

Compromised Secularism and Gender Inequality in Nigerian Politics: The Kwara Experience

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Abstract

That the 1999 constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees Nigeria as a secular state remains uncontroverted. However, scholars from different ideological and religious backgrounds are not in agreement over the actual nature of her secular status. While some argue that Nigeria is a multi-religion state, others maintained that Nigeria is a compromised secular state. This paper examines the compromised secular nature of the Nigeria state and how it produces gender inequality in Nigerian politics. It contends that because secularism is compromised in practice, the Nigerian state, unconstitutionally assumes the status of a multi-religion state, which inadvertently aids gender inequality in Nigerian politics. The paper adopts the use of both the quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, while sharing the Kwara state's experience. Quantitative primary data were elicited via questionnaires administered across selected local government areas of Kwara state; while the qualitative and quantitative secondary data were gathered from journals, textbooks and other literature materials relevant to the subject matter. Data elicited were analyzed using simple percentage. Anchoring on the findings, the paper concludes that since Nigeria, in practice remains a multi-religion state, religion (especially Islam) will continue to promote gender inequality with respect to elective positions in Nigerian politics. Charting a way forward, the paper, among other recommendations, suggests that if, as a nation, Nigeria must advance politically, there is the need for the strengthening of her secular status. This, by extension is expected to produce gender equality in Nigerian politics.

Key words: Secularism, Multi-Religion, Gender Inequality, Politics.

Introduction

The role of women in leadership, particularly political leadership, in contemporary time cannot be overemphasized. This is because women in many countries, including countries in the south, have successfully negotiated a space and a voice for themselves in the traditionally male-gendered public sphere. As a result, women in different societies, and in various ways, are saddled with political responsibilities. In Nigeria, the role of women in political leadership predates contemporary time. From a history of political obscurity, women in Nigeria gradually crept into political recognition. The appointment and election of some women into political offices between 1999 till date have shown the tacit acceptance of women by the essentially patriarchal Nigerian society as equal stakeholders in the process of nation-building (Akanji, 2009).

However, in spite of the increased awareness of the gender question, it is apt to assert that most women all over the world are still marginalized and oppressed. In 2005, Inter Parliamentary Union records shows that women occupied only 16 percent of parliamentary seats in the world, while men had 84 percent. This is notwithstanding the efforts women have put forward to claim seats in government and decision-making process. In fact the situation in Africa is still alarming (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006; Lenshie and Gambo, 2013). The extent of marginalization and oppression however differs from one country to the other, or region to region. This to a large extent is usually varied by some peculiarities such as culture and religion. Although, most scholars have attributed the growth in gender inequality to cultural patriarchs, some believed that religion has also been noted to have greatly varied the extent

of women marginalization, especially in a religious or compromised secular state.

Uncontrovertibly, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees Nigeria as a secular state. However, scholars from different ideological and religious backgrounds are not in agreement over the actual nature of her secular status. While some argue that Nigeria is a multi-religion state, others maintained that Nigeria is a compromised secular state. This raises a number of research questions such as: Is Nigeria a secular or multi-religion state? Is Nigeria a compromised secular state? To what extent has the compromised secular nature of the Nigeria state produced gender inequality in politics, with respect to the multi-religion nature of the Nigerian state? What is the position of religion, especially Islam, on 'Women in leadership? Why should a woman who possesses all attributes required by a good leader be denied the opportunity of becoming one?

To these ends, it therefore becomes an overall objective of this paper to examine the compromised secular nature of the Nigeria state and how it produces gender inequality in politics, with respect to the multi-religion nature of the Nigerian state, using Kwara state as a case study. To analyze how these issues are played out within the Nigerian political context, the paper is divided into nine sections. This section, which is the introductory section, is followed by section two, which explores literatures relevant to the subject matter. The third section explains the Conceptual and Theoretical frameworks. The method of analysis and the research design for this study is explained in section four. While the fifth section draws a nexus between compromised secularism and gender inequality in politics, the sixth section explains the position of Islam on women in public's sphere. The seventh section shares the Kwara experience using the results from secondary data sourced from INEC on the 2011 Kwara state governorship election. Section eight analyses the results of the primary data elicited via questionnaires and discusses the findings, while the last section contains conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

The literature on feminism explores extensively the critical role played by women and public institutions in the development process of any nation (Sid-Ahmed and Hussein, 2010). Women act as major actors in the transformation process whether in terms of their direct involvement in the economy or their more tempered role as catalyst, facilitator, and regulator of the economic activities (Debie, 2009). Feminist scholars such as Debie and Debie, (2008) argue that when women are not offered equal opportunity in the public sector, there is the danger that some skills and talents in a nation could be wasted. However some religion and cultural values and practices tend to promote negative gender equality and human dignity.

