

**Faculté des sciences économiques,  
sociales, politiques et de communication  
École des sciences politiques et sociales (PSAD)**

# **The Contrasted Performances of Women's Political Representation**

**A comparative Study of Kenya, Nigeria, and  
Senegal**

Auteur : Nour DUPREZ  
Promoteur(s) : Benoît RIHOUX  
Lecteur(s) : Alena SANDER  
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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long tail stroke, positioned on the right side of the page.

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# Introduction

Women's political representation in the Western world has been widely studied while the African continent has not drawn such attention. Many African countries are failed states, heavily affected by corruption, poverty, and insecurity, thus undermining the democratization process. Consequently, when the focus is on Africa, it is most of the time to underline the difficulties it faces and the problems to be addressed even though it abounds with both cultural richness and substantial achievements.

In recent years, several Sub-Saharan African countries such as Rwanda and Senegal almost excelled in the field of gender parity in politics, thus outpacing many Western countries. Women have held one of the highest executive positions in many African countries, such as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the former President of Liberia, Samia Suluhu Hassan, the current President of Tanzania, and Aminata Touré, the former Prime Minister of Senegal.

This thesis aims at studying more precisely the contrasted performances of women's political representation in the National Assembly in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the hypothesis that it is the result of *violence*. Peace Research defines *violence* as '*the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is*' (J. Galtung, 1969).

This comparative study focuses on Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal due to their regional stature, their institutional and cultural characteristics as well as their respective performances regarding women's political representation.

To best address this issue, the existing literature and theory of Peace Research must be reviewed. The next section is devoted to the methodological framework, in which the research question, the hypothesis formulated, the choice of countries, and the method used to approach the problem are further discussed. The various case studies are subsequently analyzed individually before being subjected to comparative analysis in the final chapter.

# Chapter 1

## Theoretical Framework, Research Question and Methodology

### 1.2. Literature Review

There exist many attempts to systematize the study of obstacles to women's political representation. In general, three kinds of obstacles emerge from these studies: political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural obstacles (Nadezhda Shvedova, 2005).

The political obstacles relate to the patriarchal aspects of politics.

*'Political life is organized according to male norms and values, and in some cases even male lifestyles. (...) The male-dominated working pattern is further reflected in the parliamentary work schedule, which is often characterized by a lack of supportive structures for working mothers in general, and for women MPs in particular'* (N. Shvedova, 2005).

Hence, women who are culturally delegated the role of wives, mothers, and caregivers, have difficulties in finding the right equilibrium between domestic responsibilities and the political profession (N. Shvedova, 2005). Consequently, they tend to be excluded from politics. This tendency is exacerbated by the cultural belief that women are naturally inadequate to hold leadership positions (J.M., Kiamba, 2009). Moreover, a correlation between modernization and the improvement of women's socioeconomic status has been demonstrated. Hence, modernization leads to an increased influence of women in politics (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

Political parties are another facet of these political obstacles. In general, women do not occupy a meaningful position within the political party (N. Shvedova, 2005). They are principally confined to mobilization roles. Besides the exclusion from the political party decision-making process, women are also the victims of a gendered bias, especially during the selection and the financing of the candidates (N. Shvedova, 2005). Hence, political parties contribute to the continuity of a discriminatory gendered political culture and prevent the full efficiency of affirmative actions established to improve women's political representation (Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2009). Indeed:

*'The adoption of quotas may produce increases, but also stagnation and even decreases in the numbers of women elected, depending upon how these reforms interact with existing party selection practices'* (M.L. Krook, 2010)

The academic community recognized that the electoral formula has a considerable incidence on women's political representation. Compared to the *plurality* and *majority voting systems*, women tend to be better represented within a *proportional representation voting system* (McAllister and Studlar, 2002). *Plurality* and *proportionality* are defined as follows:

*'In plurality/majority systems, the winner is the candidate or party with the most votes, and typically there is only a single winner in each district. In proportional systems, the electoral system is designed to ensure that the overall votes for a party or coalition are translated into a corresponding proportion of seats in the legislature'* (R.E. Matland, 2005)

In addition to the establishment of quotas, the closed lists accentuate this favorable effect on women in opposition to open lists *'where the voters are able to influence which of the party's candidates are elected by means of personal voting'* (R.E. Matland, 2005). Quotas, also called affirmative actions, are strategies that improve women's political representation within elected institutions. Indeed, *'affirmative action seeks to overcome discrimination, increase diversity and reduce poverty among groups that have historically been victimized by discrimination'* (D. Taiye Agbalajobi, 2021). Such strategies appear to be effective considering that *'a dramatic change has taken place recently in the global ranking order of countries based on their level of female political representation.'* (D. Dahlerup, 2005)

Proportionality offers various advantages which explain the better representation of women, mainly the magnitude of the districts which is the basis of the political parties' strategy of candidates' selection (R.E. Matland, 2005). In plurality/majority systems, the impact of the gendered bias is more important considering that, in theory, only one candidate or political party list per constituency is elected. Therefore, women will have fewer chances to be selected by the political party which, consciously or not, favors the male candidates. Men are believed to be more suited to leadership positions and consequently get more votes. Therefore, according to some studies, *'women's groups should be supportive of moves to increase the total number*

*of MPs in the parliament and of moves to reduce the number of electoral districts'* (R.E. Matland, 2005).

Yet, the effect of proportionality on women's political representation has also been questioned. In addition to the fact that for a long period, the proportion of women within the *proportional representation system* was more or less equal to the one within the *majority system* (R.E. Matland, 1998), the correlation between *proportionality* and satisfactory women's political representation is not systematic. Not all countries using such a system have a meaningful proportion of women within their elected institutions, which thus contradicts this statement (McAllister and Studlar, 2002). Indeed:

*'Several puzzles remain. Why do should national-list proportional representation have a very different impact on women's electoral fortunes in Israel than in the Netherlands? Why should the use of quotas for candidacies seem to work better in Argentina than in Ecuador?'* (P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 2001)

Therefore, the institutional features alone should not be considered the only explanation for the level of women's political representation. Such findings encourage to further analyze other crucial aspects that impact the situation of women in politics.

The socio-economic features are the second kind of hindrance to women's political representation. (Nadezhda Shvedova, 2005).

The state of modernization of a country appears to have an impact on the societal perception of women and can be described in two phases (P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 2001):

*'First, industrialization brings women into the paid workforce (...) During this phase, women make substantial gains in educational opportunities and literacy. Women are enfranchised and begin to participate in representative government, but they still have less power than men. The second postindustrial phase brings a shift towards greater gender equality, as women move into higher-status economic roles and gain greater political influence within elected and appointed bodies'* (P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 2001)

Nonetheless, in many developing countries, women live below the poverty line while in developed countries, there still exists a gender difference in terms of income. Yet, *'the economic empowerment of women, along with education and access to information, will take women from the constraints of the household to full participation in politics and political elections'* (N. Shvedova, 2005). Hence, education is an important step in this industrialization process that would eventually lead to women's emancipation and increased political participation.

However, for some authors, the economic empowerment of women resulting from modernization does not necessarily facilitate access to politics. *'In many postindustrial societies, despite the transformations of women's and men's lifestyles, electoral success has continued to elude women'* (P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 2001).

Finally, the sociocultural norms are the third obstacle that explains the disparities in women's political representation in societies that are yet postindustrial and proportional. (P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 2001). In some postindustrial and proportional societies, women are underrepresented because of the existing conservative and anti-egalitarian norms and traditions that deeply shape the mind and perception of individuals (P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 2001). *'A traditional strong, patriarchal value system favors sexually segregated roles'* (N. Shvedova, 2005) and reduces the chances of women entering politics considering that they are culturally given the role of mothers and housewives. Yet:

*'Other research reveals that social and economic changes may evolve separately from changes in the political arena. Many developed countries, like France and the United States, continue to see low numbers of women in parliament. At the same time, developing countries like Mexico, South Africa, and Uganda have witnessed dramatic increases in recent years'* (M.L. Krook, 2010).

Patriarchal practices tend to be more widespread within Islamic societies, which could explain the low proportion of women within their elected institutions:

*'A more recent worldwide comparison of women in politics in 180 countries reveals that the greatest contrasts between predominantly Christian countries and countries of other religions, including Islam,*

*Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, and Hinduism, all of which had lower proportions of women in legislatures and in cabinet offices'* (P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 2001).

However, such statements are challenged by other studies. Characteristics such as industrial development or democratization are more determinant in women's empowerment than religion. Consequently, women are better represented in Christian countries because of their level of development rather than their religious beliefs. (A. Reynolds, 1999).

The patriarchal attitudes are reinforced by the mass media which are considered as being the fourth branch of power because of its capacity to shape the mind and opinions of individuals (N. Shvedova, 2005). The media are one of the main instruments of propagation of gender stereotypes:

*'Another widespread trend in the mainstream media is to depict women as beautiful objects: women are identified and objectified according to their sex and are made to internalize certain notions of beauty and attractiveness which relate more to a woman's physical capacities than to her mental faculties. Such an approach encourages the long-standing patriarchal stereotype of the 'weaker sex', where women are sexual objects and 'second-class' citizens'* (N. Shvedova, 2005).

Violence against women in politics is one of the many dramatic consequences of patriarchy and can be defined as the following:

*'Violence against women in politics, including in and beyond elections, consists of any act of gender-based violence, or threat of such acts, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering and is directed against a woman in politics because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately'* (UN Women, 2021)

Even though both genders are exposed to violence in politics, women are more exposed to gender-based violence which often consists of sexual harassment or *'threats to their personal security and that of their loved ones, social ostracism and attacks on their moral character and self-confidence'* (UN, 2018). Such violence does not only concern female candidates and their family but also female elected and voters (P. Norris, 2020) and has significant physical and

psychological consequences which often discourage women from participating in politics (UN, 2018).

Now that the existing obstacles to women's political obstacles have been reviewed, let's further explain the theory of Peace Research which enables us to elaborate on both the theoretical framework and the research question of this comparative study.

## 1.2. Peace Research

Peace Research is a security field approach. Security is an evolutive concept that encompasses various aspects, depending on perceptions. Hence, one can perceive the threats to democracies, populism, corruption, discrimination, and inequality as security matters. Yet, an extrapolation of this security approach to this comparative study remains relevant. Using Peace Research as an analytical framework enables us to bring out more systematically common characteristics regarding the hindrances to women's political representation in sub-Saharan Africa. This theory highlights the deep reciprocal influence between the structural aspects (the political system and legal framework), the violent individuals' behavior against women, and the cultural aspects. The Peace Research concept of *violence* has several dimensions because it encompasses all the aspects previously mentioned. *Peace* is the absence of *violence* which is '*the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is*' (J. Galtung, 1969). For instance:

*'If a person died from tuberculosis in the eighteenth century it would be hard to conceive of this as violence since it might have been quite unavoidable, but if he dies from it today, despite all the medical resources in the world, then violence is present according to our definition. [Or], a life expectancy of thirty years only, during the Neolithic period, was not an expression of violence, but the same life expectancy today would be seen as violence according to our definition'* (J. Galtung, 1969).

There are three kinds of *violence* which together form the *triangle of violence*: *direct violence*, *structural violence*, and *cultural violence*. Each *violence* can either be *physical* or *psychological*

*violence. Physical violence* includes all actions that directly affect and harm the human body and may lead to the death of the person in the most unfortunate situations; while psychological violence is the ‘*violence that works on the soul including lies, brainwashing, indoctrination of various kinds, threats, etc.*’ (J. Galtung, 1969).

Let’s take the example of the rape of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. First, *direct violence* happens ‘*where there is an actor that commits the violence*’ (J. Galtung, 1969). In other words, the subject-object relation is clearly identifiable. In this case, the object is the Congolese women; the subject is the rapists who can be either the rebel militias, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or the civilians. If they do not fire guns into women’s sexual organs, rapists insert objects of all kinds with a real desire to physically but also psychologically destroy the victims. Hence, women suffer from numerous physical damages (from tears in genitals to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, and from infertility to unwanted pregnancies) and psychological damages (from humiliation to mental disorders).

‘*Violence without this relation is structural, built into structure*’ (J. Galtung, 1969). Hence, *structural violence* is the systemic violence without a clear *subject-object relation*. Peace Research refers *structural violence* to social injustice that ‘*hinders equal access to opportunities, to goods and services that enable the fulfilment of basic human needs*’ (HarvardX, 2017). Because of the physical and psychological after-effects of rape, there is an urgent need for medical and psychological care that the State is unable to provide. Both the health and judicial systems are failing, thus promoting impunity and the distress of victims. In this situation, we cannot directly identify the relationship between the victims and the perpetrators. This cause-and-effect relationship is therefore elusive and diffuse in the system.

Raped women are stigmatized. Instead of being perceived as the victims of a heinous and criminal act, they are accused of having consented to it and thus being responsible for what happened to them. Instead of getting psychological support, they are marginalized and further humiliated, not only by their community but also by their own family. Such disregard and lack of consideration for women result from what Peace Research calls *cultural violence* which is ‘*any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form*’ (J. Galtung, 1990). The Congolese culture is deeply gendered. For example, ‘*marriage is a sine qua non condition to exist and play a role in society*’ (V. Moufflet, 2008). The fact that women

are reduced to marital objects can therefore justify: the laxity of the judiciary in dealing with rape cases; impunity; the difficulty in accessing health care; family rejection and marginalization. In other words, culture is a breeding ground for sexual violence against women.

The literature review and Peace Research enable us to elaborate the research question of this comparative study, namely: ***What are the main factors hindering women's political representation in sub-Saharan Africa?***

The main objective of the work is therefore to shed light on the barriers to women's political representation with the general assumption that women face *violence* as defined by Peace Research, based on which the following sub-hypotheses are developed.

