peoples' rights in an election. It is the touchstone of competitive elections. The electorate has the choice of either renewing the mandate of those in leadership positions already who have performed, or rejecting those who have wasted time and resources through the ballot box since the ballot is stronger than the bullet (Lincoln, 1994). The serious task before the electorate therefore will be to choose and vote for only the candidates that can deliver the dividends of democracy to them. Ebegbulem (2010, p. 170) opines that in direct election voters may not be well informed enough to choose the right people to represent them in government hence he cites Kapur to have argued that "the average voter cannot always choose for himself the right man." However, it must be mentioned here that no individual or organisation has the right to pass any judgment on voters' wisdom or otherwise; whatever government is chosen should be allowed to function since that is the choice they have made. The Newspaper plays the role of educating the electorate here on how to make the right choice.

Women and Political Participation in Nigeria

The discourse on political participation of women has become global in recent times. In Africa, and Nigeria in particular, elections are held with only few women having the temerity to participate as against the stipulation of affirmative action (1995) convention that at least 30% of all elective and appointive positions be reserved for women at all levels of authority, and which most countries are signatories to.

No democracy in the world can succeed without the active and intense participation of its citizens, both male and female, just as no political system anywhere can be adjudged as legitimate and stable if it does not present a level playing field of participation for all political *dramatis personae*. Political participation is a *sine quo non* in every democratic society because it involves a commitment to equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacity (Agbaje, 1999). To Lewu (2005) political participation is a variety of ways in which people try to exercise influence over the political process while 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.

Women participation in the political process, was motivated with the adoption of promulgated ordinance of 1876 (Alabi & Akpa (2003), which informed the incorporation of traditions that were "not repugnant to natural justice, equality, and morality and good conscience" IHEME (2002) into the political process of the development of the Nigerian State. Women eventually got franchise in 1954, and this gave

them opportunities to participate in the later colonial period and during the First Republic of 1960 to 1966.

Gambo and Lenshie (2014) avers that colonialism opened up more chances for women participation by distorting the old hierarchies of traditions which, in a way, have long quarantined the female gender to some specific medium of articulating their interests, and sometimes their voices not being heard. This heralded the agitation for gender equality, representation and participation. Gambo and Lenshie (2014) added that though women were not at the centre stage of governance under the colonial rule, they were, however, socio-economic and political drivers. This is regardless of the position of Anya (2004) who felt that the advent of colonialism and western education introduced discrimination in employment and franchise which were based in acquisition of education, and lose of control of political powers by women because the said policy was packaged to favour men alone. Asogwa (2013) agrees with Anya that colonialism greatly led to the changing roles of Nigerian women.

However there tends to be a very insignificant number of women, as compared to the men, participating in the ongoing political process in Nigeria. In politics there are palpable instances of how women are being discriminated against because of their biological makeup, compounded with the situation where some political offices are seen as exclusively men reserve and others for women, who are deemed the weaker sex. In some cases women are denied suffrage in one way or the other. For instance women are not allowed to vote at all in the Vatican City while in Saudi Arabia women were allowed to vote for the first time in December 2015 (Dewey, 2013; Wisegeek, 2014; Zarya, 2015). The situation is so discriminatory that Yarhere and Soola (2007) reported Hilarie Belloc to have expressed his disgust in women even taking part in voting by retorting, "I am opposed to women voting as men vote. I call it immoral because I think the bringing of one's women, ones mother and sisters and wives, into political arena disturbs the relations between sexes."

In spite of this and many other derogatory and disadvantaged conditions of women, reacted Daniel-Inim (2009), there have been women who have been able to enter into men's domain, operated and excelled. Albeit they achieved this myth like a plant on a hard ground, nevertheless, they were able to break through from the other side of the barrier where culture and self-interest of men have sought to place them (Abhulimen, 2006, p. 14). According to Osehobo(2006):

The persistence of traditional and stereotypic gender roles, often reinforced by legal and institutional structures, impedes woman's empowerment promotion of gender equality which continues to be relegated to a lower level of national priority (p. 7).