Ordinarily, the question of gender participation and representation in the political arena should not be an issue that would attract internationally concern; but the realities of gender discrimination in developing countries, especially in Africa, have created and necessitated that impetus (Lenshie and Gambo, 2013). Their argument is that gender related questions were rendered best mute under the whims and caprices of patriarchy in Africa. They argued further that, at the turn of the 21st century, the increasing tide of democratization across the world provides the impetus for resounding and unrelenting assertion for 'gender quota' in the form of greater participation and representation of women quantitatively and qualitatively in the affairs of government.

Concerning secularism and religion in Nigerian politics, scholars of different orientations hold divergent views on whether Nigeria is a religious, secular or an ecumenical state. The individual opinions are based on the perspectives through which the country is assessed. In the first assumption, it is believed that since there is hardly anything done or embarked upon in Nigeria without directly or indirectly mentioning the name of God Almighty, the country should therefore, be considered as a religious or a multi-religious state. This religious nature of Nigeria therefore, may take the form of formal or informal acknowledgement of one religion or another: Islam, Christianity or African Traditional religion. The second assumption contends that, the fact

that no one specific religion is adopted as an official state religion in Nigeria, even though the country's constitution guarantees freedom of religion for the citizens, Nigeria remains a secular state. The third assumption is more of an intellectual conviction. It holds the view that Nigeria is neither a secular nor a theocratic state. The argument here is that a secular state is where religion is not given any role to play in its affairs. However, contrary to all arguments, this school of thought believes that religion is a big factor in Nigerian politics. To it, Nigeria is an "ecumenical state where deals are made between the state and religious institutions involving power sharing without reducing these deals into law" (The Democrat; Friday, September 6, 1994).

Although, the political development under the banner of federalism, requires that the government of the federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion, individuals, groups or even government officials perform and function within the realm of religion in force, be it paganism, atheism, Christianity or Islam. (Jamiu, 2012). This is to say that the spirit of the constitution of Nigeria favours religion of any kind. What the constitution objects to is an attempt by either the federal or state government to adopt any religion as state religion. However, in reality, what is obtainable is some states in Nigeria today is an unofficial adoption of either Christianity or Islam as state religion, to the extent that these religions determines who get elected or not (Salahu, 2015).

However, concerning the secular nature of the Nigerian state, Omotola (2009) with a contrary view, argues that, the application of secularism in Nigeria is woefully inadequate due to the constant use of religion by politicians for personal gain. He also argues that the government provides funding for the construction of various religious buildings as well as sponsors pilgrimages for citizens of the two major religions. He concludes that the Nigerian government and its role as a secular state has been "severely compromised" and it should be redesigned without the current religious overtones and practice true secularism. This counter argument may not be the correct path to solve the current religious issues because of the central role that religion plays in Nigerian life. It is worthy to note

that the "Muslim-Christian ticket" or the "Christian-Muslim ticket" has always been the 'Electoral-talisman', when it comes to winning elections in Nigeria. As such, this type of political development does confirm the impact of religion on Nigerian politics, and by extension, on the outcomes of elections in the country (Salahu, 2015). If this is true, it is apt to assert that a religious state or a compromised secular state to a large extent can also encourage or discourage gender inequality in politics, depending on the religion's position on gender issues in relation to leadership.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

There are four main concepts that are central to this paper. These are Religion, Secularism, Gender and Politics.

Religion, like other concepts, cannot be easily and simply defined. Definitions usually vary in accordance with the level of education and experience of the definers, that is, in relation to how they were brought up, what they have heard or read, where they have been and what they have gone through in life (Jamiu, 2012). However, the difficulty in defining the concept should not deter us from exploring the possibility of tinkering with some and put them into use in this paper. For the purpose of this paper, we shall explore the following definitions:

Bilton (1977) defines religion as "a system of belief about the individual's place in the world, providing an order to that world and a reason for existence within it. In a similar vein, Durkheim (1951) conceptualizes religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, and all those who adhere to them." While trying to explain the concept, some Marxist scholars of the socialist and communist background adopted the Liberation Theory. This set of Marxists see religion as the opium of the masses, a creation of the ruling and the property owning class, used to uphold an exploitative and oppressive social order favorable to that same ruling class in the society. Their views are commonly represented by Karl Marx (1918) who wrote that: "Religion is the sign of the oppressed

cultures, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of the spiritless conditions, it is the opium of the people.”