- **Women in Kenya, Nigeria, and/or Senegal face *structural violence*, which explains the different proportions of women in their respective National Assembly.**

Firstly, it would mean that the government and the political institutions at large are insensitive to the issue of gender inequality. Therefore, there is no implementation of any kind of legal and political instrument to empower women. Secondly, it would mean that the socioeconomic status of women prevents their political representation. This hypothesis aims at emphasizing social injustice, i.e. violence with no clear subject-object relationship that results from a defaulting functioning of society.

- **Women in Kenya, Nigeria, and/or Senegal face *direct violence*, which explains the different proportions of women in their respective National Assembly.**

Women would be more exposed to *direct violence* at different moments of their lives, either physical or psychological, such as sexual harassment and threats which discourage them from accomplishing professional objectives and pursuing a career in politics.

- **Women in Kenya, Nigeria, and/or Senegal face *cultural violence* which explains the different proportions of women in their respective National Assembly.**

Both *direct* and *structural violence* find their origins in *cultural violence*. Cultural practices and norms could be determinant factors in hindering women's political

representation. Culture is so internalized that the abnormality and discriminatory behavior of individuals and institutions are not questioned. The exclusion of women from leadership positions is legitimized, which explains the lack of governmental intervention to promote women's empowerment.

The following section is dedicated to a discussion of the methodology used to answer the research question, more precisely an explanation of the choice of the countries and variables studied as well as the empirical strategy, its advantages and disadvantages.

## **1.3. Methodology**

### **1.3.1. Case Studies and Variables**

There is no general trend toward the reduction of gender discrimination in sub-Saharan Africa. The degree of attention given to the gender inequality issue varies strongly from one country to another, which makes this geographical area a very contrasted continent in this regard. This Master thesis aims to compare three Sub-Saharan countries, namely Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal selected based on their geographical position, their respective global ranking of the proportion of women in national assemblies<sup>1</sup>, and on several factors resumed in the table below.

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<sup>1</sup> Senegal ranks 11, Kenya ranks 90 Nigeria ranks 180 out of 192 countries (Source: Les femmes dans les Parlement Nationaux, 2019)

	<b>KENYA</b>	<b>NIGERIA</b>	<b>SENEGAL</b>
<b>RELIGION</b>	Mostly Christian	Half Christian, half Muslim	Mostly Muslim
<b>ELECTORAL FORMULA</b>	Majority voting system	Majority voting system	Mixt system
<b>COLONIAL PAST</b>	Former British colony	Former British colony	Former French colony

*Figure (1) Features of the Case*

- Religion is the first variable which allows to measure the impact of one specific culture on women’s political representation and consequently the potentially existing *cultural violence*. Hence, the countries chosen present different religious beliefs. Kenya is a predominant Christian country, Senegal is a predominant Muslim country, whereas Nigeria is composed of the same proportion of Christians and Muslims. Yet, taking religion as a cultural variable is a simplified analysis that tends to generalize and erase the multiple cultural and traditional particularities that have an equally important impact on the status of women. Yet, it was only possible to study the impact of Christianity and Islam on the political representation of women because of the inaccessibility of the field and the complexity of studying the numerous traditions.
  
- The institutional features of the countries are the second variable which enable to measure the degree of *structural violence*. The purpose was to demonstrate, for instance, the influence of one particular electoral formula on women access to politics. Both Nigeria and Kenya use a *majority voting system* while Senegal uses a *mixt system*. However, this comparative research is somehow incomplete because it does not include a country using a *proportional representation system*. Rwanda was meant to be part of the study, but feasibility constraints narrowed the research to Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal. Besides its conflictual past, the contribution of the analysis of Rwanda analysis to this comparative study would have been mainly related to the electoral formula. Hence, Senegal was chosen over Rwanda because this study focuses mainly on the

cultural hindrances to women's political representation considering that the impact of the electoral formula is quite well recognized academically.

- The last factor is history, in particular colonialism which allows for an analysis of *cultural* and *structural violence* as well. The purpose is to determine the impact of different colonial powers with different cultures on the evolution of women's political representation. Both Nigeria and Kenya are former British colonies while Senegal is a former French colony. Studying two countries with similar past and institutions but with different degree of female political representation enables to further emphasize the impact of culture. How can such different outcomes be explained? How can countries that share cultural, historical and/or institutional similarities have such different sensitivities towards the empowerment of women in society?

### **1.3.2. Empirical Strategies**

This Master thesis was realized based on a qualitative method that appeared to be better suited to analyze cultural practices and norms. Scientific articles such as the ones of P. Norris, R. Inglehart et M.L. Krook enabled us to give a general orientation of this study by targeting the different variables.

There is extensive literature devoted to Western countries. Therefore, the difficulty is to rely mostly on a Western-centric theoretical framework and transpose it to the case of Sub-Saharan Africa. The challenge was to avoid blindly applying a Western theoretical framework to non-Western societies. The democratic injunction in Africa illustrates such challenge. By analogy, one could also talk about the feminist injunction. African countries have their own culture and history which differ from one another, but above all from the Western societies. In a postpositivist logic, it is obvious that each researcher has normative baggage. The goal is not to get rid of it but to be aware of it and avoid value-based judgments. There is a need to realize that feminism has different facets depending on the continent, the country, or even the region in which one is. We cannot conceive a world without any cultural nuance and expect to tend towards uniform feminism.

Gathering primary sources was, therefore, necessary to give an added value to this work. Besides the different figures elaborated to better visualize women's political representation based on reports and statistical sources provided by specialists on Africa and organizations such as the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, UNESCO, and the Senegalese Parliament website, several specialists were interviewed. Initially, all countries were supposed to be equally covered by the same number of interviews so as not to create an analytical disequilibrium. However, according to their quality and completeness, it was necessary to contact additional specialists to deepen certain aspects and information that had been omitted by the interviews previously conducted. It was the case for Nigeria in particular. Moreover, the access to the field was not the same for all countries. Indeed, there were more opportunities to gather primary sources in Nigeria than in Kenya and Senegal.

The following specialists and activists were interviewed for this research. They were contacted either because they are the authors of interesting scientific articles or through organizations such as Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre or Global Wo.Men Hub.

1. Yolande Bouka is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University, specialized in issues related to gender and African politics;
2. Olanike Olugboji is a Nigerian environmental consultant, activist, and founder of Women's Initiative for Sustainable Environment (WISE).
3. Nkiri Uzodi is a Program Manager at Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) which *'is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit capacity building organization that works to strengthen democratic governance and citizens participation in Nigeria'* (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2021).
4. Selly Ba is a Senegalese Doctor in sociology specialized in issues related to gender and religion.

The chapters of this work are organized as follows. Each country is studied in individual chapters which all have the same structure. First, the electoral formula variable comprises a general analysis of the political system as well as the legal strategies adopted by the government. The impact of the political parties will be also subject to further analysis. Political parties are key players in politics and embody the patriarchal culture of the respected case studies and consequently enable to make a direct link between culture and politics. The

second section is dedicated to the analysis of culture that, however, goes beyond religion because both violence in politics as well as the social norms are further examined. The last section aims at analyzing on one hand the socioeconomic status of women that is also determinant for entering politics, and on the other hand their level of education that is directly related to the former.

Then, an entire chapter is devoted to the comparative study which synthesizes the elements resulting from each individual analysis in order to highlight the similarities and differences. The purpose is to move towards a systematization of the factors obstructing the political representation of women in sub-Saharan Africa.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Women's Political Representation in Kenya**

### **Introduction**

Kenya, former British colony and member of the Commonwealth has succeeded in positioning itself as a defining power in East Africa. This regional power has been characterized by relative political and democratic stability since its independence on December 12, 1963, despite existing inter-ethnic tensions and occasional violent political crisis.

Improving women's political representation has been a major concern since the 2010 constitutional reform and the adoption of the *gender principle*. The country has slightly improved the numerical representation of women in the National Assembly, but not enough to be a leader in this matter, with Rwanda easily overshadowing it both regionally and internationally. Indeed, only 23 out of 290 directly elected representatives are women.

This chapter, as well as the following ones, will be divided into three main sections. First, the political system, the legal strategies put in place to promote women's political representation and the impact of political parties will be analysed. The second section aims to study the relationship between culture and women's empowerment. Finally, the socio-economic status of women and their level of education will be further discussed.

### **2.1. Political System, Legal Strategies and Women's Political Representation**

#### **2.1.1. Legal Strategies and Promotion of Women's Political Representation**

The promulgation of the 2010 Constitution considerably improved women's situation in Kenya. The prohibition of gender-based discrimination and the establishment of the *gender principle* were adopted. The gender principle provides that '*not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender*' (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2021) enables women's political representation to increase in the following elections:

*In 2013, this legal framework resulted in the largest number of women in government in Kenya's history, with women holding 21% of seat in the national legislature, an increase from 9,8% after the 2007 elections. In 2017, women performed even better, accounting for 22% of seats in the National Assembly' (Y. Bouka et al., 2019).*

The 2010 Constitution also adopted an affirmative action to improve women's political representation by creating the *women representatives*. These 47 elected positions are specifically reserved for women and therefore, they do not compete with men. The *women representatives* have a specific role within the National Assembly. As its name suggests:

*'Women representatives should promote the interests of women and girls within their counties and the country at large. This role involves coming up with laws and policies that specifically target women and girls. Through parliament, they should lobby and advocate for equity and equal opportunities for women and girls.'* (AfroCave, 2021)

However, what seems to be a noteworthy improvement, hides a reality that is much less impressive. Indeed, despite the gradual results, the number of women in the National Assembly has never reached the one-third required by the Constitution. Apparently, this tendency is likely to be repeated in nearby elections.

Nonetheless, the violation of the gender principle is mainly observable at the national level. Indeed, the counties seem to comply more easily with the threshold: only three counties out of the forty-seven failed in reaching it. Such different outcomes result from the *'two different constitutional designs between the national level and the county level'* (Y. Bouka, personal communication, 2021). Because of the creation of the *women's representatives'* positions at the national level, the great majority of female members of the National Assembly were not elected but nominated or granted reserved seats, which can explain partly the counties' compliance with the gender principle and the failure of the national level.

*'On the national level there are different rules that create different pathways for women's representation. We already talked about the counties and at the national level we also talked about the role that women*

*representatives play in this architecture and how it is probably a good entry into politics because they do not have to compete against men. In the last elections, women have moved away from dual gender competitive seats at the national level and flocked towards the women's representatives' positions. That definitely influences women representation. The number of women representative seats does not change. What can expand is the dual gender competitive seats and if women move away from those to move towards the women's representatives, then you are pulling away from a potential tool.'* (Y. Bouka, personal communication, 2021).

Proportionality would enhance inclusion and the representation of the minorities including women (cfr. Chapter 1). Such system would have been better adapted to a country ethnically divided like Kenya. Yet, Kenya is a *first-past-the-post system*. In other words, it is a single-member constituency which means that only one person is elected as representative of the constituency. The candidate does not need to win an absolute majority of the votes to be elected but must have obtained the most votes. This *first-past-the-post system* is '*less likely to yield broader representation of underrepresented groups whether we are talking about ethnic, racial or gender groups*' (Y. Bouka, personal communication, 2021) and therefore constitutes a significant obstacle to women's political representation. Indeed, single-member constituency increases inter- and intra-party competition. The parties obviously choose the candidate who is most likely to win. In a patriarchal society such as Kenya, this competition is discriminatory since the choice of candidate is tends to be influenced by the gender rather than by the qualification of the candidates. Women are disadvantaged. Indeed, because of '*a potential male bias among voters, [parties tend] to nominate a male candidate over a female one in single-member districts, often referring to him as the most broadly acceptable candidate*' (D. Dahlerup et al., 2013).

Hence, political parties strongly the candidates' political future and on women's representation, which is further analysed in the following section.

### 2.1.2. The Impact of Political Parties on Women's Representation

According to the Federation of Women Lawyers Gender Audit, *'during the 2013 elections, political party selection was assessed as one of the most pivotal factors in the success or failure of women aspirants and candidates'* (Y. Bouka et al., 2019). Political parties naturally influence women's political representation because they constitute the entrance to politics which is further compromised by non-compliance of the political parties with the *gender principle*. Indeed, one of the main reasons of the inefficiency of the *two-third rule* is the fact that there is no obligation or sanction for non-compliance. The lack of implementation of the *gender principle* enabled political parties to circumvent their obligation to promote women's political empowerment. However, the 2017 High Court's ruling required the political parties to comply with the *two-third rule* otherwise their electoral list will be rejected. Perhaps this would lead to an improvement of the political situation of women, which would however remain moderate due to the *first-past-the-post system*.

The elites who are *'typically male actors who wield influence from within the party structure'* (Y. Bouka et al., 2019) also impact the political future of the aspiring national representatives. Indeed, the success of a candidate's political campaign depends on the economic support of these *'king-makers'* (Y. Bouka et al., 2019), which considerably impacts the national representatives' autonomy:

*'This points out that money in politics has had a negative impact, since excessive campaign funds have limited the independence of candidates and restricted the participation of vulnerable groups such as women and youth in running for office'* (O. Gakuo Mwangi, 2008).

Political parties select the candidates for the competitive and nominated seats. Political parties do not *'have a belief that they can gain political capital by taking on the issue of women's representation and there are various reasons for that'* (Y. Bouka, personal communication, 2021), namely the patriarchal culture and the tendency not to select women for mixed gender competitive seats because they already have the opportunity to hold political office through nomination which further increases the female representatives' feeling of indebtedness to their political party.

*‘In some cases, women were directly asked by parties to step aside in favour of their male counterparts in exchange for a nomination. This had a negative impact on the number of female candidates vying for open seats’ (Y. Bouka et al., 2019).*

The creation of reserved seats for women also constitutes an obstacle to the evolution of women’s representation and encourage *‘women’s political participation through the women representative position’* and reinforces the idea that *‘politics is men’s business and if women want to be in office they should compete for women representative seats’* (Annexes: Interview of Y. Bouka, 2021). Locking women into reserved seats constitute therefore the negative effect of the quota strategy.