At this junction it is imperative to recall that women have always participated in governance, Some of these women include Idia and Emotan of Benin Kingdom, Omu Olewel of Ossomari, Moremi of Ife, Queen Bakwa Turuku, Queen Amina-her daughter, Egbe Iyalode of Benin Kingdom, and Mrs. Funmi Ransome- Kuti. There were also other exceptional women who are prominently remembered for their roles in the society. Alabi and Akpa (2003) observe: We hear of Queen Amina of Zazzau who fought great battles and conquered many male counterparts. Other prominent women were Nana Asmau, a teacher/women leader during the Sokoto Jihad, Inikpi of Igala land, Moremi of Ife, Oweri of Ihesa, Queen Kambassa of Bony Kingdom and the Magara and Gumsu of Kanuri; the Iyalodes of Yoruba land and the Onus of Igbo land.

Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013) adds that women in Nigeria were part of the past socio- economic and political development of the many ethnic groupsthat make up the nation, iterating that many dynasties were founded and nurtured by women who determined the fate of kingdoms as well as men. Special mention is made of the Yoruba of South West Nigeria which allows women to occupy positions of leadership. Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013) cites Afonja (1986) as mentioning such women to include Yeyenirewu of Ekiti who ruled between 1511 and 1552 and one time female Ooni of Ife, Luwe. Reference was also made of Egbaland where "history records accounts of female traditional rulers three of whom stood out: Tenilade, Erelu and Latoni" (p. 44).

Their performances are standing the test of time for other contemporary women to emulate. Fab-Ukozor (2007) buttresses the fact that the definition of politics, or political culture was a shared responsibility between men and women in most African traditional societies. He pointed out the fact that in some societies men and women ran parallel governments in order to ensure smooth and peaceful administration of the socio-political system. He gave the instance of the old Midwestern region of Nigeria, where the Omu and the Obi are independent of each other in running their different offices. Omu (queen) conducted the affairs of women in the society, and her powers were so great that she could mobilize Onitsha women for certain socio-political events. While the Obi (King) conducts the affairs of men. Both were said to have played complimentary roles to achieve cohesion and maintain social justice.

Bruce-Lockhart (2015), citing the Inter-Parliamentary Union, puts Rwanda (63.8%) as having the highest number of female parliamentarians, followed by Bolivia (53.1%), Cuba (48.9%), Seychelles (43.8%), Sweden (43.6%), Senegal (42.7%), South Africa (41.9%), Ecuador (41.6%), Finland (41.5%), and Iceland (41.3%), but that is not the case with Nigeria. Based on statistical analysis adopted by Olatunde (2010) from the First Memorial Lecture in honour of Prof Jadesola Akande, by the then Governor of Lagos State, Babatunde Fashola in 2009 reveals a comprehensive record on women political participation and representation. The record as presented by the Governor in April 2009 shows that “in 1999, there were only 12 women elected into the State Assemblies against 978 men. In the Senate, there were three (3) female Senators out of 109 Senators elected that year. Also, 13 women were elected into the House of Representatives. By 2003, after the elections, the number of female Parliamentarians had increased slightly as follows: House of Assembly of various states increased to 39 against 951 men; 21 women were elected into the House of Representatives against 339 men. Also four (4) women won seats in the Senate from a total of 109 Senators. The record states further that appointments into elective offices from 1999 shows that 833 persons were appointed with 86 of them women, indicating an average of about 11.9% women’s participation and representation so far” (Olatunde, 2010).