Nwolise (1988) stresses his observation on religion's dysfunctional role. He is of the view that though religion can pull people, especially of one religion together, it can also disintegrate them and set them against each other. The views of Marxists, socialist and communists about religion as depicted by Karl Marx's assertion quoted earlier sees nothing good either in religion or in its adherents. Rather, it is just an instrument of exploitation and oppression (Jamiu, 2012). This conflicting role assigned to religion by western scholars, probably prompted Nwolise (1988) to attempt to strike a balance between the two extreme views. He therefore regards religion as a system of beliefs and practices which if organized along the will of the Creator helps in explaining the uncertainties of human life, securing moral behavior and ensuring that people have smooth social relation on earth as prelude to having everlasting happy life with God after death; but which if run according to the dictates of evil forces brings fire and brimstone on the society whether multi-religious or mono-religious (Nwolise, 1988).

Secularism as a concept is characterized by conceptual and operational ambiguities. It is a contested concept involving arguments about its proper meaning and uses. Nonetheless, scholars are in agreement on the fact that defining secularism in isolation of religion remains a difficult task. This is because the concept evolves as a result of seeking solution to conflicts and crisis inherent in most multi-religious societies, especially in relation to power relations. According to Falola (1988), no one can aspire to, or hold a political office in Nigeria without pretending to be religious. It is worthy of note to state that when the idea of a secular state emerged, it referred to a state in which the temporal, secular ruler, enjoyed full autonomy as ruler with no control from religious or spiritual authorities (Onaiyekan, 1988). But in today's parlance, a secular state is interpreted as thus: “When you are in a position of trust, forget about your religion because it is a private affair between you and your God. If you want to

bring religion in, let it be after office hours” (Okogie, 1987).

Viewed from a different perspective, Islamic scholars, especially in Nigeria believe that a secular state is a negation of the Sharia and by extension, inimical to the development and aspiration of Islam. Gummi (1987), defines a secular state as an atheistic state. Supporting this thought is Ibrahim (1986), who argues that secularism is hostile to Islam. According to him, it seeks to undermine Islamic values, supplant the Islamic laws with those of its own and deface the sanctity of the Muslim society. However a more subtle definition from this school is given by the Jamatul Nasril Islam. JINI defines secularism as a system of social teachings or organization which allows no part for religion.

Gender is a socio-cultural concept which seeks to create identity of male and female in terms of roles as well as perceptual and material relationship between men and women. As a social construct, it is conditioned by household structure, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interest and needs. It is also functional to determining the rights, responsibilities, and identities of men and women in relations to one another (Bravo-Baumann, 2000). Kessler and McKenna (1978) refer to gender as the amount of masculinity and femininity found in a person. This conceptualization shows that ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are similar. However, some scholars argue that the two are distinct concepts. Oakley (1972), argues that ‘sex’ has biological connotations, hence, it is a biological term, while ‘gender’ is a psychological and cultural concept, because of its psychological and cultural connotations.

Though both sex and gender can be viewed differently, gender according to Heywood (1997) is a cultural distinction between males and females, based on their different social roles and positions. Gender is therefore considered as a social construct, usually based on stereotypes of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ behavior. In a similar vein, Ostergaard (1994), defines gender as a qualitative and interdependent character of women and men's position in society. These conceptualizations suggest the salience of conceptualizing gender as the relation between men and women, largely constructed by the

society rather than by biology or nature. The strength in this conceptualization of gender is that it effectively recognizes and accommodates the sexual orientations and gender identity of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people (Akanji, 2009). For the purpose of this paper, gender is therefore construed as the biological sexual identity of women and men and the patterns of relation that the society imposes on them.

Politics is exciting because people disagree. They disagree about how they should live. Who should get what? How should power and other resources be distributed? Should society be based on cooperation or conflict? And so on. They also disagree about how such matters should be resolved. How should collective decisions be made? Who should have a say? How much influence should each person have? And so forth. For Aristotle, this made politics the 'master science': that is, nothing less than the activity through which human beings attempt to improve their lives and create the Good Society. Politics is, above all, a social activity. It is always a dialogue, and never a monologue (Baker, 1962).

In their attempt to find the answer to what politics is all about, Anifowose and Enemuo (1999), notes that: a search through political science textbooks confounds the student with numerous definitions, stating that 'politics is the process of making and execution of governmental decisions or policies' (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950; Dahl, 1995); 'the authoritative allocation of values' (Easton, 1957); or 'who gets what, when and how' (Lasswell, 1930); 'the quest for power, order and justice' (Merki, 1967); 'the art of influencing, manipulating and controlling others' (Wright, 1955); a process of resolution of conflicts in society' (Ranny, 1975), and 'a struggle among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues' (Dyke, 1960).

