

# Young Women and Political Participation: Exploring Gender Differences in the Awareness, Knowledge and Support for Political Restructuring among Youths in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Political restructuring can create new political spaces for young women or facilitate an opposite trend. Yet, no study has examined the role of young women with respect to the current agitations for political restructuring in Nigeria. With a focus on the role of young women, the present study explored gender differences in the awareness, knowledge and support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria. Participants were 575 youths (372 males, 180 females,  $M = 25.62$ ,  $SD = 5.51$ ) drawn from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Data was collected using a questionnaire assessing awareness, knowledge and support for political restructuring in Nigeria. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) were used to analyse the data. The results show that there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and awareness of political restructuring. However, females had higher knowledge of and support for political restructuring than males. The discussion of the findings highlights implications for young women in terms of political participation, research and policy.

**Keywords:** political restructuring; young women; gender; awareness; knowledge; support; youths

## Introduction

On May 24, 1966, following a successful usurpation of power by the military, a unitary system of government was introduced in Nigeria through the Unification Decree No. 34 (Okonkwo 2018). This witnessed a massive federal takeover of educational institutions, social services, and economic activities that resulted in an excessive degree of federal



Gender Questions

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involvement in almost all facets of national life (Orluwenem 2018). However, this was met with a general feeling of displeasure due to the overbearing power of the central military government. This displeasure was evidenced in the persistent calls for political restructuring of the country. At the vanguard of this call was the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), whose leader was late Anthony Enahoro (Okoroji and Odoshimokhe 2013; Oladesu 2016). This body was one of the leading voices in the demand for a Sovereign National Conference under the regime of General Sani Abacha to determine, among other issues, the course of democratisation and political restructuring of Nigeria. However, despite the fact that a National Conference was eventually held in the country in 1994/95 (Enogholase 2013), the restructuring of the polity in tandem with the basic principles of federalism remained desirable.

The transition to democratic rule on May 29, 1999 that “buzzed with activity” (Kalu 2003, 389) did not change much as the Unitarian political structure was retained and entrenched in the country. For instance, the federal government currently dominates the polity to the extent that it receives 52.68% of the country’s revenue while the 36 states alongside the 774 local governments are left with 47.32% (i.e. 26.72% for states and 20.60% for local governments) to share (Awofeso and Obah-Akpowoghaha 2017; Lukpata 2013; Onuigbo and Eme 2015; Soludo 2018). Also, in the lists of responsibilities and powers contained in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), there is an Exclusive Legislative List of 68 items on which only the federal or central government has the right to legislate. The Concurrent List, which has 30 items, is the mutual responsibility of both federal and state governments. The functions of the local government councils are stated in the Residual List contained in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution (Forum of Federations n.d.).

Hence, the current agitation for political restructuring in the context of this study refers to the call for constitutionally driven reordering of the political structure of Nigeria to devolve political and economic powers in line with the basic principles of federalism. This is based on the belief that the current centralised structure is defective and inimical to development in Nigeria (Adeniran 2017). To this end, there have been several calls from various quarters ranging from individual statespersons (Ajayi 2017; Alike and Ezigbo 2017; Ezigbo and Oyeyipo 2017; Ogunmade, Obi, and Oyeyipo 2017; Olumide 2017) to political and civil society groups (Godwin 2017; Yakubu 2017). The youths have also been demanding for the restructuring of the Nigerian polity (Godwin 2017; Ujumadu et al. 2017).

The focus of scholars who have dedicated their attention to the issue of political restructuring has ranged from the conceptualisation of political restructuring (Yaqub 2016), the political economy of restructuring (Soludo 2018), federalism and resource control (Aibieyi and Osemwota 2006; Ekuri and Etim 2017; Nwogwugwu and Kupoluyi 2015; Okolo and Raymond 2014), to the call for political restructuring in Nigeria (Ezeani 2018; Obidimma and Obidimma 2015; Okonkwo 2018). To date, there does not seem to have been any empirical study that investigates the role of young women at the

forefront urging and fuelling agitations for political restructuring in Nigeria. This is despite the fact that revolutions such as political restructuring cannot only create new political spaces for young women or facilitate an opposite trend (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Al-Ali 2012), but can also be spearheaded successfully by youths (including young women) (see Amor 2018; Grange 2014; UNDP and UNDESA n.d.). It is in this light that the present study explored gender differences in the awareness, knowledge, and support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria. This formed the basis for the discussion on the role of young women with respect to the agitations for political restructuring in the country.