Moreover, the degree of autonomy of the female national representatives depends on the trajectory of the female politicians, whether they have been nominated or directly elected. Indeed, nomination creates a feeling of indebtedness to the political party and their financiers, which consequently leads to a poor autonomy. Hence, *‘it is easier to instrumentalize a nominated political legislature than an elected one’* (Y. Bouka, personal communication, 2021).

A more in-depth analysis of the impact of culture will provide a better understanding of the discriminatory behavior of the political parties against women.

## **2.2. Culture and Women’s Political Representation**

### **2.2.1. Violence Against Women in Politics**

In Kenya, violence is deeply anchored during the electoral process, from the elaboration of the political parties’ electoral list to the election and nomination stage. *‘The ability to muster and marshal violence to intimidate opponents is rewarded and admired’* (Y. Bouka et al., 2019). The purpose of violence is to discourage aspiring candidates from running

for political office. Although it affects both genders, women are more exposed to violence than men because of the belief that women do not belong to politics.

Female candidates, as well as their family and supporters are particularly exposed to sexist, abusive language and violation of their physical integrity. Many of them have been raped or even stabbed and their perpetrators remain unfortunately unpunished. Since violence is a political practice and therefore not politicized as a security matter, there is a tendency not to sanction violent acts perpetrated during the electoral process. Impunity, in turn, further encourages the continuity of such disruptive behaviour.

Violence in politics has consequences on the elections results considering that the supporters of female candidates are reluctant to vote because they fear violent repercussions. Hence, female politicians and their entourage are always in a state of fear, which significantly prevents women to seek political office or gaining electoral support.

In order to understand the origin of violence against women in politics in Kenya, the patriarchal social norms of the country need to be further discussed.

### **2.2.2. Social Norms**

The Kenyan political landscape is deeply patriarchal. Indeed, politics are often associated with strength and combative aspects which naturally excludes women who are often associated with weakness and softness. *‘Most Kenyan cultures still regard the place of a woman as being in the kitchen and raising children as part of their reproductive role.’* (Institute of Economic Affairs Kenya, 2008). Consequently, they have difficulties in accepting the idea of women being involved in politics. Voters naturally direct their vote towards male candidates because they intrinsically believe that men are more suitable to leadership positions.

In order to obtain electoral support, women have to prove that they are fulfilling their social role before entering politics, such as being good mothers and goods wives. *‘These qualities are often considered a prerequisite to being a trustworthy political leader (...) Their primary responsibility is to their families and that it is unacceptable for them to neglect their homes’* (Y. Bouka et al., 2019). This biological division of labor is internalized by both men and women. It is therefore difficult to generate a societal change.

Female politicians are often negatively depicted by the media while men do not face such pressure. Therefore, the media propagates gender stereotypes in the Kenyan society and contributes to the continuation and reinforcement of these patriarchal beliefs.

### 2.2.3. Religion

From Protestantism to Catholicism and Evangelicalism, from traditional religions to Hinduism and Islam... such is the mosaic of religions in Kenya, although some of them represent only a tiny fraction of the population. In order to facilitate the analysis, only Islam and Christianity are further discussed in this section. The Muslim regions are among the least densely populated, making Christianity the dominant religion in Kenya ‘with 88.8% of the population’ (L. Sarr, 2017).

The figure (2) illustrates the distribution of Christianity and Islam by county according to their predominance. The figure (3) represents the counties in which women were elected to be national representatives.

Based on these two figures, one can observe that all the counties in which one or more women were elected are predominantly Christian, Garissa county being the exception. Hence, one can assume that religion influences the political representation of women in Kenya. Islam is apparently more averse to it. Islam makes a much sharper distinction between men and women societal roles. However, it is not Islam that is essentially more discriminatory and patriarchal than Christianity, but rather its interpretation. Indeed, in the Qur’an:

*‘The rights granted to males and females are similar and the status of men and women before God is the*

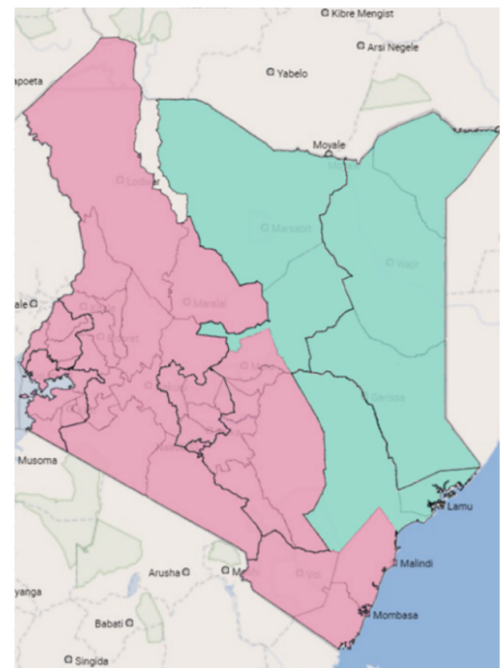


Figure (2) Distribution of Religions by County (Christianity and Islam)

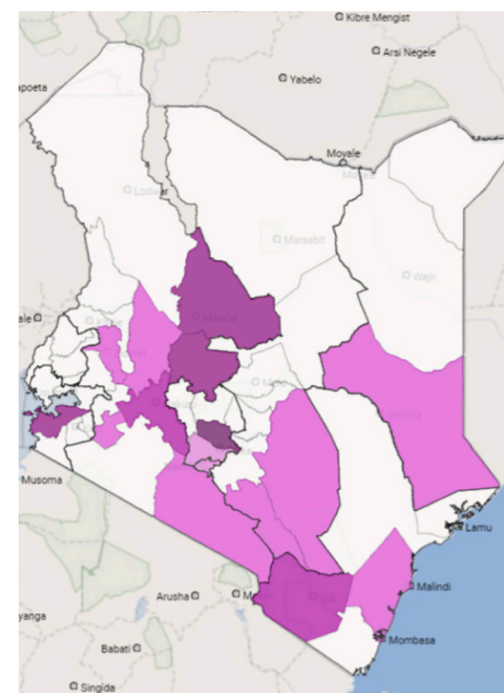


Figure (3) Percentage of Elected Women Representatives per County in 2017

1-10% 11-20% 21-30%  
31-40% 41-50%

*same. Women are portrayed as equal partners with men in the execution of religious obligations. The Qur'an further shows that, man and woman will earn rewards in the hereafter not because of their sex but in accordance with the way they practice the principles of Islam.'* (N. Kahumbi Maina, 2007).

Religion should not be considered as an abstract reality that escapes us while imposing its absolute truth but should rather be analysed as a social construction.

*'Although the Qur'an is categorical on gender equity, verses are interpreted to show that woman is inferior to man. This subjective interpretation that gives religious legitimacy to gender inequity is reinforced by social lore that depicts women as subordinates.'* (N. Kahumbi Maina, 2007).

The social lore that defines the scope and impact of religion on women differs from one culture to another and from one geographical area to another. Religion alone cannot be blamed for gender inequality considering its deep intertwinement with cultural practices and power relations. Hence, gender inequality does not result from religion as such, but from religion as an *instrument of power*, which is rarely questioned.

Hence, culture confines women to the domestic sphere and consequently determines their socioeconomic status. In the following section, the socioeconomic features of women and its relationship with their political representation are further discussed.

### **2.3. Women's Socioeconomic Status, Level of Education and Political Representation**

The socioeconomic attributes of women strongly influence their political representation because of the high cost of electoral campaigns. Successful campaigns usually require financial resources to cover expenses like *'party membership, candidate nomination fees, campaign materials, payments to constituents, logistical support, transportation and*

*security*' (Y. Bouka et al., 2019). Having financial resources is therefore essential for candidates to seek political offices.

Corruption is widely spread in Kenyan politics, which not only increases political expenses but also fragilizes the democratic process. In Kenya, gifts and voters' bribery are common practices. Candidates have to show that they are able to provide for their community. There is a correlation between women's political representation and corruption. Indeed, *'the higher numbers of women in national parliaments seem to be linked to lower levels of corruption.'* (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2022). In fact, *'vote buying and bribery exclude women as they tend to have less financial means than men.'* (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2022). The high cost of electoral campaigns, exacerbated by the phenomenon of corruption, constitutes a significant obstacle for women to become candidate. Consequently, most of the time, they cannot enter politics without the economic support of the *king makers*. However:

*'Male-dominated patronage networks in the country tend to only include women that are amenable that may not attempt to advance a women's rights agenda and threaten men's position of power. Women's participation itself is not enough; it needs women who are willing to change the status quo and fight existing structures to lead to lower levels of corruption.'* (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2022)

Women have a disadvantaged socioeconomic status compared to men because they are more affected by poverty and they do not have the same financial resources at their disposal as men.

*'Some traditional practices governing land and livestock ownership, access and control over land, and benefits accruing to land produce tend to favor men compared to women. This to a large extent disadvantages women in accessing credit. In 2004 only 1% of land titles in Kenya were held by women and 5-6% was owned jointly.'* (Institute of Economic Affairs Kenya, 2008)

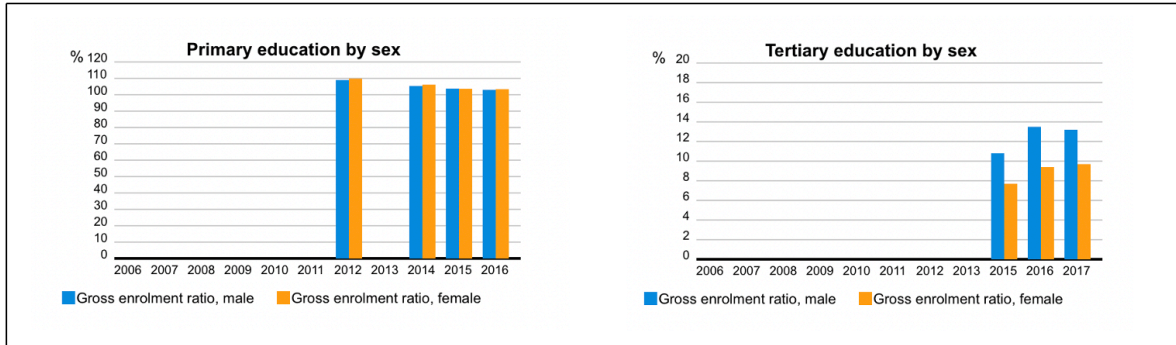
Being an owner of lands offers a necessary financial guarantee to cover campaign expenses, which women do not enjoy. Moreover, women face other obstacles:

*'While men are free to spend their income autonomously, women may be constrained by their spouses who often control family finances. (...) They have to spend more money on security to protect themselves and their supporters against violence. Since women derive political legitimacy by framing themselves as 'mothers' of their communities, they also find themselves asked to support the poorest and the most vulnerable of their constituents'* (Y. Bouka et al., 2019).

Women's socioeconomic status results mainly from their level of education which *'hinder women's representation in high level economic activities including decision making systems and wage employment'* (Institute of Economic Affairs Kenya, 2008). Therefore, women tend to occupy less profitable positions, a tendency that is accentuated by a misogynist culture that does not value women's skills, and by the alleged incompatibility between domestic and professional tasks.

Education plays an important role in the political representation of women because it is a tool of intellectual and economic emancipation. It allows women to emancipate themselves from cultural and socio-economic barriers and to aspire to occupy the same positions as men and thus progressively erase gender inequalities. Yet, accessing education is not easy. *'The proportion of graduates in Kenya's population is still very low. This suggests that the country has low access to higher education'* (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). In 2019, only 3,5 % of the population had a university degree (Statista, 2022).

Despite general improvements in educational attainment, the access to education is still discriminatory. The higher the level of education, the lower the proportion of women. Girls are more likely to drop out of school as figure (4) illustrates.



*Figure (4) The Evolution of School Attendance by Gender and Education Level*  
*Source: UNESCO (2017)*

There are several reasons explain this phenomenon of abandonment. The first one is cultural, more particularly the belief that women are not supposed to get a higher education and should therefore be limited to primary and at best secondary education (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006). The practice of early marriage is also an obstacle to female education. *‘Marriage and upbringing of children are the most important and greatest ambition in the life of girls. It is their ultimate destiny’* (N. Kahumbi Maina, 2007). It is culturally believed that being educated is contradictory to being a good wife. Education is consequently harmful to the future of women.

*‘Men tend to shun highly educated girls. Most of them view highly educated women as rude, uncooperative and unable to manage housework’* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006).

Women who access university *‘come from proportionately more advantaged backgrounds.’* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006). Indeed, financial difficulties constraint parents to favor their sons’ education. Firstly, other than the belief of their daughter’s intellectual inferiority in comparison with their sons’, parents perceive education as a real investment. Investing in girls' education is like betting on a future that is uncertain, potentially full of pitfalls and various unpredictable hazards.

*‘Parents worry about wasting money on the education of girls who are likely to get pregnant or married before completing their schooling. There*

*is also a strong belief that once married, girls become part of another family and parental investment is lost* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006).

Parents fear that their girl will get pregnant, which will undermine the honour of the family which prevails over young girls' education.

Moreover, young girls are exposed to different forms of violence such as sexual harassment even in the school institutions.

*'The main offenders include teachers, workers in boarding schools and school peers. The abuse, which ranges from verbal harassment to physical abuse, leads to withdrawal from school, unwanted pregnancies, and the death of boys and girls through HIV/AIDS'* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006).

Religion, in particular Islam, also influences negatively women's education. Most Muslims are in the East of the country where Islamic education is more widespread. Indeed, the Western education is often perceived as threatening Islamic values, which consequently reflects a certain cultural protectionism.

*'Some Muslims considered the Christian presence through the schools disruptive. School is perceived to be the instrument for the spread of non-Muslim ideology and culture'* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006).

Secondly, there is an economic factor that results from the cultural one. Children's education represents an important *opportunity cost*, especially in families with financial difficulties, for whom child labor constitutes an important source of income. Although this is the case for both girls and boys, the *opportunity cost* of the former's education is even more significant since there is a variety of jobs a girl can do, such as childcare and household duties.