While there has been a wide range of definitions, most of them can be classified as being one of the two types- the classicalist or the behavioralist school of thoughts. The classicalist identify politics with government or the state, while the behavioralists, revolve around the notions of 'power', 'authority' and conflict (Anifowose and Enemuo, 1999). For those who believe that politics involves power and influence,

politics gives an answer to the question, "who gets what, when and how? The Eastonian definition of politics as the "authoritative allocation of values for a society", is considered very useful by political scientists. It emphasizes political activity rather than institutions (Anifowose and Enemuo 1999). The authoritative allocations of values, is, Easton argues, the kind of activity we should be interested in. The first assumption is that in every society, values are desired, that is people have different interests or objectives, and these must be allocated, or distributed by someone or something. In essence, it is a power and conflict situation. Every society has different political systems allocating values authoritatively. A policy is said to be authoritative when the people to whom it is intended to apply or who are affected by it consider that they must or ought to obey it (Easton, 1965).

According to Anifowose and Enemuo (1999), Herbert Winter and Bellows suggest a definition that contains elements of the thoughts by Vernon Dyke and David Easton, that "politics is a struggle between actors pursuing conflicting desires on issues that may result in an authoritative allocation of values" (Winter and Bellows, 1981). However, while there is no best definition of politics, as advanced by many scholars while attempting to define the concept, most political scientists agree that politics has something to do with power, influence and authority, which are the central organizing concepts of the study of politics. Incidentally, these three central organizing concepts of politics- 'power', 'influence' and 'authority' are essentially, highly, and critically explored in any contemporary religion study.

For the purpose of analysis, literature on religion and gender inequality finds its roots in the **Patriarchal** theory. Patriarchy refers to male domination of control at all levels in the society. It maintains and operates the system of gender discrimination justified in terms of patriarchal ideology. It is a system of ideas based on the belief that the male is superior sex. Sometimes it claims that division of labor is based on biology, as well as the scripture (Religion). Note that in most societies, the conventional ideology is patriarchal. Men perceive women as the inferior being, she is weak, physically and intellectually, and if strong, she is portrayed as being devilish (Akanbi, 2004).

There are some assumptions on which patriarchy are built. The first assumption is that the role and place of women is, first and foremost, tied to the family. Furthermore, the notion that women are basically and primarily expected to bear and raise children, and also take care of the home. Such assumptions, which are common all over the world, undermine the attempts by women to venture out of the limitations imposed on them by the society (Akanji, 2009). It is quite interesting to note that the two dominant religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity, support patriarchy, and by extension gender inequality.

Methodology and Design

This study was conducted within Kwara state, using three local government areas as case study. These are Ilorin West, Moro and Offa local government areas, each representing the three senatorial districts in the state. The paper adapts the research design used by the same researcher in a study titled 'Local Government Revenue and Performance in Kwara State' (Salahu, 2012). The study employed the use of both the quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires were used to elicit quantitative data on residents' perceptions on issues relating to religion, secularism and gender inequality in Nigerian politics. Data were also gathered through secondary sources such as newspapers, textbooks, internet and journals. The research population covers the twelve wards in Ilorin West, the twelve wards in Offa and the 17 wards in Moro local government areas. According to the 2006 census, the three local government areas under study, Ilorin west, Offa and Moro have population figures of 364,666; 89,674 and 108,792 respectively. Samples were drawn from these population figures. Stratified sampling technique was adopted. This was used in this study to obtain greater degree of representativeness.

The purposive sampling method was used to select the three local government areas on the merit of the fact that their headquarters serves as convergent points for all other localities in each of the three senatorial districts in the state. A simple random sampling technique was adapted to select the five wards each from the three local government areas. The fifteen wards were clustered based on the 2006 census enumeration areas (EA). Samples were drawn from these EAs,

based on the Probability Proportionate to Population (PPP) sampling technique. A total number of 500 questionnaires were administered. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (simple percentage).

Secularism and Gender Inequality: The Nexus

In recent decades, religion has become increasingly visible in political and public life in all parts of the world. This has provoked renewed debate about the role of religion in late modernity. The dominant conception of secularism as a core tenet of a liberal, modernizing paradigm is now in question. That is, the separation of religion and state, the progressive "secularization" of modern societies, and the growing acceptance of gender equality, are no longer presumed to be inevitable and interrelated (Reilly and Scriver, 2014). A number of key developments shape contemporary discussions of the interrelation of religion, gender, and the public sphere. First, there is the hegemonic influence of the "clash of civilizations" Moreover, safeguarding gender equality and women's rights, and/or the secular nature of the state or public sphere, have featured prominently in justifications of punitive policies aimed at migrant or minority groups in the West, particularly Muslims. These developments are a reminder of the centrality of gender power relations in the interrelation of religion, culture, and the public sphere (Taylor and Gutman 1994). Focusing on the dropping rates of church attendance and membership in the most stable and prosperous countries in Northwest Europe, Steve Bruce (1996) concludes that there is a decisive overall trend toward secularization as modernization occurs. In contrast, others have argued that societies in different parts of the world are actively "de-secularizing" in various ways, evidenced by the rise of new religious and spiritual movements and practices (Berger 1999; Davie 2002; Herbert 2003). Updating his theory of public religion, Jose Casanova maintains that religion de facto has been continually present in public spheres in a majority of contexts, including long-established democracies, despite the rhetoric of the "secular modern state" (Casanova 2008). Empirical evidence, therefore, shows much variety in how "religion" manifests across and within