## **Youths and Political Participation**

Young people between the ages of 10 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world's population (UNDP 2013; UNDP and UNDESA n.d.) with a population of 1.8 billion (Das Gupta et al. 2014). In developing countries, the youth population is growing overwhelmingly. According to the UNFPA report, about 89% of the world's 10- to 24-year-olds, almost nine out of 10, live in less developed countries (Das Gupta et al. 2014). In 2015, of a total population of close to 1.2 billion people in Africa, an estimated 541 million (45.1%) were between the ages of 18 and 45. Young people between the ages of 15 and 35 constitute one third of Africa's population (Goremusandu 2017; MINDS 2016).

This population can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have throughout history participated in, contributed to, and even catalysed important changes in political systems, power sharing dynamics and economic opportunities (UNDP and UNDESA n.d.). They have the capacity to determine substantially the global future trends in very important ways. However, these youths face poverty, barriers to education, multiple forms of discrimination and limited employment prospects and opportunities. With respect to political participation, they are grossly under-represented, especially in the conventional forms of politics. For instance, in a third of countries, eligibility for national parliament starts at 25 years old or older (UNDP 2013); 1.65% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20s and 11.87% are in their 30s; and the average age of parliamentarians globally is 53 (50 years old for women parliamentarians) (UNDP and UNDESA n.d.). Studies have also shown that older people are more likely to vote than younger people (Lagos and Rose n.d.; Turcotte 2015). The youths are rather more represented in political activism or unconventional forms of political participation like signing petitions and participating in rallies (Turcotte 2015). Yet, young men and women engage in political activism differently. For instance, young men are more likely to break the law, in addition to taking part in direct action and demonstrations, whereas young women are more likely to donate money to a cause or write to politicians and newspapers (Electoral Commission 2004). Young men are more likely to say that they would vote in a general election (65% compared with 55% for young women). Young women were also found to be more cause-orientated than men (being more likely to sign a petition or boycott products, for example) whereas young men were more campaign-orientated (more likely to contact

politicians, to join or work for a political party) (Briggs 2008; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Electoral Commission 2004).

In Nigeria, although there was a relative increase in the level of youth political participation with particular reference to the 2015 election turnout (MINDS 2016), it is generally poor especially with respect to direct involvement in political processes (IDEA and NFPO 2018). Discouraged by the lack of economic opportunities, access to basic necessities, political platforms and electoral irregularities (MINDS 2016), these youths desert mainstream politics and leave it to the older adults in the country. This does not only hinder the development of youths in the country, but also impedes national development in general. Of course, many studies have highlighted the enormous benefits that come with successful inclusion of the youth in mainstream politics (see Das Gupta et al. 2014; Lagos and Rose n.d.).

The present study therefore investigated the gender differences with respect to the awareness, knowledge and support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria. The focus on the youth was informed by the fact that youths suffer profound discrimination in politics and focusing on them will not only provide the youth's perspective on the political restructuring discourses in Nigeria, but will also suggest ways to increase their lot in the event of a successful restructuring in the country. Yet, the present study did not necessarily set out to investigate the level of youths' support for political restructuring but the role of young women with respect to the awareness, knowledge and support for the movement. This is important because while the youths generally suffer profound political discrimination, young women suffer more (see Das Gupta et al. 2014; DiLanzo 2018; EIGE n.d.; Goremusandu 2017; Grange 2014; IDEA and NFPO 2018; iKNOW Politics et al. n.d.; MINDS 2016; UNDP 2013).

## **Gender Differences in Political Awareness/Knowledge**

Political awareness/knowledge is an essential resource for effective participation in politics (Basinger and Lavine 2005; Gelman and King 1993; Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). Yet, several studies have found it to be disproportionately distributed as men, in many instances, take the lead (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; 2000; Dow 2009; Fraile 2014; Frazer and Macdonald 2003; Garand, Guynan, and Fournet 2005; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Lizotte and Sidman 2009; Mondak and Anderson 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997; Wolak and McDevitt 2011).