The records further show that a total of 7,160 candidates contested in April 2007 general elections. Out of the 25 candidates for the office of the president only one was a woman while five vied for the office of the vice president. Four hundred and seventy four (474) contested for the office of Governors in the 36 states, 14 of them were women and 21 on the other hand contested for the Deputy Governor’s seat. In the Senate of the 799 candidates only 59 were women. Also of the 2,343 contestants for seats in the House of Representatives, 150 were women while 358 women out of 5,649 candidates contested for seats in the States Houses of Assembly. After the election, available records show that 9 female senators won out of 109. There were no winners for the post of the Governor; however, there were 5 Deputy Governors in Lagos State, Ogun State, Osun State, Imo State and Plateau State and the House of Representatives once had a female Speaker. The Speaker of the Ogun House of Assembly was once a woman (who was later impeached) and Lagos state has a woman as the Deputy Speaker. Altogether, there are 34 women members of the State Assemblies. According to the Governor, this result shows a mere 2% increase from the 2003 elections (statistical analysis adopted from the First Memorial Lecture in honour of Prof Adesola Akande OFR, by Governor, Babatunde Fashola.

The foregoing reveals women’s low level of access, presence and influence in the Nigeria’s politics. Although, the pre-colonial era gave room for women participation and representation, the various changes along the way brought with it challenges for women inclusion and participation. (Anorue, Obayi, & Onyebuchi, 2012).

According to Helen Esuene in Effiong (2014), sometimes women running for public offices are labelled as “cultural deviants” and things are said and done just to make them chicken out of their political aspirations. For instance, in the 2007 gubernatorial election in Akwa Ibom State about 70 aspirants indicated their interest for the seat of Governor, but none of the aspirants was a woman. The reason may be culture based because a woman aspiring to be a governor in Akwa Ibom state is likened to a person writing her own political death sentence. Helen Esuene, a female aspirant for the 2015 Gubernatorial election in Akwa Ibom State told Effiong (2014) of *Daily Sun* Newspaper during an interview that since the era of Mrs. Maria Ikpe, the only female gubernatorial candidate so far, who

contested on the platform of the defunct Alliance for Democracy (AD) and polled 1,394 votes at the 2007 general election, but later died in mysterious circumstance, no other woman has agreed to walk close to any gubernatorial ambition in the state.

Women tend to be discriminated against and marginalised via various means which include: ethno cultural tenets, non-implementation of women's rights, customary/Sharia laws, religious doctrines, gender structure, male chauvinism, lack of education, lack of economic independence, domestic violence, lack of skills, deprivations of quality health, employment and politics, socio-economic and political marginalization as well as total exclusion from the decision making process at all levels of the society. Also, rigging of election, political violence, massive fraud and electoral malpractices, corruption in the political sphere, political thuggery, political assassination and vandalisation make women to put politics in abeyance.

Given the foregoing situations in Nigeria, it seems difficult for women to win elective positions because the political sphere tended to be clothed with uncertainties that only very few "lion hearted" women can survive it. Okoye, cited by Fab-Ukozor (2007, p. 104) states that:

Having realized that it would be a Herculean task contesting for elective offices with men who have to their advantage factors which have largely contributed to electoral success- cultural sentiments, finance, capital, social status. etc., women have resorted to pressing for gender quota system in politics and government.

That women have the potentials to function, if elected, as Governors, Senate President, and even as the President of the nation, is not in doubt. Esuene (2014) puts it this way, "We have tested the men. The men have been there and they have done fantastic job, but it is time to try women and I want to say that this is the season to put more women on the job of governance." Similarly, Babatunde Raji Fashola, the Governor of Lagos State said that:

The value of unpaid services from women could not be quantified, the value of unpaid services rendered by women in their traditional roles as wives, mothers and home keepers is clearly beyond estimation. The only way we can show appreciation and effectively pay women back for their selfless service to humanity is to continually create new opportunities for them to actualize themselves, be gainfully engaged and escape the poverty trap. In doing this the society is actually helping itself as it has been demonstrated that as women climb higher on socio economic ladder, they pull up their families along with them. (Arebi, 2008, p. 17)

The woman can surely actualize herself if she is supported in her political desires. Women should be allowed to participate fully in the political process without any form of bottleneck, or hurdles placed before them.