*'Girls are an important source of income for their families, and the need for additional household income often takes priority over education. The high status accorded to marriage and motherhood in many communities impacts negatively on female participation in education'* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006).

There is also the question of practicality. In rural areas, which are predominantly Muslim, children often have to travel long distances to go to school, which exposes children to potential dangers, not to mention the costs of public transportation that many families cannot afford.

*‘The location of a school makes it accessible or closed to Muslim girls. This is because a Muslim woman is not supposed to travel for long distance unless accompanied. Therefore, where there are no schools within the locality and vicinity, some parents may be reluctant to send their daughters to distant secondary schools. A long distance to school is likely to expose her to moral and physical danger’* (N. Kahumbi Maina, 2007).

There are also regional disparities that differ from the rural-urban opposition. These regional disparities do not only concern education and can be explained by colonialism. Besides the opposition of Muslim communities to Western inputs, the colonizers did not develop the North-Eastern region because they thought that its pastoralist population *were wasteful of land and were not as industrious as agricultural peoples’* (UNESCO, 2009).

Hence, colonialism further marginalized the region and contributed to its poor level of education.

Colonialism institutionalized a more pronounced cleavage between the public sphere and the private sphere to which women were associated. Women were therefore gradually excluded from politics and the decision-making process, which was not necessarily the case in precolonial African societies (Y. Bouka, personal communication, 2021). Moreover, women did not have access to the level of education that would provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to hold the same positions as men. *‘The subordination of women in public position of power decision making is clearly explained by a correspondingly low female participation in colonial education with that of males’* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006). Hence, colonialism enabled the importation of a Western misogynist system overseas.

*‘Research shows the feminisation of those occupation was in harmony with the gender relations in Victorian England – not traditional Africa – where women’s employment positions were constructed as subordinate to those of men’* (F. Chege & D.N. Sifuna, 2006).

## Conclusion

The gender principle enabled a slight but insufficient improvement of women's political representation in the Kenyan National Assembly. In addition to Kenya's *first-past-the-post system* and the legal pluralism, the *two-third rule* was not correctly implemented which consequently did not address the patriarchal functioning of the political parties which yet constitute one of the main obstacles to women's political representation.

Moreover, the nomination process and the granting of reserved seats have an adverse effect. While the first intention was to empower women, such strategies unfortunately confine women to *women representatives* positions because it encourages women not to run for mixed competitive seats. Female national representatives being essentially nominated or granted reserved seats, their degree of autonomy diminishes because of their indebtedness to their political parties and funders. A dependence that is even more significant because of the disadvantaged socioeconomic status of women who consequently do not have the same financial resources as men to face the political expenses. The lack of economic manoeuvre results from women's lower level of education and the patriarchal Kenyan culture. Women are relegated to the private sphere, which considerably reduces their opportunities.

The power of culture is such that women themselves have internalized the belief that they are destined not to fulfil other things besides becoming mothers and wives. Such cultural beliefs are more common within the Muslim community which appears to be more conservative regarding women's emancipation. Yet, considering that it constitutes a minority in Kenya, Islam cannot be considered as a major impediment to women's political representation. Indeed, it could not have impacted that much the low proportion of women in the National Assembly.

# **Chapter 3**

## **Women's Political Representation in Nigeria**

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is the most populated African country. Nigeria is a former British colony and acquired its independence on October 1, 1960. Because of the multiculturalism, the establishment of a federal state was the only way to keep the country reunited. In addition to ethnic diversity, the country is populated by as many Christians as Muslims. Its democratic ambitions and undeniable economic assets could make it a key player in international relations. However, decades of exacerbated instability and insecurity have put this potential on hold. Since independence, Nigeria faced numerous difficulties such as community tensions and military coups. Violence caused by increasing banditry and the presence of jihadist terrorist groups render the country even more vulnerable.

Improving women's political representation is still debated in Nigeria, leading to a stagnation or even a declining of the already poor women's political representation. In 2015, only 22 out of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives were held by women while in 2019, there were only 13 female representatives, each coming from different states. As a result, 23 out of 36 states had no female representation. Nigeria has thus become one of the worst countries in terms of women's representation.

### **3.1. Political System, Legal Strategies, and Women's Political Representation**

#### **3.1.1. Legal Strategies and Promotion of Women's Political Representation**

Nigeria is a federal state constituted of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The States are divided into 360 constituencies in which only one representative is elected. Hence, Nigeria is a *first-past the post* system, in other words, a *single-member plurality system* which is less inclusive than *proportional representation system* (cfr. Chapter 1).

The specificity of Nigeria is its lack of adoption or efficiency of political tools to promote women's empowerment, which explains the poor representation of women in the National Assembly. Yet, gender equality is a constitutional principle. The 1999 constitution '*provides for a non-discrimination against any citizen of Nigeria, whether male or female*' (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2019).

In addition to the constitutional basis, Nigeria is also a signatory of numerous international conventions which promote women's empowerment in politics, such as the United Nations treaties. However, many were not or not correctly implemented. For example, Nigeria has adopted the successive *2000 National Policy on Women* and the *2006 National Gender policy* whose purpose was:

*'To provide for the empowerment of women at various levels and to call for the elimination of all practices that marginalize women especially in the area of decision making. The policy also promotes Affirmative Action that would bring about the actualization of 30 percent representation of women in legislative and executive arms of government.'* (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2018).

Although a promising initiative, both policies did not have the desired effects mainly because of the lack of legal backing necessary to ensure the right implementation of such strategies. Consequently, '*these policies are only in paper and not in practice*' (D. Taiye Agbalajobi, 2021). No affirmative action was actually implemented to promote women's political representation. Hence, women's political representation fluctuated slightly but remained generally stagnant, with a persistent male domination.

This failure is results from the '*lack of political will of government to push for representative position for women in the legislature.*' (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2019). The efficiency of strategies such as the *National Policy on Women* was indeed questionable because there was no legal backing provided to ensure its proper implementation and respect and therefore, did not tackle sincerely and directly the issue of gender inequality in politics.

*‘The challenge, however, is that many of these policies have not spelt-out appropriate sanctions against certain societal misconducts and infringements on the rights of women- such as gender-based violence against women in clear terms. However, the reality on ground is that the policies are yet to be translated into programs to benefit the people for whom they were formulated.’ (O. Mercy & U. Nanji, 2014)*

Hence, the constitutional mandates and the regional and international conventional commitments of Nigeria do not reflect the reality on the ground. Actually, there is still a significant gap between the legal reality, although ineffective, and the sociological reality: *‘the rights of women and girls are grossly undermined and under-valued’* (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006) and there is no political will to overcome this unfair situation due to Nigeria’s patriarchal culture. There is no willingness to adopt affirmative action to politically empower women, which explains therefore the extreme low percentage of women in the National Assembly.

*‘The main arguments against quota systems include the idea that they are in breach of the principle of equality, as some candidates are allegedly favored over others based on their gender. They are also viewed as reducing the freedom of choice of voters’* (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2019).

### **3.1.2. The Impact of Political Parties on Women’s Political Representation**

Political parties also play a key role in the promotion of women’s political representation. Firstly, because they select the contesting candidates. Secondly, because they set out the conditions to join the political party.

Women are assigned secondary roles within the political party, which prevents them from having an impact on the decision-making process and indirectly the National Assembly.

*‘The highest positions held by women in a number of key political parties include most insignificant posts whose importance is only for mobilizing womenfolk to vote for men. Thus, they are usually unable to assert*

*themselves or push for the interest of women during nominations leading to marginalization of women during election.'* (U.P. Nwabunkeonye, 2014)

The behavior of the political parties reflects a real desire to marginalize women. Besides situations where women are asked not to run for office and to leave their place to male candidates, *'the timing of political meetings (mostly late at night) and serious politicking which involves a lot of traveling automatically exclude mostly married women from active participation in politics'* (U. Nwabunkeonye, 2014).

Moreover, the increased influence of women in political parties is hindered by the *godfathers*.

*'They consist of rich men whose contributions to campaign funds of some candidates have helped the latter to win elections. (...) Political godfathers use their influence to block the participation of others in Nigerian politics. They are political gatekeepers: they dictate who participates in politics and under what conditions'* (I. Olawale, 2005)

Women's opportunities are further hampered by the cost of entering politics. Political parties ask a significant amount of money that most of the time women cannot afford without the help of the *godfathers*, which considerably reduces their autonomy once elected considering that women feel indebted to them. Indeed, *'female candidates have no chances of getting elected if they do not have powerful godfathers to fund their campaigns'* (M. Ette & P. Akpan-Obong, 2022). However:

*'Considering the financial backing, the godfathers' and other financiers of politicians in Nigeria prefer male political aspirants to female ones based on the societal value assumption that political activities are masculine and male candidates are believed to stand better chance of winning elections'* (U. Nwabunkeonye, 2014)

A more in-depth analysis of Nigerian culture will provide a better understanding of the hostility of political parties and godfathers towards women's political empowerment.

## 3.2. Culture and Women's Political Representation

### 3.3.2. Violence Against Women in Politics

*'Violence against women is not only a manifestation of unequal power relation between men and women; it is also a mechanism for perpetuating gender inequality. Violence against women is institutionalized through family structures, wider social and economic frameworks and cultural cum religious traditions. It is a widely accepted method for controlling women.'* (D. Taiye Agbalajobi, 2021)

Violence is widespread in all the spheres of society, and therefore politics could not have been spared. Even though violence affects both genders, women remain the primary victims of violence in politics:

*'Violence is used to intimidate or control them. Some of them are pressured to step down in favor of a male candidate and could be victims of threats and physical violence. Though violence is also equally used against male aspirants by their fellow men, they have more significant effects on women aspirants.'* (D. Taiye Agbalajobi, 2021)

Women are exposed to many dangers at various levels of the political process, such as rape, injuries and death. Culture of silence and impunity encourage such violent behavior which have become almost acceptable. Violence against women in politics, especially coercion and intimidation, affects both female politicians and voters.

*'Women also often face violence and interference against their political voice in the home, where they may be intimidated, harassed or even abused by their husbands in order to keep them from voting or to force them to vote for a specific candidate'* (A. Z. Safir & M. Alam, 2015)

Violence against women in politics is therefore a major impediment to their political representation in Nigeria. It is a consequence of the patriarchal social norms which are further analyzed in the following section.

### 3.2.2. Social norms

In Nigeria, patriarchy has always existed but has been exacerbated during the colonial period which institutionalized the cultural differentiation between biological sexes and therefore gender-based discrimination.

Patriarchy results in a ‘*cultural classification*’ or ‘*sexual division of labor*’ (D. Taiye Agbalajobi, 2021) which *assigns distinct and often unequal work and political positions to biological sexes, turning them into socially distinct groups*’ (D. Taiye Agbalajobi, 2021). Hence, biology plays a crucial role in defining the place and role of individuals within society. Women are the eternal subordinate because their biological sex is culturally constructed as the weak one.

*‘Women are discouraged from participating in public life from childhood through adulthood by authority figures such as husbands, fathers, mothers and other relations due to cultural image of a virtuous woman defined as quiet, submissive who should be seen and not heard. Because of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, most Nigerians including women still believe and accept the traditional perspectives that view women as inferior to men, second class citizens, weaker sex, to be seen and not heard, child bearers, primary caregivers, etc. In most cases, they feel the game of politics is an exclusive reserve of men and dare not venture into it and those who manage to venture are usually contented with the back seats’* (U. Nwabunkeonye, 2014).

The cultural subordination of women to men, also observable at the domestic level of society, renders the family support, especially the ones of the husbands, necessary for engaging into politics. Aspiring women candidates sometimes lack financial and psychological support from both their husbands and electorate, even the female one, because their perception of women's role in society is shaped by patriarchy. Moreover, ‘*women themselves believe that political participation would negatively impact the ability to perform their primary duties as caretakers*’ (M. Ette & P. Akpan-Obong, 2022). Domestic tasks are not in adequacy with the agenda of the political parties. Therefore:

*'In Nigeria, women who are actively participating in politics are seen and treated as free women (prostitutes/wayward) of easy virtues, stubborn people, whores, too domineering, cultural rebellions, etc. It is observed that during campaign, the political opponents (mostly men) use the alleged loose moral standing of these women against them and often insult them directly in public. Thus, they are often subjected to public ridicule and are socially stigmatized by both men and women. The use of negative labeling; derogatory names; abusive language and expressions to describe Nigerian women in politics discourage many of them from active participation in the nation's politics.'* (U. Nwabunkeonye, 2014)

Patriarchy is reinforced by public exposure. Media are key actors in politics and in determining the political success of aspiring candidates. Media strongly shape individuals' perception of politics. However, women do not benefit from the same media coverage as men. Besides the under-coverage of female candidates, the media transmit and perpetuate gender stereotypes and thus a negative perception of women who have the desire of entering politics that is still profoundly male dominated.

*'Media reports on them are often negative, reflecting widely held stereotypes in society, which have nothing to do with their political aspirations. For example, the media tends to stress the compassionate and nurturing qualities of women, while competencies are emphasized in men'* (I. Eshiet, 2013).

In addition to be portrayed as mere sexual objects, *'emphasis is placed on age, marital status, looks, fashion sense and domestic and family lives, rather than on the substance of decisions and actions'* (I. Eshiet, 2013).

### **3.2.3. Religion**

Despite the secular Constitution, there is no clear distinction between the public and the religious sphere. Religion influences all the structures of society.

*‘For most Nigerians, the concept of separation of church and state is more about maintaining a balance of power between Islam and Christianity rather than an intrinsic belief in secularism’ (J. Campbell & M.T. Page, 2018).*

In Nigeria, there are as many Christians as Muslims. The Muslim population is mainly in the Northern part of the country, especially in the Hausa states (figure 5). Islam has negatively impacted the place of women in society. *It reinforced the patriarchal elements already present in society (...) stripped women of all their public roles, firmly subordinated them to men, and even locked them in seclusion’ (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994).* Women have become partially or completely isolated from public and economic life and therefore have less incentives to engage in politics. As figure (5) and (6) illustrate, the vast majority of female elected representatives do not come from the Hausa States, predominantly Muslim. Hence, one can assume that Islam impacts more negatively women than Christianity.