Explanations for this epistemic disparity which basically dwell on measurement and social issues range from those that focus on the role of "stereotype threat" (McGlone, Aronson, and Kobrynowicz 2006), men's "propensity to guess" and women's propensity to give "don't know" responses (Frazer and Macdonald 2003; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Lizotte and Sidman 2009; Mondak and Anderson 2004), women's lower positions with respect to education, occupation and other demographic variables

(Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Kenski and Jamieson 2000), to the traditional male-dominated nature of political systems as well as orientations in some societies (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Delli Carpini and Skeeter 1996; Dow 2009). Another explanation focused on political institutions as potential mediating influences on women's levels of political knowledge (Fortin-Rittberger 2016). According to this position, in instances where there may be more proportional electoral rules that provide additional incentives for political parties to mobilise women, women are not only more likely to have a high level of political engagement but also a high level of political knowledge (Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012).

There is yet another explanation that maintains that asking gender-relevant questions (i.e. questions related to women) during surveys could close the gender gap in political knowledge. According to this position, there may be policy areas and practical political information that are more directly relevant to women than men (Dolan 2011). Examples of such information/areas are how to access government benefits and services (Stolle and Gidengil 2010), information on abortion, sexual harassment, and equality for women (Hansen 1997; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Paolino 1995), knowledge of female political candidates and officeholders (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Dolan 2011; Koch 1997; Verba, Burns, and Scholzman 1997) etc. All these explanations notwithstanding, women's lower levels of political knowledge create constraints or impair their ability to participate effectively in politics (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Delli Carpini and Keeter 2000).

In the present study, political knowledge was not assessed with a gender-relevant concept nor using the popular five batteries of tests (see Hayes 2008; Mutz 2002; Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Political knowledge was rather assessed based on one of the currently dominant political concepts in Nigeria, which is political restructuring (see Soludo 2018). The study specifically assessed three issues around the concept of political knowledge: (1) gender differences in the awareness of political restructuring, (2) gender differences in the source of awareness of political restructuring, and (3) gender differences in the in-depth knowledge of political restructuring in Nigeria.

## **Gender Differences in Political Participation in Nigeria**

Political participation has been acknowledged to be the crux of democracy (Appadorai 2004; Falade 2014; George-Genyi n.d.; Lamprianou 2013; Pausch 2012) as well as crucial for effective and good governance (Nekola 2006). Yet, women (especially young ones) are less represented, especially in the mainstream forms of participation such as contesting for a political office, membership of a political party, membership of legislative communities, campaigning, attending political meetings, etc. in many societies across the globe (Beauregard 2014; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Dolan 2006; Koch 1997; Lawless 2004; Reingold and Harrell 2010; Murray and Sénac 2018; Verba et al. 1997). They are rather more represented in the other forms of political

participation such as participating in private activism, signing petitions, boycotting products, blogging, etc. (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Although it has been found that the gender gap is closing or even reversing for some forms of political participation or activities such as turnout, protest, or new forms of participation such as political consumerism (Dalton 2002; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004; Norris 2002), women still lag behind in several forms of political participation including political knowledge, interest and efficacy (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Dow 2009; Fitzgerald 2013; Hooghe and Stolle 2004; Mondak and Anderson 2004; Pyeatt and Yanus 2017; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Stolle and Gidengil 2010; Taft 2014).

In Nigeria, for instance, about half of the population which currently stands at 183 million are women, whose population stands at 90,989,254 as against 92,387,474 males, yet women continue to be under-represented and disadvantaged in virtually every facet of the country—education, health, work, power and decision-making (National Bureau of Statistics 2016). Even though a very recent study has found that women’s role in the socio-economic and cultural landscape appears to be increasing in the country, it has not translated into greater inclusion of women in the political process (Orji, Orji, and Agbanyim 2018). In fact, while the past two decades have witnessed an impressive rise in women’s political representation around the world and specifically in Africa, where four countries (Rwanda, Seychelles, Senegal, and South Africa) make up the world’s top 10 countries in terms of women’s share of single or lower house of parliament, Nigeria, according to this study, has achieved little progress in this regard.

Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil rule, the country has conducted five general elections (in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015), of which the record of women’s political representation has been somewhat mixed and inconsistent.