societies, at micro, and macro levels; and how its influence and authority changes with other social changes, waxing or waning in different times and under different conditions. Recognizing this variation presents new complex challenges for how "the secular" is understood and how secularism is practiced (Reilly and Scriver, 2014). However, because religion has remained critically important in most modern states as discussed above, secularism in most of these states remain compromised. This position suggests that the questions of gender and religion are typically constructed as "public" within the secular logic, which calls for a reconsideration of the interrelation of state and religious authority through a gender lens necessitating a rethink of the gender inequality within the public domain.

Islam and Women in Public's Sphere

The reemergence of religion as a significant cultural, social, and political force is not gender neutral. Tensions between claims for women's equality and the rights of sexual minorities on one side and the claims of religions on the other side are well documented across all major religions and regions. It is also well recognized in feminist scholarship that gender identities and ethno-religious identities work together in complex ways that are often exploited by dominant groups. Hence, a more comprehensive understanding of the changing role and influence of religion in the public sphere more widely requires complex, multidisciplinary, and comparative gender analyses. Most recent discussion on these matters, however, especially in Europe, has focused primarily on the perceived subordinate status of Muslim women. These debates are a reminder of the deep interrelation of questions of gender, identity, human rights, and religious freedom more generally (Reilly and Scriver, 2014).

Since it is the objective of this section to critically look into Islam and women in the public sphere, our main focus therefore, lies in the examination of the position of Islam as a religion on women's aspirations to leadership positions in politics. Fundamentally, Islam as a religion frowns at women's aspirations to leadership positions, either politically or spiritually. Although, contrary to most critics of this divine position, Islam recognizes women as partners to men, but equal

partners. That is why Allah (S.W.T) in the Holy Qur'an categorically states that: *"Men are in charge of women, because Allah (S.W.T) has made one of them (men) excel the other; and because they spend of their properties for the support of women. So, good women are the obedient, guarding in secret, that which Allah (S.W.T) has guarded"* (Quran 4:34).

Despite the fact that there are several women who possess, distinctively, all the major attributes required of a good leader, Islam as a religion discourages pushing women forward for Leadership positions where qualified men are available. In Islam women are not qualified to hold such positions due to certain defects. While explaining these defects, Ambali (1998) observes that: *'Just as a slave does not enjoy full independence, since he is subjected to the control his master; similarly, a woman does not enjoy full independence of action, since she is subjected to the influence of her parents or guardian before marriage and that of her husband after marriage.* In addition to this, women by nature carry a good number of responsibilities which weigh them down and have effects on their temperament (Ambali, 1998:86).

In relation to authority and leadership position, Allah (S.W.T) made the woman a guardian, one who orders, one who prohibits, within the house of her husband and an authority over her children. The Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him said: *"The woman is a guardian in the house of her husband and she is responsible for her flock"* (Al-Fauzan, 2003:14). This hadith suggests that the guardianship and authority that a woman can wield under Shari'a incidentally begins and ends in her husband's house. However, Islam does not prohibit the women from working outside of her home, what Islam frowns at is for women to be paraded as leader or ruler within the public sphere amidst equally qualified men. According to Al-Fauzan (1998), even if a woman must work outside of her house, there are conditions that must be met. These conditions are: (a) She must really need the job, or that the society needs her services, that is if there are no men that can undertake her kind of work. (b) That work takes secondary place to her duties in the house, which are her original duties. (c) That her work be involved with women only, such as teaching women, doctor or nurse for women.

In fact, Islam does not consider it to be well with a people who entrust their leadership to a woman. This was inferred from the reaction of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, to the news that the people of Persia have made a woman their ruler (Ambali, 1998). Reacting to the news, the Prophet, peace be on him said "*Those who appoints a woman as their ruler will never prosper*" (Bukhari).