However, *‘Nigeria’s Muslims and Christians have similar views on many social issues (...) both, in their own way, establish a separate, usually subordinate, space for women’ (J. Campbell & M.T. Page, 2018).* Moreover, it is the *interpretation* of the Qur’an that undermines women’s opportunities rather than Islam itself. Such interpretation depends on the interaction of Islam with other features such as historical cultures and traditions that pre-existed the appearance and growing of Islam.



Figure (5) The Hausa States, Predominantly Muslim

Source: Epic World History

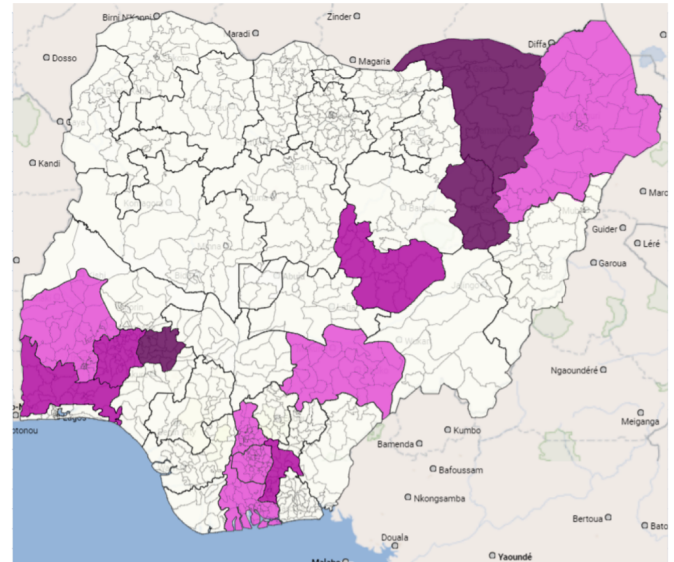


Figure (6) Percentage of Elected Female National Representatives per State

5-10% 11-15% 15-20%

*‘Islamic teachings are not imposed uniformly in all West African cultures. Thus, the written law of Islam interacted with each specific set of pre-existing customs and traditions to create distinctive Islamic societies that differ sometimes strongly, from each other.’* (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994)

We can conclude that religion plays a determining role in the political representation of women which appears to be better in the Southern and consequently Christian States. Yet:

*‘While Muslim traditions are generally seen to be less permissive of women to participate in political life, it is difficult to just draw a straight line from the religion to poor women’s participation because there are intersecting issues of class, power, privilege and access even among women from both regions and religions. There are many educated Muslim women that hold positions of power and are supported by their men. Conversely, there are Christian/Southern women who don’t get the support they need and vice versa.’* (N. Uzodi, personal communication, 2022)

### **3.4. Women’s Socioeconomic Status, Level of Education and Political Representation**

As mentioned above, the cost of entering politics is substantial, which includes both *‘the economic threshold for members aspiring to electoral offices’* (O. Olugboji, personal communication, 2022) and the financing of the electoral campaign. Therefore, seeking political offices requires a considerable financial contribution which a lot of women cannot afford considering that *‘about 90% of women in Nigeria currently live below poverty line’* (U. Nwabunkeonye, 2014)

The cost of electoral campaigns comprises corruption and more particularly voters bribery. It is a common practice for the voters to ask the candidates something in exchange for their vote.

*‘Most impoverished voters prefer to sell their votes to the highest bidders, and since women generally lack the economic power to purchase access, they are easily excluded from any serious political contention.’ (M. Ette & P. Akpan-Obong, 2022)*

Clientelism and corruption impede the effectiveness of the Nigerian political system, especially the principle of a fair and free elections.

*‘Nigerian political institutions historically have been weak, in part because politics has been based on patronage and clientage networks, not formal political institutions, processes, or policy initiatives. Official corruption is more than conventional in Nigeria; it is endemic. Massive election rigging by rival elites has been characteristic of Nigeria since independence. Voter registration lists have been inflated, ballot boxes stuffed, and the integrity of collation centers regularly compromised’ (J. Campbell & M.T. Page, 2018).*

Women are more negatively impacted by corruption. Women do not have the financial means to respond to such practices that would facilitate their entrance in politics.

*‘The intersection of socioeconomic and cultural norms leaves women on the margins of politics’ (M. Ette & P. Akpan-Obong, 2022).* Women face even more socioeconomic consequences resulting from the patriarchal culture, such as the difficult access to credit facilities or the fact that married women’s financial resources are controlled by their husband, leaving them with little freedom and autonomy. Yet, it is not only a question of controlling the family patrimony. Indeed, some women do not have any financial resources and consequently *‘rely on a male breadwinner for survival due to their inability to independently earn a living’* (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2018).

What happens in individuals' domestic environment radically determines society's functioning. How can you expect an improvement of women’s socioeconomic status and consequently their political representation while they are already submitted at a domestic level?

*‘The ability of women to influence decisions at household level is essentially limited. With very little leverage over decision making at the household level, the capacity of women to participate in decision making at higher levels is equally constrained’ (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2018)*

These socioeconomic inequalities are obviously related to the level of education of women.

*‘It has been stressed that higher education is the most potent force stimulating a reassessment of what roles are appropriate for women. Secondary and university education are credited with expanding women’s horizons, thus encouraging them to look for fulfilment not only in the home but also outside it’ (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994).*

In Nigeria, there is a clear historical difference in the level of education between the Northern and the Southern parts of the country, whose main explanation is religious. For a long period of time, the Islamic North was hostile to Western and secular educational system because of the *‘view that Western education was alien and might contaminate Islamic ideas’* (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994).

Colonialism and its interrelation with religion played a significant role in the apparition of regional disparities regarding education. The *Indirect Rule* made religion the determining factor in the development of education.

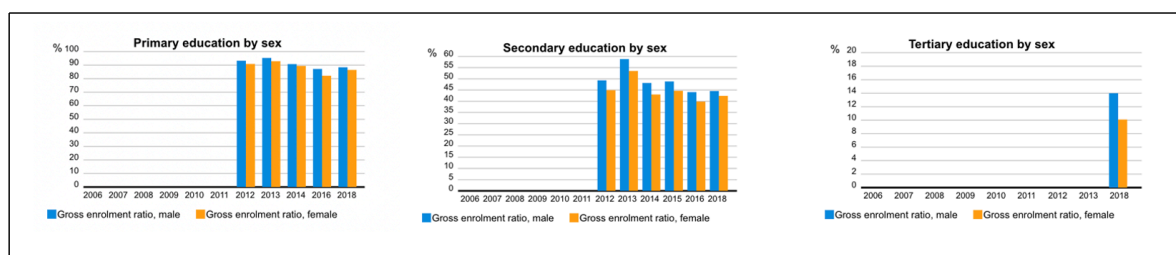
This Indirect Rule established a sort of cultural protectionism, especially vis-à-vis Islam which was protected from the Westernization and Christianization which occurred in the rest of the country. Instead, Qur’anic education has been further developed. Therefore, an isolation process of Northern Nigeria occurred, which did not beneficiate from the same level of educational development.

*‘Islam’s primacy in Hausaland had significant consequences for women. In the first two decades after independence in 1960, Islamic women in Northern Nigeria were severely disadvantaged in both education and politics compared to their non-Islamic sisters in Southern Nigeria. In Southern Nigeria, Christian missionaries established roughly twice as many schools for boys as for girls. No such schools were established in*

*Northern Nigeria for either boys or girls.*’ (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994)

Colonialism also institutionalized the gender inequality regarding education, which was reserved to young boys. On one hand, the colonizers established the general education reserved to men, which was intended to train the country’s future civil servants; and on the other hand the domestic education reserved to women who were trained to take charge of all the domestic tasks and therefore to become good wives and mothers. Hence, there was this clear distinction between female and male education, which have further marginalized women socially, economically and politically.

Despite the slow progress in reducing gender inequality in education, young girls continue to this day to deal with major obstacles which hinder their education. Young girls are more affected by the school abandonment phenomenon. The higher the level of education, the lower the number of girls attending school as figure (7) illustrates.



*Figure (7) The Evolution of School Attendance by Gender and Education Level*  
 Source: UNESCO (2018)

The abandonment phenomenon results from many factors. First, not all children have equal opportunities to access education. Of course, there is the question of financial resources, but there is also the question of accessibility of schools. The rural areas are strongly disadvantaged in comparison with the urban ones.

*‘In rural areas, girls may have to walk considerable distances to reach the nearest school. In recent research, 14% girls surveyed walked over six kilometers to school every day, taking them over an hour each way. Results of a baseline survey conducted in 2008 in Northern states revealed that 21% girls viewed distance to school as a major obstacle that would*

*prevent them from achieving the desired level of education'* (British Council, 2014)

It is either not feasible, either too expensive because of the cost of transportation or too dangerous for girls who are socially depicted as weak and in constant need for protection. Although girls are more exposed to sexual assault and harassment.

Traditional and cultural practices constitute major obstacles to women's education. It is still culturally prevalent to believe that the sons' education is more profitable considering that young girls are meant to marry into another family. Therefore, their women's education is considered as a loss-making investment. In Nigeria, education is most of the time perceived as an investment rather than a natural fulfilment, which is due to the high level of poverty.

*'With 60% of Nigerians living in poverty, on less than US\$1 per day, girls are often sent to work in markets or hawk wares on the street. UNICEF estimated that 15 million children work full time in Nigeria, the majority of whom are girls out of school in Northern States'* (British Council, 2014).

Therefore, families are forced to think of education in terms of opportunity cost which is more significant for young girls. Indeed, young girls can do a variety of odd jobs outside school such as being a nanny or a domestic, which constitute a certain source of income while education constitutes a heavy cost. Hence, the poorer a family is, the higher the risk of dropping out of school. *'46% of girls who had withdrawn from school indicated that they dropped out for economic reasons'* (British Council, 2014).

In addition to the cultural preference to educate boys over girls, the latter face other traditional impediments such as the societal pressure of marriage and early marriage. Such practice results partially from *'parents' fear of pregnancy outside marriage which intensifies when girls reach puberty. Marriage may be viewed as a protective mechanism, shielding girls' honor from the potential shame of an early, unwanted pregnancy'* (British Council, 2014).

Early marriage is more common in the North of the country predominantly Muslim. According to a study produced by B. Callaway in 1982 among a group of university students at Bayero University, *'ninety percent of the Muslim female students ranked "pressure to marry young" as the primary obstacle to girls' pursuing their education whereas only fifty percent of the*

*Christian female students cited this as an obstacle*' (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994). Hence, education disparities are also related to the Islamic culture. Moreover:

*'Unlike girls, boys do not reach adult status until they become economically self-supportive, usually in their late twenties or early thirties. Therefore, they marry much later than do girls, because Islam forbids men from marrying until they can support their wife (or wives) and children by providing shelter, food, and clothing.'* (Callaway & Creevey, 1994)

In other words, these marital and supporting roles attributed to men exacerbate the gendered educational gap. Men are religiously encouraged to pursue further studies and thus end up being more educated. Yet, marriage is not only a question of culture but also a question of money:

*'Marriage may also be seen as a way to accumulate cash or goods through bride wealth payments, given by the groom or his family to the bride's family during the marital union. These can be of significant economic value to a girl's family. The significance of marriage relationships for social networks and developing social capital is also important'* (British Council, 2014).

It is even more difficult to circumvent these cultural obstacles because of women's acceptance and internalization of their submissive situation which is therefore hardly questioned.

*'In northern Nigeria, educated women are as religious as uneducated women. They may be less fatalistic, but they do not challenge the prescriptions to marry, to obey their husbands, and to forever seek greater knowledge of Islam'* (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994).

Not only does Islam imposes cultural obstacles to women's education, but even when women succeeded in having a complete education, their perception of themselves and their place in society is still shaped by Islam, which therefore perpetuates patriarchy.

## Conclusion

Despite the numerous regional and international commitments, Nigeria did not manage to improve women's political representation, particularly because of the lack of affirmative action, which would have been helpful in an unfavorable political environment for women's empowerment. Indeed, the *first-past-the-post* system, legal pluralism as well as partisan behavior prevent women's participation in politics.

Women are also reduced to the marital and maternal roles which are culturally contradictory to both professional life and political office. Such sharp biological division of labor seems to find its origin in the colonial period which exacerbated the marginalization of women from the decision-making process. Because Nigerian women are supposed to become wives and mothers, there is no need to educate them, which is therefore perceived as a lost investment. Moreover, cultural traditions such as early marriages, which are particularly practiced in Northern Nigeria, further impede women's education and consequently their socioeconomic status.

Women have also difficulties in accessing credit facilities and they are culturally excluded from the family patrimony management. Yet, the socioeconomic status appears to be determinant in women's political representation which is further hindered by the internalization (even by women) of misogynist perceptions according to which women are not suited for politics and leadership positions. Such beliefs are more common within the Muslim community, making Islam, or more precisely the patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an, an important obstacle to women's empowerment.

# Chapter 4

## Women's Political Representation in Senegal

### Introduction

Senegal is a West African country that is known for its political and democratic stability. It is a former French colony which became independent on April 4, 1960.

Senegal is one of the most advanced countries in the world regarding women's political representation. Indeed, since the adoption of the parity law, the country succeeded in considerably increasing the number of women in the National Assembly, reaching 42% of the representatives in 2017 (Senepus, 2017). Several women have been head of government, namely Aminata Touré from 2013 to 2014, and Mame Madior Boye from 2001 to 2002, making Senegal the first African country to grant such a position to a woman.