**Table 1:** Women in the Nigerian Parliament

<i>World Ranking</i>	<i>House of Representatives</i>				<i>Senate</i>			
	<i>Elections</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Elections</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>
181	03. 2015	360	20	5.6	03. 2015	109	7	6.5
125	04. 2011	360	24	6.8	04. 2011	109	7	6.4
117	04. 2007	360	25	7.0	04. 2007	109	9	8.3
107	04. 2003	360	17	4.9	04. 2003	109	3	2.8
104	02. 1999	360	12	3.4	02. 1999	109	3	2.8

Source: “Women in National Parliaments” (Orji, Orji, and Agbanyim 2018)

As Table 1 illustrates, Nigeria achieved the highest percentage (7.0%) of women’s representation in the lower parliament (the House of Representatives) in 2007 after the unimpressive record of 3.4% and 4.9% in 1999 and 2003, respectively. However, the figures declined to 6.8% and 5.6% in 2011 and 2015 (National Bureau of Statistics 2016;

Oluyemi n.d.; Orji, Orji, and Agbanyim 2018). It should be noted, however, that following the conclusion of a number of election petition cases by 2017, the figure went up to 6% (22 in the House of Representatives and 7 in the Senate) (Orji, Orji, and Agbanyim 2018). Also, with 15 years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999–2015) Nigeria is yet to produce a female president as well as a female governor in any of the 36 states of the Federation (Oluyemi n.d.). At the state and local government levels, women seem not to appear in the power equation.

This, according to Fatile and Ejalonibu (2016), is made worse under the present administration, especially in terms of appointive positions. For instance, out of the 37 appointed ministers in the country, only six are women and also out of the 27 nominated resident electoral commissioners (RECs) for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), only one female made the list. In fact, a report has it that Nigeria has only achieved 6.7% of the 35% of affirmative action for women recommended by the National Gender Policy (Oluyemi n.d.). This is not surprising as the Nigerian government has reportedly rejected the legitimisation of the 35 and 20% affirmative action bill for women for ministers and commissioners respectively on the basis of cultural and religious beliefs (see Adebayo 2017). With respect to voting and other forms of participation, a study reported with respect to Ondo State, Nigeria, that women are also significantly under-represented (Falade 2014). Also, the resident commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Enugu, Mr Emeka Ononamadu, reportedly said that contrary to the previous widely held view that more women vote during elections, only 44% of female voters were accredited and voted compared to 56% male voters in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria (*Vanguard* 2018).

This gender inequality or under-representation of women in political participation in the country is even worse among young women who are disadvantaged on the basis of both gender and age. Nevertheless, this gender inequality is variously attributed to factors such as illiteracy/low level of education of female folks, poverty, discriminatory cultural and religious practices, money politics (i.e. high cost of engaging in politics in Nigeria), stigmatisation, unfavourable political meeting schedules, political violence and low self-confidence (Ajogbeje 2016; Arowolo and Aluko 2010; Awofeso and Odeyemi 2014; Azuh, Egharevba, and Azuh 2014; Ekpenyong, Ibiam, and Agha 2015; Eshiet 2015; Iloh and Alumona 2009; Ngara and Ayabam 2013; Oni and Segun 2012). However, some efforts are afoot especially by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in conjunction with the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) to ensure or achieve gender equality or increased presence of women, especially young ones, in political processes in Nigeria (Thomas-Odia 2016).

In the present study, support for political restructuring, as a form of political participation, was assessed to understand the differences that arise with respect to gender. Previous studies, as seen above, have focused on gender differences in major/institutionalised forms of political participation along elective and appointive positions in Nigeria. The uniqueness of the present study therefore lies in the fact that it

explored gender differences in a non-institutionalised form of political participation such as awareness, knowledge and support for political restructuring in Nigeria. The demand for political restructuring is currently one of the most dominant political movements in Nigeria into which many have keyed. Hence, an understanding of the place of young women in the entire agitation for political restructuring in the country will not only add important perspectives to the body of knowledge on youths, young women and political participation, but will also provide an important insight for policymakers on how to protect young women's interests in the course of restructuring the Nigerian polity.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

