Chapter 11
Internet Mediatization:
New Opportunity for Women in Politics?

Nkiru C. Ezeh
Madonna University, Nigeria

Njideka V. Enwereuzo
Madonna University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The political rights of women remain greatly constrained by political structure and traditional practices which many believe are responsible for the exclusion of their interests in decision making process and development paradigms. Anchored on the Democratic Participant Media Theory and Public Sphere Theory, this study evaluated if Internet can mobilize and encourage women to voice their concerns and opinions on political matters. Survey conducted among 200 female academic staff members of universities in the south-east, Nigeria revealed that although the Internet provided the women with needed political information and interaction; it did not significantly induce their interest to participate in politics. The study recommends that women should aggressively utilize the opportunities provided by Internet by forming groups and networks where political issues are analyzed and discussed. Where the nature of relayed message is well focused, chances of using the Internet for inducing political participation can be enhanced.

INTRODUCTION

In all spheres of life, women have experienced one form of discrimination, marginalization or domination or the other by men (CIRDDOC, 2002; Tasie, 2013; Aldoory & Parry-Giles, 2005). The patriarchal social structure in Africa provides a framework upon which the marginalization and discrimination is based. They are not given fair opportunity to participate in decision making processes and so their needs and aspirations are not put into consideration when decisions that affect their lives are taken. This is due to the environment they found themselves whereby they were not given equal opportunities with their male counterparts, even as children. Women are reduced to "unproductive stereotype" (Aldoory & Parry-Giles, 2005) and this made them to became psychologically indifferent to things that concern them, even politics.

The political rights of women remain greatly constrained by culture and practices (Eliasoph, 1998; CIRDDOC, 2002) as some of the culture forbid such equal rights. In African the belief that "women are to be seen, not heard; and "women education ends in kitchen" make many women shy away from political participation so as not to be labeled 'wayward' or subjected to public ridicule. Again, political participation is sometimes risky, expensive and requires a great deal of investments from individuals willing to engage in political activities (CIRDDOC, 2002; Nwafor, 2013), and women are unable to match the capacity of men for money (CIRDDOC, 2002).

As a result of these, women are reluctant to neither seek nor participate in political activities and politicians do not court them. This lack of mobilization efforts targeted toward women makes them unlikely to form political engagement patterns (Sherrod 2003; CIRDDOC, 2002). When women who constitute a chunk of the country's population are not encouraged to participate in politics, democracy will always remain in theory.

The media if well-organized can provide avenues for mobilization and participation (McQuail, 2005) of women in political activities. In the past, the traditional media of radio, television, newspaper etc. are the only political mobilizing propeller. But many scholars (Putnam, 1995; Bakker & Vreesa, 2011) have argued that they directly or indirectly blocked popular participation in the political process. They rely predominantly on paid professionals and lack the ability of voters to inject their views, voices, and values into the campaign environment (McQuail, 2005). Again, these paid professionals are also part of the system that relegates women to the background, and thus further decapitate them politically.

The emergence of Internet as a veritable medium of mass communication has brought a great competition to the world of conventional media, like radio, television, newspaper and magazine among others. Scholars have argued that the Internet is a democratizing medium with capacity to affect media use - access to

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/internet-mediatization/145068

Related Content

History of Feminist Approaches to Technology Studies
Jennifer Brayton (2006). *Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology (pp. 759-764).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/history-feminist-approaches-technology-studies/12823

Social Empowerment of Women Through ICT Tools With Special Reference to Use Post Pandemic
Manisha Khanna (2023). *ICT as a Driver of Women's Social and Economic Empowerment (pp. 102-122).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-empowerment-of-women-through-ict-tools-with-special-reference-to-use-post-pandemic/321573

A Study on Women's Financial Inclusion Using Digital Technologies
Palak Srivastavaand Ahmad Tasnim Siddiqui (2023). *ICT as a Driver of Women's Social and Economic Empowerment (pp. 21-35).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-study-on-womens-financial-inclusion-using-digital-technologies/321568

Work Life Balance Issues: The Choice, or Women's Lack of it
(2013). *Gendered Occupational Differences in Science, Engineering, and Technology Careers (pp. 167-191).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/work-life-balance-issues/69605

Funding Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology in Ireland
Ita Richardson (2006). *Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology (pp. 355-360).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/funding-women-science-engineering-technology/12760