### 4.1. Political System, Legal Strategies, and Women's Political Representation

#### 4.1.1. Legal Strategies and Promotion of Women's Political Representation

Senegal is '*a very strong presidential regime with a President of the Republic who is the epicenter of the executive branch*' (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, n.d.), in which gender equality is constitutionally recognized. The country is divided into 46 departments and 54 electoral constituencies. The Parliament is unicameral and its 165 deputies are directly elected for a five-year mandate.

Senegal recently instituted the *system of sponsorship*, in French '*système de parrainage*'. Indeed, articles L.57 of the Senegalese electoral Code provides that:

*'All candidacies for presidential and legislative elections presented by a legally constituted political party, a coalition of legally constituted political parties or a group of independent persons must be sponsored by a list of voters.'* (Droit Afrique, 2021)

The *système de parrainage* constitutes the first step of the electoral process to be taken. Its blocking effect impacts both male and female candidates, although it further increases the burden of the numerous obstacles that only women face.

To make a first selection and to favor the most serious and promising applications, ‘*candidates for the legislative elections will therefore have to collect at least 34,580 signatures in at least seven regions of the country, with a minimum of 2,000 sponsorships per region*’ (Sénégal Politique, 2022). Hence, the candidates who gathered the required number of signatories became the candidates for the legislative.

The electoral formula influences women’s political representation. The members of the National Assembly are elected based on a *mixed electoral* system. On one hand, 105 deputies are elected through a *majority voting system*. The party list that receives the most votes wins all the seats in the constituency. On the other hand, 60 deputies are elected according to the *proportional voting system*. The introduction of proportionality enables a better representation of the votes and gives women more chances to be elected.

*‘Most of the women deputies in the National Assembly have been elected via proportional representation from the national lists. This confirms the results of the analysis by Richard Matland, who states that proportional voting is more favorable to women’* (A. Faye Kassé, 2004).

Despite the country’s numerous ratifications to international conventions, Senegal was still behind in terms of gender equality. Hence, in 2010, Senegal also adopted the law to achieve parity between men and women in all elected or semi-elected bodies. The *parity law* proved to be effective. ‘*Senegal has taken an important step towards equality by increasing the presence of women in the Assembly from 33 to 64 deputies, making the Senegalese National Assembly one of the most equal in the world*’ (Cesti Info, 2022) which is the equivalent to approximately 43% of the total number of representatives. Despite the debate around the legitimacy of quotas strategies, it is clear that ‘*without the law of parity, (Senegal) would not be at this level of representation of women in the national assembly*’ (D. Ndione Beye, 2021).

However, the efficiency of the *parity law* seems to be limited. In 2012 there was a significant increase in the number of women in the National assembly, a number that has since stagnated. Numerous obstacles hinder the proper application of the law. The first obstacle is the perpetual

debate around the legitimacy and efficiency of affirmative actions such as the *parity law*, which is often referred to as a '*danger to democracy*' (Le Monde, 2022).

*'The battle for women's rights is never won in advance. Therefore, we must always be vigilant. Thus, we note that since the adoption of this law, male voices have always been raised to question its relevance'* (Cesti Info, 2022).

The second obstacle is the circumvention of the law, more specifically by the political parties which constitute therefore the main limit of the *parity law*.

Hence, it is necessary to further analyze the general impact of the political parties on women's political representation and their hostility regarding the *parity law*.

#### **4.1.2. The Impact of Political parties on Women's Political Representation**

Political parties have a considerable impact on women's political representation because they are in a sense the gatekeepers of politics. '*The future parliamentarians come from the political parties*' (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022) considering that the political parties are the ones who elaborate the electoral lists. Yet, '*political parties are allergic to parity*' (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022). Despite the binding nature of the *parity law*, the political parties have managed to find a way of reducing the expected effect of the law, which explains the stagnation of the number of female deputies in the National Assembly and the continuous male numerical superiority.

*'The parties have developed several strategies to get more men elected than women. The most common strategy is to systematically place a man at the top of the list. Taking advantage of the obligatory alternation of the sexes between male and female candidates, this strategy allows the parties, in the event of an uneven number of elected officials, to get one more man elected'* (La Liberté, 2019).

Because of their patriarchal behavior, political parties naturally exclude women from the most important positions. *‘The meetings of the political parties are very late at night and women with small children cannot participate in these meetings’* (D. Ndione Beye, 2021). Therefore, women have constraints because of cultural norms that attribute to them the domestic role and prevent them from getting involved in politics.

Once women are involved in politics, they are assigned to insignificant roles in the decision-making process. Even though female members are more numerous within the political parties, they are not appropriately represented. In other words, there is not an accurate representation of the segments of the population in the decision-making instances, which is a *‘symptom of a sick representative democracy’* (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022).

*‘As soon as we talk about women and politics, we think of mobilization, it is their first role and unfortunately, women accept to play this mobilization role’* (D. Ndione Beye, 2021). Women are not valued for their ideas but are valued as mere mobilization instruments of the political parties. Women who defend progressive ideology, especially regarding gender equality, tend to be excluded from the political party.

*‘Women who want to hold power, to build their own discourse are ejected from the party. They are called ‘hotheads’. Women who stand up to the party leader are rejected from the party. Women who have a strong head in terms of personality and who do not want to stand behind the party leader or behind others have enormous difficulties to emerge in the political parties’* (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022).

Men aim at keeping their position central, dominant, and determinant within the political party. Therefore, men look for women who do not question the ideology of the political parties. Consequently, the patriarchal behavior of political parties explains why, up to now, women's political representation within the National Assembly did not reach the expected 50%.

Let us now analyze in more detail the Senegalese culture

## 4.2. Culture and Women's Political Representation

### 4.2.1. Violence Against Women in Politics

Little studies have been conducted on violence endured by women in politics in Senegal. Instead, there are plenty of press articles and research that denounce the general violence in politics in Senegal, i.e. violence which affects both genders. Political violence such as the one that occurred with the March 2021 demonstration following the arrest of the political opponent Ousmane Sonko, which led to several deaths, does not make any distinction between men and women. Tensions tend to increase during the elections period.

However, women tend to be more exposed to peculiar forms of violence. Female voters '*are often under social pressure to make political and electoral choices*' (Senepus, 2022) and female candidates are not spared either. Considering that politics have been socially constructed for and by men, undeniably it has been associated with characteristics such as virility and, indirectly, with violent confrontations that have become the way to solve any problem (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022).

Violence also occurred in the domestic sphere. The tight schedule of political parties that is often in contradiction with the domestic tasks delegated to women, tends to create tension at home especially with the husband who happens to threaten his wife by imposing an ultimatum. Many women were forced to drop their political carrier to save their households (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022).

### 4.2.2. Social norms

Patriarchy was aggravated and institutionalized during the different colonial stages.

*'We were first a society colonized by the Arabs who have a strongly patriarchal culture and thereafter there was colonialism which imported a system also patriarchal. Before Islam, we had our own religions. We were matrilineal societies where even the child bore the name of the mother. The woman had an extremely important place in politics but when Islam arrived in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it came with the Arab culture which is*

*strongly patriarchal and this started to deconstruct this matrilineal system, not to say matriarchal, because for me we never had a matriarchal society. And when colonialism came in, it completely destroyed this system, so colonialism contributed to the vulnerability of women' (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022).*

The French legal system at the time was deeply misogynist. For a mere moment, after the French revolution, there was hope for the French female community to see their right being recognized. This brief moment following the 1789 Human Rights Declaration, was the period of the *intermediate law* which aimed at breaking with the practices of the *Ancien Régime*, one of them being the domination of men, heads of families. However, such breakthrough was too revolutionary and ambitious for the conservatives, nostalgic of the feudal system. Hence, with the arrival of the emperor Napoleon, there has been a reconsideration of these notable advances, particularly with regard to women's rights, but not only. Therefore, one of the purposes of the elaboration of Napoleonic Code was to find a compromise between the antagonists, namely, the revolutionaries and the conservatives. While the French Revolution could have been a great opportunity to improve women's conditions, it eventually ended up reestablishing the prior and traditional masculine domination and family law. The French Code had a big impact in Europe because of the Napoleonic conquests. A lot of European countries adopted the Napoleonic Code with or without any modification. The influence of the French law was even more considerable because of the colonial ambitions that enable the former to spread beyond Europe. Senegal did not escape this influence.

*'After conquering Senegal, the colonizer took a series of political measures that consecrated the retreat of women. By stipulating that she had to submit to the colonial order and to her husband, he deprived her of any right of representation but also of access to property. In 1904, the land law in the territories under French occupation recognized as legal only private, personalized and duly registered property. And based on the Napoleonic Code, all property was almost automatically attributed to the head of the family, who was "naturally" the husband' (F. Sow Sarr, 2018).*

Therefore, the importation of a misogynist model originating from France ensured the legal recognition and reinforcement of gender inequality.

Patriarchy shapes the Senegalese society which tends to relegate women to the domestic sphere, letting men the possibility to be the only one involved in the decision-making process. Men define the political agenda and the priorities to address. This societal gendered hierarchy is based on:

*‘Stereotypes that are in turn rooted in the belief that women are naturally weak and that they have poor critical and analytical skills. These prejudices are anchored in the subconscious of the populations that externalize it in a conscious and/or unconscious way’ (I. Diallo, 2020)*

Men are perceived as being superior to women, the former controlling both the public and private arenas. Women must fulfil their role of good mothers, good wives and manage all household tasks.

*‘Some studies have shown that in Senegal, there are households in which the wife must obtain her husband's approval to join an association, a union or a political party’ (I. Diallo, 2020).*

In the first place, women face thus obstacle in the private space, such as the lack of support from their husband and family which constitute a first gatekeeper to politics. The underlying problem is the fact that this perception of masculine domination is commonly shared among men and women.

*‘It is women who consciously and/or unconsciously maintain the patriarchy in order to convey for several generations practices that undermine the moral and physical integrity of women. Even Senegalese men are victims of this system because they are raised by their mothers as kings, not having to participate in any domestic chores, among others. The few men who do participate in domestic chores are seen as cowards or "toubabs"<sup>2</sup>’ (M. Thior, 2020).*

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<sup>2</sup> Europeans, Westerners

The interiorization of these stereotypes enable the social order and functioning to seem natural to such an extent that women themselves do not question them. They socialize their children and inculcate patriarchal values (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022).

*‘We had made a media production to ask the Senegalese in a general way if they were ready to have a female President of the Republic and I was surprised to see that it was the women themselves who said that they were not ready to have a female President of the Republic. (D. Ndione Beye, 2021).*

The media are important democratic instrument which contribute to the shaping of individuals’ perceptions. The media, in addition to a lack of coverage compared to the one of the male counterparts, propagate images of women that are either degrading or in line with the role traditionally attributed to them, thus reinforcing stereotypes about them.

### **4.2.3. Religion**

The Senegalese population is predominantly Muslim and composed of a small Christian minority of 5% (Bou El Mogdad, 2022). The importation of Islam in Western Africa country is known for having disrupted the functioning of traditional societies, mostly by reinforcing their patriarchal aspects already present in the former traditions. Senegal has not been spared by this phenomenon in such a way that women became even more excluded from the public and political sphere. Therefore, it is not the arrival of Islam which is the cause of the gender distribution of societal roles, but an amplifier of a trend that was already common in Senegal.

*‘In Senegal, pre-Islamic societies contained a mixture of matrilineal and patrilineal traditions. [...] Political posts of importance were held by women in the Wolof kingdoms before the arrival of Islam. But even then, women held a secondary political position to men and were economically disadvantaged. [...] The point is that it was not the result of the spread of Islam. When Islam was spread throughout the Tukolor, Wolof and Serer kingdoms, it reinforced the patriarchal values of these traditional societies, justifying in the law and the Qur’an the subordination of women to men.’ (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994)*

However, the impact of Islam as much as the impact of colonialism was moderated by the collaboration that took place between the French colonizers and the religious and local authorities. The power and influence of one was balanced by the power of the other. Therefore, the exclusion of women in Senegal has not been as marked as in some other countries. Indeed, *'because women are not secluded, they speak openly to men, and men do not hesitate to request the help of powerful, well-connected women'* (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994). This collaboration enabled the accommodation of the Islam to Western influence. Therefore, in Senegal, *'Islam is not a major factor inhibiting the education of girls'* and hence, *'has not been a major factor preventing women from economic involvement. Muslim women are as likely as Catholic women in Senegal to work'* (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994).

*'In Senegal, after the original French conquest, Islamic leaders never saw themselves as directly threatened by modern secular state. Hence, the power of militant political Islam was diluted in its interaction with liberal Western institutions in Senegal'* (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994).

Therefore, Islam in Senegal may be perceived as being less conservative and more liberal than some other Muslim countries which emphasize the fact that Islam is not what prevents gender equality but rather its interpretation which *'depends on the culture, the epoch and the geographical area'* (M. Thior, 2020).

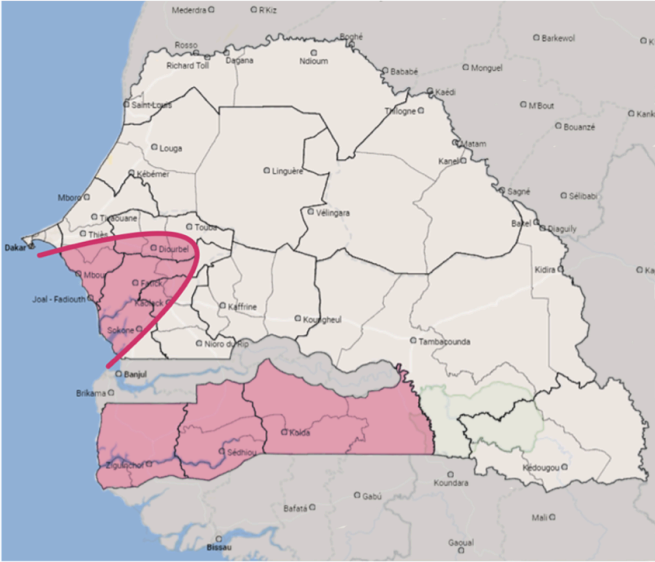
However, it is undeniable that Islam places many obstacles in the path of women's personal and professional development.