The study involved 575 youths drawn from six states (Cross River,  $n = 98$ , Enugu,  $n = 99$ , Ogun,  $n = 98$ , Kogi,  $n = 94$ , Taraba,  $n = 89$ , and Sokoto,  $n = 97$ , states) in Nigeria. These states were randomly selected from each geopolitical zone (i.e. south-south, south-east, south-west, north-central and north-west) that makes up the country through a balloting technique in which all states from each zone had equal chances of being selected. This however did not apply to the north-east due to security challenges in the zone. Hence, Taraba State was purposively selected due to the relative absence of security challenges in the state. Questionnaires were distributed among students in universities and other tertiary institutions as well as to youth corps members in the respective states. Youth corps members were recruited from different venues of Community Development Service (CDS) meetings of the National Youth Corps members in these states. The recruitment of individual participants for the study was based on the convenience sampling technique. This technique is a sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study. To this end, the researcher recruited participants for the study wherever he could find them and typically wherever was convenient. Most of the participants were males (66.9%) and single (87.3%). Participants' ages ranged between 17 and 59 years ( $M = 25.62$ ,  $SD = 5.51$ ). Regarding ethnic identities, 19.7% indicated that they were Hausa/Fulanis, 35.2% identified as Igbos, 21.7% identified as Yorubas, and 23.5% indicated that they were from other minority ethnic groups. Considering their religious subscriptions, 52.3% of the respondents identified as Christians, 43.8% as Muslims, while 4% indicated that they were traditional worshippers. More than half of the participants (53.2%) had academic degrees.

### **Measures**

Two scales namely the Knowledge of Political Restructuring Scale (KPRS) and the Support for Political Restructuring Scale (SPRS) were developed by the researcher. In an attempt to measure the knowledge of political restructuring, the eight-item KPRS focused on the dominant feature or idea in the body of literature regarding what political restructuring in Nigeria actually entails. The dominant ideas in the opinions expressed



by political elites which are published in periodicals (i.e. print and online newspapers/media) were also considered. The general opinion is that Nigeria has not been operating a federal system of government or “true” federalism. This is evidenced in the power distribution imbalance contained in the Second Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) where 68 items in the Exclusive List of responsibilities are completely assigned to the federal or central government, in addition to the right to also legislate on items listed in the Concurrent List (which contains 30 items only) alongside the 36 state governments in the country. Furthermore, the federal government currently receives a 52.68% share of the country’s revenue while the 36 states alongside the 774 local governments are left with 47.32% (that is, 26.72% for states and 20.60% for local governments) to share. Hence, the dominant idea regarding what political restructuring entails is the devolution of power among federating units/regions or states in Nigeria. The items measuring knowledge of political restructuring in Nigeria were therefore built around this idea. This formed the basis on which the knowledge of political restructuring among the youths was assessed in this study. Sample items from the KPRS include the following: political restructuring entails “true” federalism; political restructuring entails the devolution of powers in Nigeria; political restructuring will reduce the over-dependence of states on the federal government in Nigeria. Participants responded to these items on a five-point Likert scale, indicating to what extent they agree, from one (strongly agree) to five (strongly disagree). The item number two was scored in reversed order. Independent factor analysis for KPRS suggested that the scale fit a single factor structure. It yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .82.

The SPRS is also an eight-item scale used in measuring support for political restructuring among youths in Nigeria. The term “support” is in this study conceptualised as “agitation,” or “demand” or “call” for political restructuring. The items in the scale are structured in a positive direction in support of political restructuring except for items two, five, and eight which are negative and as such reverse-scored. Sample items are as follows: Nigeria should be politically restructured; Nigeria is not due for political restructuring; Nigeria does not practise “true” federalism. These items were scored on five-point response format, indicating to what extent participants agree, from one (strongly agree) to five (strongly disagree). Independent factor analysis for SPRS suggested that the scale fit a single factor structure. It yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .81.

The awareness of political restructuring was measured with the following statement: “Have you heard of political restructuring in Nigeria.” Participants responded to this statement by ticking either “Yes” or “No.”

## **Statistical Analysis**

Descriptive statistics was used to assess for response patterns across the demographic characteristics of the sample. A chi-square test of association was used to test for the

relationship between gender and awareness of political restructuring. This is considered suitable because the response pattern for the awareness of political restructuring was dichotomous (Yes/No). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compute for group differences in knowledge of political restructuring and support for political restructuring. It should be noted that knowledge of political restructuring and support for political restructuring yielded continuous total scores.