The Kwara State 2011 Governorship Election Experience

Kwara state is a relatively poor state. Its politics and administration had always been under the control of a single individual. Another very important feature of the state is that it is highly religious, and predominantly Muslim in nature. It is of equal importance to note that about 65% of its political jobbers are of the womenfolk and the youth. It is interesting to note that since the beginning of electoral politics in Kwara state, the king of Kwara politics, Senator Olusola Saraki had at different times single-handedly installed his numerous political god-sons as governors in the state, starting with Governor Adamu Attah at the wake of the Second Republic, up to the installation of Governor Shaaba Lafiagi of the abortive Third Republic. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999 till 2007, the story was no different. In 1999, he installed the late Governor Muhammed Lawal, followed by his Crowned Prince, Dr. Bukola Saraki, who rode to victory on the platform of Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP). The former Senate Leader's political parties had always enjoyed overwhelming victories in elections, both at the state and local levels. Most of these victories were attributable to the political sagacity of this 'Leader'.

However, the 2011 elections presented a serious challenge to his political hegemony in the state. This was partly due to the fact that the former Governor, Dr. Bukola Saraki was not in the same political camp with his father, Senator Olusola Saraki. While the son supported the incumbent Governor, AbdulFatah Ahmed on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP; the father supported and campaigned for Senator Gbemisola Saraki, his biological daughter, who ran on the platform of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria, ACPN. Another very critical factor which worked against Senator Olusola Saraki was the fact

that he fielded a female candidate for the race in a state as religious as Kwara. One very interesting feature of the 2011 governorship election campaign in Kwara state was the gender issue, which to a large extent were driven and powered by religious sentiment. This was made to be so, because Kwarans are very religious people. Because of their serious attachment to their faiths, most especially the Muslims, it became difficult to separate politics from religion, as such; political campaigns were laced with religious sentiments which preached gender inequality in places of worship. This saw many Islamic preachers, sponsored and unsponsored, preaching vigorously against the emergence of a female governor in the state, since the position of Islam seems very clear on the matter.

Initially there was the prospect of the Second Republic Senate Leader, Senator Olusola Saraki positioning his daughter to replace his son as governor of the state. This was short lived as reports during the election showed her trailing even in her own ward while all other major gubernatorial candidates won the votes in their wards. It was quite interesting to note that, Senator Gbemisola Saraki even came third in her Ajikobi ward, losing to the Peoples Democratic Party and the Action Congress of Nigeria's candidates, even in the face of her father's political sagacity. What this suggests is that no matter how well qualified a candidate is, once the candidate is a woman, she remains a *bad product* politically in a religious state, most especially within the five local government areas that makes up the '*Emirate*'. Quite interestingly, the *Emirate* holds more than 60% of the state's population, and incidentally the highest concentration of Muslims in the state. Moreover, the same *Emirate* happened to be the traditional stronghold of the Saraki's dynasty. Another very interesting fact is that Ajikobi ward within the *Emirate*, which incidentally coincides with Saraki's Agbaji quarters, remains the Islamic nucleus of the state. We may therefore be apt to argue that Senator Olusola Saraki during the 2011 governorship election in Kwara state dared Kwarans by fielding a woman in the race against the peoples wish. Consequently, citizens' displeasure with the 'Leader's choice of a female candidate could be responsible for the protest votes recorded against Senator Gbemisola Saraki,

the ACPN candidate during the election. The PDP candidate won the election, scoring a total of 254, 969 votes, the ACN followed with 152, 580 votes, while the ACPN female candidate polled a paltry 72, 456 votes despite her father's position as the 'Godfather of kwara politics'.

Interestingly, it is worthy of note, that the ACN candidate, Barrister Muhammed Dele Belgore was a political-new-comer in Kwara politics in 2011, compared to the ACPN candidate, a two times Senator prior to the election. More so, while the other two candidates won in their various wards, the ACPN candidate could not win her ward, which incidentally is the religious (Islamic) nucleus of the *Emirate*.

Analysis of Data Elicited Via Questionnaires and Discussion of Findings

Data elicited via questionnaires were collated. Analyses concerning respondents' demographic data are presented in Table 1, while data bothering on the residents' perceptions on issues pertaining to religion, secularism and gender inequality are presented and analyzed in Table.2, using simple percentage.