*'Senegal, despite its secular government, allow Muslims to follow the prescripts of Islamic Law in matters dealing with marriage, child maintenance, divorce, and inheritance. Thus, Muslim women have fewer rights in these areas than do other Senegalese women and are relatively less equal to men'* (B. Callaway & L. Creevey, 1994).

Therefore, the Islamic teachings tend to limit the opportunities of women and accentuate the inferiority of women to men, for instance through the legality of polygamy which is not practiced in the Christian community.

However, although Islam seems to be more restrictive regarding the rights of women, *'members of Senegalese society share the same general attitude towards women'* (S. Mac Dougall, 2011)

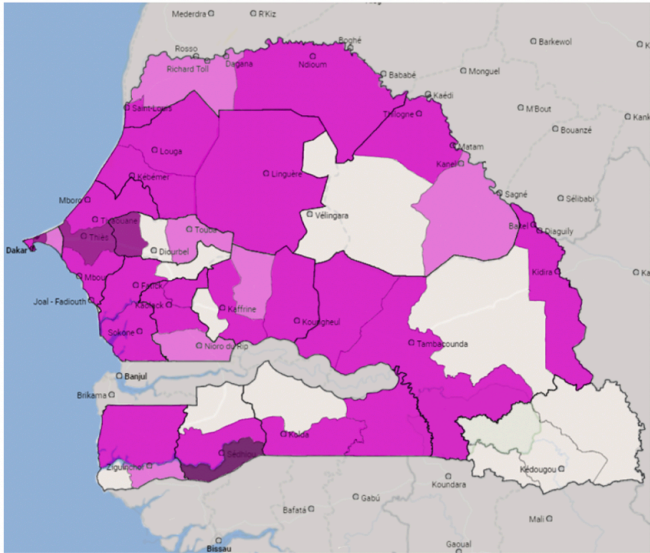
whether they belong to the Christian or Muslim community. Religion, regardless of the type, is often used to justify and legitimate the perception of women within society and therefore their exclusion from the decision-making process. Religion is an instrument of power in the hands of the most powerful ones, namely the men, which enables them to dominate all the spheres of society. It is not religion in itself but the interpretation of the texts that must be incriminated. The Qur'an contains many illustrations of powerful women like Oumou Salamata, a political advisor to the Prophet, who had therefore important political responsibilities which demonstrates that there is nothing in the original religious texts that justifies the discrimination of women that we know today (S. Ba, personal communication, 2022)



*Figure (8) Areas with an Increased Presence of Christians*

Figures (8) represents the geographical area where there is a stronger concentration of Christians, namely in the region of Casamance in the South and in the Serer community in the West of the country.

Figure (9) represents the percentage of elected women per department in the 13<sup>th</sup> Legislature. The comparison of the two figures enables us to observe that there is no particular correlation between women's political representation and the Christians' proportion. Some departments, especially in Casamance and in the East part of the country, have no elected female candidate. Such situation can be explained by the number of seats allocated to these regions which is often limited to one seat. Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn about a potential religious impact on women's political representation.



*Figure (9) Percentage of Female Elected National Representatives in the 13<sup>th</sup> Legislature (2017)*

20-39% 40-59% 60-79% 80-100%

### **4.3. Women's Socioeconomic Status, Level of Education and Political Representation**

Culture undeniably determines the socioeconomic status of women which are relegated to the private sphere and domestic tasks that are not valued economically. Such situation naturally creates a wage gap between men and women. Moreover, men make more money than women because they held the most strategic positions (S.Ba, personal communication, 2018). Women are less likely to hold such positions because of the belief that women are not able to manage such strategic position mainly because of their maternal responsibilities.

Furthermore, the property owners are most of the time men, which constitutes significant economic resources that can be used as collateral to start professional projects or to finance electoral campaigns.

Colonialism considerably impacted women's socioeconomic status. In the Napoleonic Code, women were deprived of a legal capacity and the preeminence of men over women was legally recognized. The wife was notably excluded from the management of the family patrimony, which always required the authorization of the husband. The domestic sphere was the mirror of the public and political sphere. Colonialism enabled the spread of the French Civil Code and consequently the transposition of this misogynist legal system in Senegal.

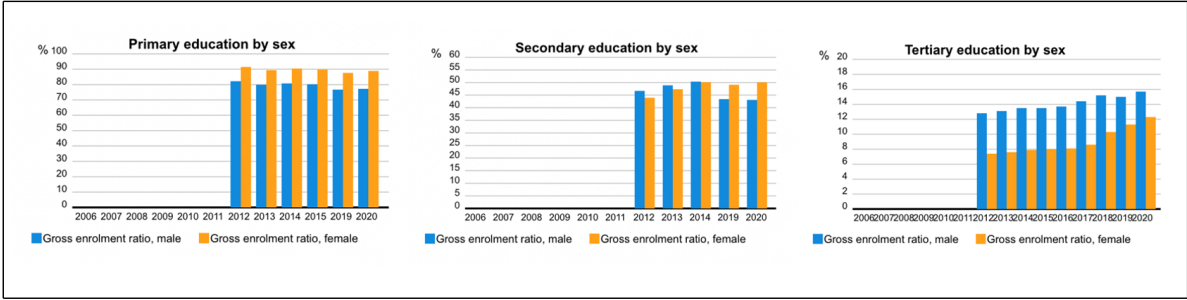
The disadvantaged socioeconomic status of women is also a consequence of their current level of education. Senegal is not an advanced country in terms of education. Not everyone has the same access to education. Girls are more discriminated. Such discrimination originates from colonialism. The French colonizers voluntarily created a distinction between the male and female education, the type and level of education differing based on sex. The male students were therefore favored compared to their female counterparts. School facilities for boys were developed.

*'Overtly sexist colonial policy limited women's access to education and training. In 1906, there were 29 schools providing education for boys with 3,252 students, compared to four schools for girls' (F. Sow Sarr, 2018)*

The level of education and the phenomenon of abandonment depend on the regions and its level of development. There will be more schools in urban centers than in rural areas, where the distant to school is important, in addition to the lack of the necessary equipment to ensure a good teaching. Therefore, because of convenience, insecurity and lack of a minimal comfort, children tend to abandon before the end of their schooling.

In addition to this regional discrimination which affects both genders, there is also discrimination against women. Gender discrimination in education is not assessed on the basis of the enrollment rate. As figure (10) illustrates, girls' enrollment rate in primary school is higher than boys', which is also the case in secondary school since 2019. There is an improvement and a stabilization of the level of education of young girls. However, the number of both female and male children attending school significantly decreases from primary to secondary education. Such results demonstrate the difficulties in accessing education, regardless of gender.

The gap between women and men's enrollment rate worsening in tertiary education, although it is reducing over the years. Consequently, gender inequality affects particularly tertiary education. Few women pursue higher education and are therefore more affected by the abandonment phenomenon



*Figure (10) The Evolution of School Attendance by Gender and Level of Education*  
 Source : UNESCO (2020)

This gender-based discrimination results from several cultural and socioeconomic factors. Women culturally belong to the domestic spheres, which is the result of the divisions of labor based on the biological sexes. Early marriage is one of the consequences of such cultural perception.

*‘The social norms in force encourage early marriage. This is why mothers, from their daughters' earliest childhood, initiate them into the good*

*manners that will make them future good wives and mothers. Some parents, especially in remote areas, consider that girls do not need to be educated, since the ultimate and natural duty of a woman is to marry and have children'* (S. Angers-Sall, 2009).

In addition of being a cultural practice, early marriage is also a way to avoid the negative heavy consequences of puberty and more specifically the beginning of sexual intercourse which can possibly lead to unexpected, unwanted and out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Such situation disgraces not only the young girls who are bearing the child but also the whole family. However, no generalization must be made given the fact that *'the age of marriage depends on the level of education and the area inhabited. Not all girls are affected by the phenomenon of early marriage'* (S. Angers-Sall, 2009).

*'While the age at marriage is falling in urban areas (about 20 years), in rural areas the decline is less marked (about 16 years). However, the process of lowering the age of marriage has been underway for a decade. This decline concerns mainly educated girls of urban origin. Moreover, the effect of education has been confirmed: while the median age at first marriage in 1997 was around 24 years for girls with secondary education and above, girls with no education married earlier, at around 17 years. In fact, educated and urbanized girls have increasingly new aspirations and are more likely to refuse arranged marriages'* (S. Angers-Sall, 2009).

Considering that marriage is an end in itself, parents educate their female children to perform domestic tasks which eventually have an impact on their educational achievements. Moreover, parents may be reluctant to educate their daughters, which is perceived as a lost investment because they are destined to get married and enter another family, and therefore, they do not benefit financially from the education of their daughters. Perceiving young girls' education as a loss-making investment is more frequent in poor families for which marriage seems more interesting financially speaking, while education appears to be costly and it is sometimes unbearable. Therefore, the socioeconomic status of the families is most of the time determinant in shaping the educational future of women.

## Conclusion

The improvement of women's political representation has been possible thanks to the *parity law* and its binding effect considering that non-compliance is sanctioned with party-list rejection. The efficiency of such gender law was facilitated by the Senegalese mixed electoral formula. Indeed, the restrictive aspect of the *majority system* is tempered by the introduction of the *proportional representation system* in which women are more likely to be elected.

Yet, the political parties managed to circumvent the *parity law*, which explains the stagnation of the number of female representatives' number. Political parties are the political embodiment of a patriarchal Senegalese culture whose exacerbation dates back to the arrival of Islam and colonialism. However, the collaboration between the colonial and religious authorities has moderated such exacerbation. Although the interpretation of Islam is used to justify the marginalization of women, it did not prevent a considerable improvement in their political representation. However, together with the discriminatory social norms, it may be responsible for the non-realization of gender parity.

Women face hostility when they step out of the private sphere to which they are supposed to belong. Such cultural beliefs impede women's educational path in many ways and consequently their socioeconomic status which is, however, important for entering politics.

# Chapter 5

## Comparative Study

### Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the comparison of the results of the individual analysis of the case studies through the lens of Peace Research. Bringing out common characteristics enables to tend toward a systematization of the obstacles to women's political representation in Sub-Saharan Africa. This comparative study is structured like the previous chapters. First, the different political systems and legal strategies are compared. Secondly, the different cultural features are discussed. Finally, there is a comparison of women's socioeconomic and educational features in Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal.

#### 5.1. The Electoral System, Legal Strategies, Political Parties, and *Structural Violence*

The research shows that women in politics in Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal are victims of *structural violence*. There can be *violence* even if no one is committing directly the act of violence. *Structural/indirect violence* is the systemic violence, without a clear *subject-object relation*. Peace Research refers to *structural violence* to *social injustice* that '*hinder equal access to opportunities, to goods and services that enable the fulfilment of basic human needs*' (HarvardX, 2017).

One must apply the definition of violence (cfr. Chapter 1) to the case studies and identify the '*what is*' and '*what could have been*'. The '*what could have been*' is the achievement or the attempt to achieve genuinely gender parity. Nowadays, gender inequality is not an abnormality or an exception. It is, unfortunately, spread worldwide. Each of the countries studied constitutionally recognizes gender equality, although far from being achieved for some. The '*what is*' is the unequal opportunities to participate in politics between men and women.

Women are strongly underrepresented in Nigeria. Unlike Kenya and Senegal, Nigeria did not adopt any efficient legal instrument or policy to improve women's political representation despite its numerous regional and international commitments to the matter. Both the 2000 National Policy on Women and the 2006 National Gender Policy proved to be ineffective. Consequently, Nigerian women seem to be more exposed to such violence because of the total lack of affirmative action to compensate for the social injustice they experience. Kenya has implemented the *gender principle* which aims at ensuring that no gender represents less than one-third of the members of the National Assembly. Yet, it was not so much the introduction of this law that improved the political representation of women in Parliament, but rather the creation of reserved seats called *women representatives*. However, '*even though the number of women representatives in Parliament has increased, it still lies way below the expected 33.3% if the two-third gender rule is to be observed*' (C. Kaimenyi, et al., 2013). Senegal, for its part, adopted the *parity law* which forces political parties to alternate male and female candidates on their electoral list. Besides being more ambitious by trying to achieve a perfect parity, the *parity law* appears to be more efficient than the *gender principle* because it was actually implemented, meaning that sanction was provided in case of non-compliance. On the contrary, the Kenyan *gender principle* was not correctly implemented which has allowed for unconstitutional behavior.

The efficiency of affirmative actions is influenced by the electoral formula which contributes to the different levels of women's proportion in the National Assembly among the three countries. Both Nigeria and Kenya have a *first-past-the-post system* or *plurality system* which is definitely less inclusive than a *proportionality representation system* (cf. Chapter 1), while Senegal is a *mixed system*, composed of both a *majority* and *proportional system* through which female candidates are more likely to be elected.

In addition to the electoral formula, political parties seem to have a significant impact on the efficiency of the legal instruments promoting gender equality in all three countries. Indeed, even though the Senegalese system appears to be more efficient, it also has certain limits. Political parties have put in place strategies that eventually led to a better masculine representation. In Kenya, the *gender principle* does not regulate the sexist functioning of the political parties. Such regulation is crucial considering the influence of political parties on women's political representation. They embody the patriarchal culture common to the three countries studied, which explains their reluctance to select women as electoral candidates and

the delegation of women to insignificant roles within the political parties. Such reluctance is even more felt in the Kenyan case because of the seats reserved for female representatives that lead political parties to encourage women not to run for the mixed competitive seats, which is a perverse effect of quotas. While in Senegal, the absence of reserved seats and the *parity law* enabled us to counter this tendency.

In all the case studies, patriarchy shapes the behavior, organization, and hierarchy of the political parties, which reflect a willingness to further marginalize women from politics. Besides the lack of responsibilities women hold within the political parties, the political parties' meetings were planned very late at night which excludes women on whom household constraints are culturally imposed.