## Results

**Table 2:** Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

<i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i>	<i>Christian, N(%)</i>	<i>Muslim, N(%)</i>	<i>Traditional, N(%)</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	191(51.3)	177(47.6)	4(1.1)	372(67.4)
Female	108(60.0)	71(39.4)	1(0.6)	180(32.6)
<b>Ethnic Group</b>				
Hausa	6(5.6)	101(94.4)	0(0)	107(19.9)
Igbo	171(87.7)	22(11.3)	2(1)	195(36.2)
Yoruba	66(57.4)	46(40.0)	3(2.6)	115(21.4)
Others	54(44.6)	67(55.4)	0(0)	121(22.5)
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	268(56.2)	206(43.2)	0(0)	477(87.7)
Married	25(8.5)	38(15.6)	1(0.2)	65(11.9)
Separated/Divorced	2(0.7)	0(0)	0(0)	2(0.4)
<b>Political Affiliation</b>				
PDP	129(68.3)	59(31.2)	1(0.5)	189(33.9)
APC	35(24.1)	108(74.5)	2(1.4)	145(26.0)
Others	137(61.2)	85(37.9)	2(1.4)	224(40.1)
<b>Educational Qualification</b>				
FSLC	9(3.1)	4(1.7)	1(0.5)	14 (2.6)
SSCE	71(24.2)	107(45.5)	2(1.1)	180 (33.8)
BA/BSc/BEng	171(60.2)	112(39.4)	0	284(53.3)
MSc/MA/MEng	40(13.7)	7(3.0)	1	48(9.0)
PhD	5(2.1)	2(0.7)	0	7(1.3)

**Table 3:** Frequencies and chi-square test of association for responses of participants on sources of information on political restructuring by gender

Source	Males (n = 384)		Females (n = 190)		$\chi$	Sig
	Yes, n(%)	No, n(%)	Yes, n(%)	No, n(%)		
Television	211(54.9)	173(45.1)	114(59.7)	77(40.3)	1.17	.286
Radio	184(47.9)	200(52.1)	80(41.9)	111(58.1)	1.87	.183
Newspaper	201(52.3)	183(47.7)	79(41.4)	112(58.6)	6.16	.013
Social media	193(50.3)	191(49.7)	93(48.7)	98(51.3)	.06	.860
Academic journal	57(14.8)	327(85.2)	34(17.8)	157(82.2)	.84	.396
School	127(33.1)	257(66.9)	54(28.3)	137(71.7)	1.36	.254
Government agencies	58(15.1)	326(84.9)	38(19.9)	153(80.1)	2.11	.155
Public library	33(8.4)	351(91.6)	23(12.0)	168(88.0)	1.99	.176
Family and friends	160(41.7)	224(58.3)	88(46.1)	103(53.9)	1.01	.326
Mosque/Church	61(15.9)	323(84.1)	44(23.0)	147(77.0)	4.37	.040
Pressure groups discussion	147(38.3)	237(61.7)	74(38.7)	117(61.3)	.01	.928

Note:  $\chi$  = chi-square test of association; Sig = probability level of significance

In Table 3, it was found that the relationships between gender and information about political restructuring from most of the sources (television, radio, social media, academic journal, school, government agencies, public library, family and friends, and pressure groups discussion) were not statistically significant. However, the relationship between gender and information about political restructuring from newspapers was significant,  $\chi(1, 574) = 6.16, p < .05$ . More males responded affirmatively to the item as a source of information on political restructuring compared to the females. Also, the relationship between gender and information about political restructuring from mosque/church was significant,  $\chi(1, 574) = 4.37, p < .05$ . More males responded “no” to the item as a source of information on political restructuring compared to the females.

**Table 4:** Chi-square tests of relationship between gender and awareness of political restructuring

		Aware of political restructuring		Total
		No	Yes	
Gender	Male	69	315	384
	Female	38	153	191
Total		107	468	575

For the analysis, Pearson’s chi-squared test was considered adequate because the two variables are categorical in nature. Gender is categorised as males and females, while

responses to awareness of political restructuring indicate either yes or no. Table 4 showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and awareness of political restructuring  $\{\chi = .31, \text{ exact significance level (2-sided)} = .571\}$ . Even though the raw scores appear to be large for the responses of male and female participants, the difference was not statistically significant because the  $p$ -value was greater than .05

**Table 5:** Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results for gender differences in knowledge of political restructuring and support for political restructuring