Table.1: Demographic Data, Presented in Simple Percentage

S/N	Characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender Distribution of Respondents		
	Male	287	57.4%
	Female	213	42.6%
	Total	500	100%
2	Age Distribution of Respondents (Age bracket)		
	Below 20	46	9.2%
	21-40	116	23.2%
	41-60	155	31%
	61 & above	183	36.6%
	Total	500	100%
3	Religion Distribution of Respondents		
	Christians	198	39.6%
	Muslims	297	59.4%
	Other Religions	5	1%
	Total	500	100%
4	Academic Qualification Distribution of Respondents		
	Primary	23	4.6%
	Secondary	102	20.4%
	College / Polytechnics / University Degree	375	75%
	Total	500	100%

From Table.1 above, it can be observed that 287 of the respondents which represent 57.4% are male, while 213 which represent 42.6% are female. This simply means that the difference in the political consciousness of male and female folks in the three local government areas is a bit wide, a difference of 14.8%. This suggests that, there is the need for government of these various local governments to raise the political consciousness of their women, through political orientation programmes. It is evident from the table, that majority of the respondents fall within the mature segment of the society, that is, an age bracket that most often constitute the workforce, as well as the elders who have adequate experience about the position of religion on women as leaders in the society. These age brackets are 21-40 years, 41-60 years and 61 & above, which have frequencies of 116, 155, and 183, a total of 454 out of 500 respondents, representing about 90.8% of respondents. This is indicative of the fact that the perceptions of the residents of these three local governments were mostly carried out by socially acceptable and responsible members of the society where judgment can be relied upon.

Also from the table above, out of a total of 500 respondents, 198, representing 39.6% are Christians, while 297 respondents, representing 59.4% are Muslims. Note that just 5 respondents are for other religions. This is reflective of the fact that these local governments are predominantly Muslim communities, and by extension the state. Concerning academic qualification, it can be observed from the above table that most of the respondents are graduates of colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. The table indicates that 375 representing 75% of a total of 500 respondents. The high number of graduates among respondents could be attributed to the fact that these three local government areas house the three top institutions of higher learning in the state. These are: University of Ilorin, in Ilorin West, Kwara State University in Moro, while Offa has the Federal Polytechnics Offa. It is believed that these institutions churn out in large numbers, graduates every year into these communities, and by extension, influencing the level of literacy and political consciousness among the residents of these communities.

Analysis of Data Elicited Via Questionnaires on Residents' Perceptions

Data elicited via questionnaires concerning the residents' perceptions on issues pertaining to religion, secularism and gender inequality are presented and analyzed in Table.2 below, using simple percentage. Responses to the eight questions under Section B are presented in Table.2 below.

Table.2: Data on Residents' Perceptions on religion, secularism and gender inequality.

Questions	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Q1: Do you agree that Nigeria is, as stated in the constitution, a secular state?	Yes	255	51%
	No	223	44.6%
	I don't know	22	4.4%
Q2: Does religion has any serious role in the Nigerian state and politics?	Yes	274	54.8%
	No	201	40.2%
	I don't know	25	5%
Q3: Do you subscribe to the fact that Nigeria is a multi-religious state?	Yes	243	48.6%
	No	236	47.2%
	I don't know	21	4.2%
Q4: In your own opinion, do you see Nigeria as a compromised secular state?	Yes	278	55.6%
	No	173	34.6%
	I don't know	49	9.8%
Q5: Is it true that women contribute in no small measure to the socio-political and economic development of the nation?	Yes	356	71.2%
	No	113	22.6%
	I don't know	31	6.2%
Q6: Do you agree that the pattern of political relations between men and women in Nigerian politics is asymmetric in favour of the men ?	Yes	313	62.6%
	No	142	28.4%
	I don't know	45	9%
Q7: Does your religion frown at women as leaders?	Yes	343	68.6%
	No	118	23.6%
	I don't know	39	7.8%
Q8: Will you vote a female candidate as governor as against a male contender?	Yes	52	10.4%
	No	394	78.8%
	I don't know	54	10.8%

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2015

The above table, Table. 2, shows that it is the opinion of 255 respondents, representing 51% of the sample population, (500), that Nigeria is, as stated in the constitution, a secular state; while 223 respondents, representing about 44.6% do not agree with the position. Comparing the percentage of those who perceived that Nigeria is a secular state and those who think otherwise, it is discovered that the difference is insignificantly small. This is a difference of just about 6.4% (51% - 44.6%), which generally suggests that there is a need for more political education on the status of the Nigerian state as a secular state. However, a consideration of the weight of the two figures succinctly suggests that majority of the residents of these local government areas are of the opinion that Nigeria is a secular state as far as the constitution is concerned.

From the same table, 274 respondents, representing 54.8% are of the opinion that religion has a serious role to play in Nigerian politics. While 207 respondents, representing about 40.2% of the total number of respondents have contrary opinions concerning the same, 25 respondents (5%) do not know whether religion has a role to play in our politics. However, what this statistic suggests is that religion has a role to play in Nigerian politics. The table equally shows that 243 respondents, representing 48.6%, subscribed to the fact that Nigeria is a multi-religion state, while 236 respondents (47.2%) do not subscribe to the fact that Nigeria is multi-religion state. Note from the table, that 21 respondents, representing about 4.2% are not sure whether Nigeria is a multi-religion state or not. What this statistic suggests is that considering the number of those in support of this position, residents generally accept that Nigeria is a multi-religion state. However, another interesting thing exhibited by these statistics, is that there is a very slim difference between those who subscribe to the fact that Nigeria is a multi-religion state and those who think otherwise, a difference of 1.4% (48.6% - 47.2%), which suggests that residents are not unanimously clear on the true nature of the Nigerian state concerning religion and secularism.