Review of Empirical Studies

Oyesomi (2011) embarked upon a study to ascertain how well Nigerian newspapers cover women's participation in 2007 general elections. The Punch and Guardian newspapers were studied for eight months (November, 2006 to June 2007). Findings revealed that of the 422 stories gathered only 56 stories were on women's participation. Also, the data analyzed indicated that of the 56 news items, 50 (89.3%) were on the inside pages while the back page recorded the least, 1 (1.8%). The study concludes that the media be encouraged to air their opinions on women's issues especially when the turnout is much as witnessed in the 2007 general elections, and that media professionals should play their fundamental role in the quest to eradicate gender discrimination of all types. The study recommends, among other things, that women in politics, whether during electioneering or not, must be on the agenda of the media coverage of national issues; that students should be trained on gender sensitivity and how the media shape

the perception of men and women; that the media air their opinions on women's issues especially when the turnout is much as witnessed in the 2007 general elections, and that the media should recognize their role in mobilizing women to greater heights and inspire them to achieve more.

African Woman and Child Feature Service (2013) carried out a study on Kenya Media and Women in Political News in order to determine the level of coverage given to females in politics in Kenya. For a period of 15 days picked from the months April and May, 2013, the contents of analytical study involved monitoring newspapers, television and radio stations in Kenya were monitored by 11 research assistants. The research covered a total of 514 news items from five newspapers involving 507 news subjects and 549 journalists in the print sector; a total of 201 news items from two radio stations involving 566 news subjects and 207 news items from two television stations involving a total of 598 news subjects.

The result of the study showed that only 18 percent of females had their views were read, heard or seen in print, radio, and television political news. The result also showed that only 9% of the journalists who wrote political news in the print media were female; men enjoyed seven times of television news time compared to women; men were the main sources of information in professions like law, police/military and politics. The study also revealed that in the print media, males were covered in more articles, editorials and letters-to-the-editor compared to the females. On the average, more men than 21% of women were covered across all geographical news sections (international, regional, national and local) in TV, radio and newspapers). The males occupied 77% of the space in the newspapers while the females were allotted only 23%.

Ragodoo (2012) conducted a study on Gender and Media Coverage. This study which is an analysis of Mauritian Newspapers' carried out a three-year review (July 2008-June 2011) of two popular weekly newspaper publications so as to have a clear picture with regards to gender representation in economic, political and social spheres. In addition, a structured-interviewed schedule was also applied to a representative sample of journalists so as to gather their views on the media coverage of women.

The study showed that newspaper coverage was in favour of the men, as women were virtually excluded in the economic and political debate, and in professional interventions and local sports reports. It was also found out from the study that men always had their voices heard on national issues while reports about women are associated with domestic violence, sexual abuse and family issues. Women are also referred to as average citizens and rarely as experts while newspaper reports also portray women in a much more negative and degrading manner.

Methodology and Discussion of Findings

Content analysis method was used to study newspapers' coverage of male and female aspirants in the 2013 Governorship Election in Anambra State. A content analysis of how three Nigerian newspapers- Vanguard, *Daily Sun* and *National Light*- covered the 2014 governorship election in Anambra State is used as a case study here. The manifest content of the selected Newspapers concerning Newspapers' coverage of the activities of male and female aspirants in the build-up to the November 16, 2013 governorship election in Anambra State was subjected to quantitative analysis. Three women who featured prominently before the various political parties conducted their primaries were Chief Mrs. Josephine Anenih and Ifunanyachukwu Krammer of PDP, and Honourable Uche Ekwenife of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA).

The specific objectives of this study are to determine the volume of coverage given to the male and female aspirants by the selected Newspapers in the build up to the November 16, 2013 governorship election in Anambra State; to ascertain the story types by which the activities of the male and female aspirants are presented by the selected Newspapers; to ascertain if equal prominence was given to the activities of the male and female candidates in the build up to the November 16, 2013 governorship election in Anambra state; to ascertain the sources of stories on the male and female aspirants; and to determine the direction/slant of the stories by which the selected Newspapers reported the activities of the male and female aspirants.