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	PR Knowledge	350.01	1	350.01	8.26	.004	.014
	PR Support	230.45	1	230.45	4.83	.028	.008
Error	PR Knowledge	24247.60	572	42.39			
	PR Support	27314.18	572	47.75			
Total	PR Knowledge	264470.00	574				
	PR Support	265540.00	574				
Corrected Total	PR Knowledge	24597.60	573				
	PR Support	27544.63	573				
a. R Squared = .014 (Adjusted R Squared = .013); PR = Political restructuring							
b. R Squared = .008 (Adjusted R Squared = .007)							

MANOVA was considered suitable for analysing the gender differences in the knowledge and support for political restructuring because there were two dependent variables (knowledge and support) which had continuous scores, whereas the independent variable (gender) was categorical (male and female). Table 5 showed that there was a significant difference between males and females in knowledge of political restructuring,  $F(1, 572) = 8.26, p < .05$ . Females had higher scores in knowledge of political restructuring ( $M = 21.55, SD = 6.72$ ) than males ( $M = 19.89, SD = 6.40$ ). Similarly, there was a significant difference between males and females in support of political restructuring,  $F(1, 572) = 4.83, p < .05$ . Females had higher scores in support of political restructuring ( $M = 21.26, SD = 7.22$ ) than males ( $M = 19.92, SD = 6.75$ ).

## Implications and Conclusion

This study shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between gender and awareness of political restructuring, which highlights how popular and evenly distributed the information on political restructuring is across genders. Yet, the major sources of information for both genders differed. For instance, more females received information on political restructuring from churches/mosques compared to males who received mainly from newspapers. This is of course not surprising as women have been found to be generally more religious and more likely to attend churches/mosques than

men across the globe (but in some predominantly Muslim countries, men attend more) (Bada 2018; Pew Research Center 2016). This gender gap in religious attendance has however narrowed, especially in the US, not necessarily because there has been an increase in men's attendance but because women's attendance has dropped (Earls 2017; McClendon 2016). Nevertheless, this finding suggests that churches/mosques are becoming politically active and conscious in Nigeria.

This present study also shows that females had higher knowledge of political restructuring than males. This is not only interesting but adds some important perspectives to the debate on gender differences in political knowledge. As discussed earlier, some scholars suggest that one of the major reasons women lag behind in political knowledge is that traditional measures of political knowledge have been gender biased as they do not contain gender-relevant questions (Dolan 2011; Stolle and Gidengil 2010). Others observe that there are certain ways of framing survey questions such as the inclusion of "don't know" responses that seem to favour male respondents (Fortin-Rittberger 2016; Frazer and Macdonald 2003; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Lizotte and Sidman 2009; Mondak and Anderson 2004). This present finding however defies these positions. The finding suggests that women, especially young ones, can show a higher level of political knowledge irrespective of whether such knowledge is assessed with gender-relevant concepts or not. For instance, political restructuring, on which knowledge was assessed in this study, is one of the current generally dominant political concepts in Nigeria which does not fall within the domain of any gender. The finding also suggests that the framing of survey questions on political knowledge has little or no influence on participants' responses with regard to personal characteristics. For instance, the survey items employed in the study allow for "not sure" responses which, if following the argument, should appear more appealing to the female characteristics or tendencies than the "don't know" responses. Yet, this does not seem to have had any discernible influence on the participants' responses. All these highlight the complexities in the debate on gender differences in political knowledge.

Furthermore, this finding suggests that the measurement of political knowledge should go beyond the use of the traditional/conventional battery of measurements including those woven around gender-relevant issues. These traditional measures appear to be monotonous and too simplistic. Also, these measures seem not to encourage or demand intellectualism and intellectual flexibility (which are the bedrocks of or criteria for knowledge) from respondents. Admittedly, it is important to ascertain people's knowledge of political office holders (whether females or males) (Burns, Scholzman, and Verba 2001; Dolan 2011; Koch 1997; Verba, Burns, and Scholzman 1997), election dates (Abdo-Katsipis 2017), how to access government benefits and services (Stolle and Gidengil 2010), laws on abortion, sexual harassment and equality for women (Hansen 1997; Kenski and Jamieson 2000; Paolino 1995), and impacts of such knowledge on their political participation. However, it appears to be more important to assess people's knowledge of more general and gender-free political concepts (such as the one addressed in this study) with high relevance and potentialities to drastically change the

course of political history in societies. First, such knowledge assessment will provide equal ground for both male and female respondents. Second, an understanding of people's knowledge of such concepts will not only aid policymakers in making relevant policy choices, but will also provide a reliable insight into gender differences in political knowledge.