Furthermore, 278 respondents, about 55.6% opined that Nigeria is a compromised secular state, while 173 respondent, that is 34.6% of the population sampled disagree with that

position, as 9.8% of respondents are not sure whether Nigeria is a compromised secular state or not. Invariably, what this suggests is that Nigeria is a compromised secular state. In terms of contribution to the socio-political and economic development of the state, 356 respondents representing 71.2% of the total number of respondents believe that it is true that women contribute in no small measure. Whereas 113 respondents, representing 22.6% of the same population do not believe that women contribute much, 6.2% remains undecided. If we weigh the various responses, we cannot but agree that women contribute in no small measure to the socio-political and economic development of the state.

On the same table, 313 respondents, representing 62.6% of our sample population agree that the pattern of political relations between men and women in Nigeria politics is asymmetric in favour of the men. 142 respondents representing 28.4% do not agree with the position, while 9% are undecided. This surely implies that there is the existence of serious gender inequality among residents of these local communities. It is evidently clear from the table that 68.6% of the respondents (343) believe that their religions frown at women as leaders. Contrary to this, 118 respondents, representing 23.6%, believe that their religions do not frown at women as leaders. Out of the 343 respondents that affirm this position, 267 are Muslims, while the remaining 76 respondents are Christians. For those that think otherwise, 21 are Muslims, while 97 of the respondents are Christians. If 267 out of the total number of Muslim respondents (297) believe that their religion frowns at women becoming leader, it summarily suggests that Islam as a religion frowns at women aspiring to become a leader.

With respect to voting and gender, 10.4% responded in the affirmative, while about 78.8% responded that they will never vote for a female candidate where an equally qualified male contender is presented. This invariably confirms the above position; and this is because the position of religion, especially Islam, is clear on women and leadership. This position is further affirmed as 273 respondents claimed they voted for PDP candidate, a male, during the 2011 governorship election, while 181 respondents equally voted for the male candidate presented by ACN. It is quite

interesting to note that only 41 respondents claimed they voted for the ACPN female candidate. And finally, the table shows that 283 respondents, about 56.6% of our sample population, agree that the compromised secular nature of the Nigerian state aids gender inequality in our politics. While 39.6% of the same population thinks otherwise, 3.8% of the total number of respondents does not know whether compromised secularism aids gender inequality. This statistic therefore shows that generally, the compromised secular nature of the Nigerian state aids gender inequality in our politics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on our various findings as explained above, this paper concludes that despite the provision of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which guarantees and state categorically that Nigeria is a secular state; the Nigerian state has remained multi-religion state in practice. It further concludes that the role played by religion in Nigerian politics has in various ways compromised its secular status; and that the compromised secular nature of the state creates space for the various religions, especially Islam, to function in critical capacity, in relation to politics, within the Nigerian political space. Anchoring on these findings, this paper finally concludes that because religion has been allowed a role in our politics, its disposition towards women's aspirations to leadership positions aids gender inequality, despite the fact that it is agreed that women in no small measure contribute to the socio-political and economic developments of the state.

Recommendations: Constitutionally, Nigeria remains a secular state, but in the real sense of it, according to our findings, Nigeria is a multi-religion state. Therefore, for the country to witness any meaningful development, this paper recommends that we need to, as a nation strengthen her secular status. Since the role of Nigeria as a secular state has been severely compromised; it should be redesigned without the current religious overtones and practice true secularism as entrenched in our constitution.

The paper equally recommends that there is the need for mass re-orientation of the citizens

to eschew religious preaching that could aid gender asymmetries. There is the need for the government to strengthen the National Orientation Agency, NOA, Federal and States' Ministries of Information; and fund relevant Civil Society Organizations in order to achieve this goal.

And finally, legal sanctions could be introduced within our legal framework against any individuals or groups that promote 'Gender inequality in Politics', especially if powered by religious sentiments. This would serve as a deterrent to those who pre-occupy themselves with promoting religious-laden 'gender statements' especially in critical political periods, such as in election campaign periods. In fact, this paper suggests a jail sentence, with option of heavy fine. These will in no small measure drive the nation close to the secular status as entrenched in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; and equally avail the women equal opportunities as their male counterparts within the public sphere.

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