The volume of coverage given to the activities of male and female aspirants in the build up to the November 16, 2013 governorship election in Anambra State by the selected Newspapers was laudable but it was lopsided in favour of the male aspirants. The skewing of most of the stories in favour of the male aspirants is what made people like Petterson and Wilkins (1994, p. 149) to assert that:

Studies of media coverage of political campaigns have uncovered some disturbing trend; journalists function as a pack; there is seldom any really distinctive political reporting during elections. Further, journalists treat fore-runners differently than they do the remainder of the candidate pack. Fore-runners are the objects of closer scrutiny, but those examinations are seldom about issues, even-though it is issue oriented reporting that tends to provoke political interest and public participation. Instead electoral reporting focuses on personality, a key component of political leadership, but certainly not the only one.

The underreporting of the female aspirant can partially be attributed to the fewness of female reporters in most of the Nigerian newspapers, though, even in the Newsroom there is discrimination against women because men who are enraged by women's "invasion" of some media newsrooms are quoted by Steiner (2009) to have said that, "newsworld would defeminize and even desex women." According to Asogwa (2013), discrimination against women in the media ranges from poor representation and participation of women in the media, absence or minimal representation of women in the news, exclusion of women from significant positions in the media industry. With this media blackout on the female aspirant the media tend to support the "eternal feminine" mystique that a "true woman" does not achieve self-actualization through intellectual creativity and participation in political, economic, and social life on a level equal to that of men. Rather, according to this view, her destiny lies in generic fulfilment through motherhood, physical or spiritual, and in being a helpmate to her husband (Daly, 1991).

Story types on how Nigerian newspapers covered the activities of male and female aspirants in the build up to the November 16, 2013 governorship election in Anambra State were presented as Straight news, Opinion Articles, Feature Articles, Advertorials, Personality profile, and picture stories. Straight news and the picture stories had the highest number of stories than the other story types.

Uyo (1987) identified the "distinguished characteristics of the news story as immediacy, factuality and objectivity" and thereby describes straight news as a story whose primary purpose is to provide timely information of interest and significance to the reader. He adds that "usually the news story tells what happened or what took place." Rivers and Smolkin, according to Uyo (1987), define the straight news report as "timely account of an event". Okoye (2006) describes Straight news as a story which has no embellishments. It is also called hard news while Nwabueze (2011) straight news reports that present what has happened in a straightforward, factual and clear manner but do not draw conclusions, nor offer any opinions, nor offer any opinions. He added that there is no attempt to probe deeper than the surface happenings, or they provide elaborate background information, or even to examine claims made.

To Uyo (1987) the news story is an account of an event that has just occurred, or that has just been discovered, where the event may only be the announcement, or disclosure, of something that will happen in the future. Positive news about political aspirants can go a long way to enhance their chances in elections but straight news coverage about Honourable Uche Ekwenife during the build up to the 2013 gubernatorial election was quite inadequate as compared to that of the male aspirants. Feature is an in-depth and factual write up on topical issues which seeks to give comprehensive information in a more captivating and relaxed style than straight news (Okoye, 2006). According to Nwabueze (2011), a feature story is simply depth reporting with factual foundation. It is a creative presentation of facts on an event, issue, personality or place. Meanwhile Seema (2013) opines that a news feature takes one step back from the headlines, explores an issue and is less time-sensitive than hard news but no less news worthy. Feature can be used to "meat" up the bones of the straight news. There were twenty five feature articles

written in connection to the build up to the gubernatorial election but only one was about the female aspirant while twenty four are on the male aspirants, what this means is that there was only one in-depth reporting about the political activities of the female aspirant. Albeit it is a truism that the use of news worthy and exciting photographs/picture is a major area of concern in the mass media, especially newspaper and magazine because it is widely believed that a good photograph is worth a thousand words (Nwanne, 2011), however when the message a photograph is supposed to pass across is not understood the purpose of that message is lost invariably that is the reason Elliot and Lester in Nwanne (2011) advised that there should not be over concentration on aesthetics to the extent that misleading image is presented. The ratio of pictures used by the selected newspapers is 11:1 that is 11 male pictures to one female picture.