In all, this particular finding has an implication for the current agitations for political restructuring in Nigeria. It suggests that young women are interested and active in the call for the restructuring of the polity perhaps in the belief that such restructuring would open up new political spaces and opportunities for them. This is in tandem with the position of Ahikire (2007) which is that a decentralisation or devolution of political power guarantees effective political participation and representation for women. It is little wonder then that young women were found to score higher in the support for political restructuring than young men in this study. But then, agitation for political restructuring as conceptualised in this study is still within the purview of extra- or non-institutionalised forms of political participation in which there are no inequalities or discriminations in respect to gender (Marien, Hooghe, and Qunitelier 2010). Other examples of non-institutionalised forms of political participation are political activism, online protests, signing of online petitions, political mobilisations etc. Institutionalised political participation, on the other hand, includes political activities such as membership of political parties, running for office etc. that are guaranteed by the constitution and provided by the existing political institutions (Mukhongo 2015), which of course remain dominated by men (Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes 2007) in many societies including Nigeria.

Hence, it is not entirely surprising that females supported political restructuring more than males. Moreover, Coffé and Bolzendahl (2010) reported that women are more likely than men to engage in "private" activism, while men are more likely to have engaged in direct contact, collective types of actions and to be more active members of political parties. What could perhaps explain the gender disparity in the support for political restructuring of Nigeria is that young women are economically bearing the brunt of the present political structure of the country which many have described as defective and anti-productive. They could also be protesting an observed political exclusion and male chauvinistic disposition of the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari as evidenced in the gender insensitive political appointments (e.g. out of the 37 ministers in the country, only 6 are women and also out of the 27 nominated resident electoral commissioners [RECs] for the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] only one female made the list) (see Agbonkhese 2017; Fatile and Ejalonibu 2017).

Be that as it may, the above findings have some policy implications. For instance, given that young women were shown to be more knowledgeable and supportive of political restructuring, it would be commendable if the interest of young women is adequately captured in the entire process of political restructuring in Nigeria. At the moment, young

women are under-represented and disadvantaged in virtually every facet of the country—education, health, work, power and decision-making (National Bureau of Statistics 2016). Although it has been reported that women’s role in the socio-economic and cultural landscape appears to be increasing in the country, it has not translated into greater inclusion of women, especially young ones, in the political process (Orji, Orji, and Agbanyim 2018). Hence, political restructuring along the principles of federalism as supported by young women in this study can address the need for greater inclusion of young women in the political process. Federalism, as a system, has several advantages, some of which are protection of minority interests from abuse by the majority (Lijphart 1999), better government services (Olson 1969), and the existence of need-specific government policies and regulations. The system particularly fosters a higher level of political participation (Levy 2008) even for women by creating multiple channels of decision-making (Stockemer 2014). Yet, creating political space or multiple channels of decision-making does not necessarily guarantee the development of institutions that are gender equitable (Molyneux and Razavi 2002; Thomas and Adams 2010). Hence, the inclusion of young women in a socio-political process requires institutions that are open or specifically dedicated to young women as a political constituency (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Viterna and Fallon 2008). To this end, the government and other stakeholders can, in the course of restructuring Nigeria, accommodate young women’s interests by creating young women-friendly institutions or political platforms in the country. An example of such institutions could be constitutionally establishing young women-friendly districts as conceptualised by Palmer and Simon (2008) in each federating unit, state or region as the case may be. Even though this model has been recently found to have achieved less in boosting women’s political participation generally in the US (see Abdo-Katsipis 2017), applying it to a substantially different context such as Nigeria could make a significant difference especially through its characteristic high demand and supply for female political leaders/candidates. A successful establishment of this and more will not only protect young women’s interests, but will also go a long way in boosting women’s (in the general sense) level of political participation in Nigeria.

This study has some limitations. First, as a cross-sectional study, the findings of the study are not free from common method bias. Second, the study used a convenience sampling technique, hence generalisation of findings should be done with caution. Despite these shortcomings, the study is a worthy enterprise as it is the first survey to investigate the role of young women in the current agitations for political restructuring in Nigeria.

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