Direction of stories about the activities of male and female aspirants in Nigerian newspapers in the build up to the Anambra State 2013 gubernatorial election were classified as positive, negative and neutral. From the collated, presented and analysed data on the reportage of the activities of male and female aspirants in the build up to the Anambra State 2013 gubernatorial election as published by selected Nigerian newspapers it is crystal clear that the newspapers did not give adequate coverage to the female aspirant as much as the male aspirants enjoyed. A total of 385 stories were gathered and 327 of this figure were on the male while only 26 are on the female.

Data analysed show that inside page stories were 350 on prominence of the activities of male and female aspirants in the build up to the Anambra State 2013 gubernatorial election with 327 (91%) being about the male and 23 about the female (88%), followed by front page 32 with 29 (8%) about the male and 3 (12%) about the female. The back page being the least had 3 with the 3 (100%) about the male and nothing (0%) about the female. It is glaring that most of the stories were placed in the inside pages of the newspapers. In their agenda setting role newspapers place stories that are notably important on the front page of the newspaper. According to Ngoa (2012), McCombs and Shaw (1972) are of the opinion that for newspapers the emphasis was on front page lead or headline stories, a three-column stories on an inside page and lead editorial taken as evidence of significant spotlight on an issue. This study reveals that the mention of the female aspirant occupied only 12% of the front page. This tends to mean that newspapers never considered the activities of the female aspirant during the build up to the Anambra State 2013 gubernatorial elections as important. Akor (2014) observes that the level of coverage given to women politicians in the media in Nigeria is still poor and laced with stereotypes and other challenges: this contributes to the poor showing for women at elections. No wonder Bogart in Finley (1986) emphasises that newspapers need to develop specific approaches to women, to blacks, and to the Hispanics.

An important issue that is worthy of discussion is the sources of stories about the activities of both the male and female aspirants. Recall that data from the three selected Newspapers show that most of the stories about the activities of male and female aspirants in the build up to the Anambra State 2013 gubernatorial election emanated through the independent investigative efforts of journalists. This is followed by stories from the aides of the aspirants with 69 (18%) which are only from the aides of the male aspirants with nothing coming from the aides of the female aspirant. From the findings it so glaring that there was no real efforts made by the female aspirants to utilise the numerous avenues through which to enjoy newspaper coverage of her activities as they relate to the election to promote her gubernatorial ambition. Who knows, maybe if she utilised the opportunities Newspapers provide adequately she might have even won the primaries of her political party (APGA) where she came second even with the very low coverage she got from Nigerian Newspapers..

Conclusion and Recommendation

The media are germane in determining the fate of politicians and the political process of any nation especially during elections. So far, we have established that there is need for balance in political reporting, that is, coverage of activities of women and men in the society. The electorate cannot fully

participate in the democratic process in making decisions on the right candidate to vote for in elections when newspapers do not avail all aspiring candidates the level playing ground to sell their manifestoes to the electorate.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this discuss therefore is that the discrimination of Newspapers against women in their reporting is a fact, there is need to change the ugly trend. This is the reason feminists criticize newspapers in their coverage of the women's movement and feminist activities, which is claimed to be disproportionately sparse, trivializing and condescending in tone (Hole & Levine, as cited in Guanah, 2014). The media must put on the garb of an "activist-media" that is vibrant and unbiased in order to shape the democratic process in Nigeria by positively influencing the thinking and actions of the electorate when it comes to voting in elections. Also Nigerian woman should take advantage of the media in the furtherance of their political aspirations for if they do not make themselves available the media will not fight for them.

It is recommended that the media must put on the garb of an "activist-media" that is vibrant and unbiased in order to shape the democratic process in Nigeria by positively influencing the thinking and actions of the electorate when it comes to voting in elections.

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