In Nigeria and Kenya, the *step-down* practice is also used by political parties to exclude women from candidacy. In Kenya, such practice is a consequence of the establishment of seats specially reserved for women's representatives. Indeed, women are often asked to run for the latter instead of running for the mixed competitive seats. In Senegal, such practice is prevented because of the required alternation of male and female candidates on the electoral lists.

The political parties continue to impact their candidates once elected. In all three countries, it is generally apparent that women do not have a say in the National Assembly. The degree of autonomy of female representatives depends on their trajectory. In Kenya, the great majority of female representatives occupy reserved seats which consequently leads to a greater dependence on the political party because women feel indebted to them. The feeling of indebtedness is commonly shared among the three countries, whether towards their political parties or their funders. Indeed, considering the significant cost of accessing politics and campaigning, both political parties and independent candidates have generally no choice but to depend on the financing of the elites to hope to reach the economic threshold. This dependence considerably reduces the autonomy of the future elected candidates who are indebted to their funders. In Senegal, it is mainly women who do not advance women's interests and do not question their political party ideology who succeed in becoming a national representative. Therefore, the political parties and the elites' interests shape politics and the behavior of the elected representatives. Considering that gender equality is, unfortunately, the least of their concern, they do not support candidates who threaten their interests by promoting those of women.

## 5.2. Culture and Peace Research

### 5.2.1. Violence Against Women and Peace Research

Whether in Nigeria, Kenya, or Senegal, violence seems to be an integral part of politics that affects both men and women. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that Nigeria faces more insecurity that is not limited only to politics but influences certainly the political representation of women in one way or another. However, because of the lack of research done on the issue of violence against women in politics in Senegal, this section will be mainly dedicated to the results of the Nigeria and Kenya analysis.

Based on Peace Research, violence in politics is a matter of *direct violence* that can be both *physical* and *psychological*. In this situation, one can clearly identify a *subject-object relationship*. The *subjects* are generally the candidates themselves and the *objects* are both female and male candidates considering that violence is a politically accepted and rewarded practice, thus is not specific to women. However, women still experience more violence than their male counterparts such as psychological violence (sexist and abusive language or a negative image disseminated by the media or threats) and physical violence (being stabbed or raped) which constitute an obstacle to their participation in politics. Female candidates are therefore continually in a state of fear which in turn constitutes a form of psychological violence. The supporters of the female candidates can also be the victim of such violence which eventually has an impact on the electoral outcomes.

The *direct violence* experienced by women in politics results partly from impunity. Because it has become a common practice, political violence remains most of the time unpunished. Impunity is a form of *structural violence* that enables the continuity of violent practices within politics. Besides the defaulting system, violence has become *cultural*. The respective culture of Nigeria, Kenya, and Senegal that legitimizes such harmful behavior is called *cultural violence*. Indeed, the manly conception of politics excludes women from political leadership positions. The place of women is culturally supposed to be in the domestic sphere. The perception of the biological distribution of societal roles is the core of hostility and violence against women in politics.

### **5.2.2. Social Norms and Peace Research**

Patriarchy is a common feature of the three countries and appeared to be exacerbated by colonialism. Hence, there is no difference between a former French colony and a former British colony regarding the position of women within society. Colonialism enabled the spread of the misogynist Western social order overseas and the institutionalization of a gender-based division of labor. Hence, the demarcation between the private and the public spheres from which women are excluded, has widened in Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. Women are thus culturally perceived as being weak individuals reduced to the role of mothers, wives, and caregivers. This perception is deeply internalized to such an extent that even women themselves do not question its relevance and contributes together with the misogynist media coverage to the perpetuation of such discriminatory culture. Therefore, on one side, women are not especially interested in doing politics, and on the other side, once they actually are, they face constant hostility.

There is *cultural violence* once the culture is used to legitimize social injustice which appears normal to everyone and therefore both *direct* and *structural violence* are experienced by women in Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. Culture is the cement of all the violence suffered by women in politics. It is the origin of violence and what allows its continuation.

Such a situation explains the lack of willingness or the lack of efficiency of the adopted policies to promote women's political representation. Their underrepresentation is not considered an abnormality. The discriminatory structure of society is a mere reflection of discriminatory culture. As long as the culture remains patriarchal, the strategies implemented will not be completely efficient, at the risk of having a mere numerical and not a real political representation of women.

### **5.2.3. Religion and Peace Research**

Religion is a point of divergence between the countries studied. Considering that religion is used to justify gender inequality, there is *cultural violence*. Since religion is the foundation of many societal norms, it is obvious that *cultural violence* will spill over into society individuals' behavior. Religion constitutes a powerful instrument of internalization

considering that the religious practices are rarely questioned and enable to make social injustice seem normal to such an extent that even the discriminated women accept their submission.

Kenya and Senegal are respectively Christian and Muslim dominant, while there is almost Christian-Muslim parity in Nigeria. In Kenya and Nigeria, there is a clear territorial demarcation between the two religious communities which enabled us to observe a correlation between women's political representation and religion, which is not the case in Senegal. In Kenya and Nigeria, women are indeed underrepresented in the Muslim regions considering that Islam exacerbates the patriarchal values, which is not the case in Senegal. If Islam is so unfavorable to women's rights, how is it that Senegal, which is predominantly Muslim, manages to have a better representation of women than the two other countries? The Senegalese case enabled us to deconstruct the stereotypes of Islam and to nuance the testimonies and research that have been conducted on Nigeria and Kenya. It is not Islam that is misogynist but the culture that accompanies it, which consequently interprets Islam in the light of patriarchy and established a relationship of *domination*. What matters the most is to analyze the cultural practices that use religion as a way to legitimize the discriminatory social order established by the *dominant class*. According to Karl Marx, religion is the *opium of the people* considering that it is used in a context of '*political relations of domination, social relations of inequality and economic relations of exploitation*' (Le Point, 2017).

*'If religion is the opium of the people, it is because these people need a powerful narcotic to support the social sufferings that are inflicted on them: the dominant classes remedy this by producing ideologies that both express and mask the reality of their brutal and iniquitous domination on the dominated classes'* (Le Point, 2017).

The analysis of Karl Marx is somehow related to the Peace Research concept of *cultural violence* which is '*any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form*' (J. Galtung, 1990). In other words, to solidify its hegemony, the *dominant class* favors and spread the interpretation of religion that legitimizes and makes acceptable, if not normal, gender-based discrimination.

### 5.3. Women's Socioeconomic Status, Level of Education, and Peace Research

The research did not highlight any difference in the socioeconomic status of women in the three countries. Women face the same socioeconomic obstacles hindering their access to politics.

Whether it is during the candidates' selection process or the electoral campaign, the candidates must provide a lot of money to achieve their political goals. Corruption has also become endemic in the three countries. Politics is therefore heavily costly, independent of gender.

The socioeconomic obstacles constitute *structural violence*. There is no clear *subject-object relationship*, and it is the result of a defaulting behavior of the society which further accentuates the class and gender gaps. The '*what could have been*' is that men and women would face the same socioeconomic obstacles in politics or no socioeconomic obstacles at all, which is not the case in reality. The financial-political impediments impact more severely female aspiring candidates because of their disadvantaged socioeconomic status. Women do not have the same financial resources at their disposal as men and are more likely to be affected by poverty.

The reasons for financial men-women inequality are:

- Women are culturally relegated to the domestic sphere and the informal economy;
- Women are not the usual family's breadwinner and thus do not control its financial resources, they are also not the traditional owner of lands and properties which constitute yet an important financial guarantee;
- Women do not occupy the strategic positions within society, which are nevertheless the most profitable.
- Women are more exposed to violence and have to spend more money to ensure their protection.

Other than being the result of cultural beliefs, the socioeconomic status of women also finds its origins in women's level of education. In Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal, women do not occupy strategic positions because they do not have the necessary educational background.

The '*what could have been*' is the situation where all children would have equal opportunities to access a decent education. Unfortunately, the '*what is*' is quite different. In the three case studies, some children, more particularly girls, are the victim of *violence* as defined by Peace.

Even though both boys and girls (especially the rural ones) are affected by *structural violence* because of the lack of infrastructure and the distance between home and school, girls face even more obstacles than boys regarding access to education. In all three countries, girls are more affected by the phenomenon of abandonment, with their enrolment rate diminishing as the level of education increases.

There are different reasons explaining the poor level of education of women:

- The first one is related to security matters. Because girls are considered as weak, they constantly need protection. They are more exposed to *direct violence* on their way to school or even at school, such as sexual harassment. Therefore, *structural violence* like the distance between home and school impacts more heavily girls than boys.
- The second obstacle concerns the financial aspect of education. A girl's education constitutes an important *opportunity cost*, especially for the poorest family. Therefore, child labor is too often preferred because it appears to be more profitable at first glance considering that a significant number of individuals are living below the poverty line. Eradicating poverty would definitely enhance the level of education of women as its opportunity cost decreases. Poverty is a form of *structural violence* that considerably reduces the opportunities of the individuals and is unfortunately quite endemic in all the case studies.
- Thirdly, education is also subject to *cultural violence*. The patriarchal culture, commonly spread in each country, creates social injustice which is internalized and thus not considered an abnormality. Women's access to education is hindered. They are culturally reduced to wives and mothers, which accentuates the feeling that their education is a lost investment. It was concluded in the chapters dedicated to Nigeria and Kenya that Muslim women were facing more barriers during their educational path. Senegal, contrary to Kenya, is composed of a majority of Muslims. Yet, there is no significant gap between women's level of education in Kenya and Senegal, which contradicts the assertion that Islam is a major impediment to women's education. Hence, one should be more nuanced and cannot conclude that religion is preventing women's access to education but rather that the interaction of religion with other obstructing factors contributes to it.

- In the three countries, colonialism appeared to be a major explanation of the regional and gendered disparities concerning education, together with religion. The colonizers decided to develop some areas over others, which results in *structural violence*. Not everyone has benefited from the contributions of Western education, which has had economic repercussions in terms of development that are still felt today. In Senegal, the interaction between colonialism and religion was completely different. Perhaps because there was no possibility to exploit a religious dissent as it was the case in Kenya and Nigeria but mostly because the logic of cooperation between the French colonial power and the local and religious authorities resulted in a bigger opening to Western norms and values and consequently a more moderate Islam.

To summarize, in the three case studies, women face the same kind of *direct, structural, and cultural violence* during their schooling. In both Nigeria and Kenya, religion is one of the main reasons explaining the different levels of *cultural violence* experienced by women. However, in Senegal, religion does not seem to be as significant in preventing women's access to education as it is in Nigeria and Kenya.

## Conclusion

For the past decade, certain African countries succeeded in improving women's political representation within their National Assembly to such an extent that they have overtaken some Western countries in this regard. Such advances justified the interest in studying Sub-Saharan countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. Moreover, few comparative studies on women's political representation in sub-Saharan Africa have been conducted.

Several difficulties were encountered during the realization of this work. The physical inaccessibility of the field constitutes a major impediment. Therefore, the main foundation of this work was scientific articles. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to carry out an ethnographic study to observe the cultural features.

Secondly, the lack of research on women's political representation in Sub-Saharan Africa constrained us to use the Western model as the basis of this analysis. However, it would have been preferable to distance ourselves from Eurocentrism and be more critical.

Thirdly, there was not the same amount of information available for each case study, which probably depends on the country's stature. Indeed, Nigeria and Kenya are considerable powers in their respective geographical area while Senegal is much more modest. It was then more difficult to find information on the issue of women's political representation in Senegal considering that less academic research was conducted on the matter. Although interviews were conducted, this research lacks testimonies from people directly involved in politics who could have shared their experiences as national representatives. However, the inaccessibility of the field made it difficult.

This study also has some limitations. First, the case studies have either a *majority* or *mixt electoral system*. This comparative research would have been more complete if a country using a *proportional representation system* was included, such as Rwanda. This research lacks an overview of all the existing electoral formulas and consequently an analysis of the alleged advantages of *proportionality* and whether they apply in sub-Saharan Africa.

Secondly, one must also be critical of Peace Research which is originally a theory that belongs to the field of international security. It is generally used to analyze conflictual situations to

restore lasting peace. Although this theory can explain situations of injustice such as gender discrimination, its application is perhaps not in perfect adequacy with purely social phenomena.

However, these difficulties did not prevent the research question from being answered to some extent. Using Peace Research as a theoretical framework has allowed us to give an overview of the issue of gender inequality. It emphasized the intertwinement of the different factors influencing women's political representation, which all need to be addressed to genuinely empower politically women. Based on this international security theory, the following hypotheses have been formulated: ***the direct, structural, and/or cultural violence faced by women in Kenya, Nigeria, and/or Senegal explain their contrasted results concerning women's political representation.*** This hypothesis can be affirmed although the degree of severity of the violence varies from country to country.

Nigeria is the most subject to *violence* because women face more *structural violence* than in the two other countries. While *cultural* and *direct violence* are similar in the three case studies, the electoral formula as well as the policies put in place by the governments vary from one country to another and constitute therefore the main explanation of the different results of women's political representation in the National Assembly. Nigerian women are strongly underrepresented compared to Kenya and Senegal because of the lack of policies empowering women. Nigeria's instability and insecurity in recent years perhaps prevent gender inequality from being a political priority.

What differentiates Kenya from Senegal is the binding nature and the objectives of the adopted strategies. The Senegalese *parity law* seems to be more efficient than the Kenyan *gender principle* probably because the former is actually implemented and regulates the behavior of the political parties, which appears to be necessary for the improvement of women's political representation. In the three countries, the political parties constitute a major obstacle to women's political representation. Political parties are the very incorporation of patriarchal social norms in politics and therefore are the main cause of affirmative action's ineffectiveness. Therefore, it is important to consider the political parties while elaborating strategies to reduce gender inequality to reach a real representation of women in politics. In all the case studies, no matter their numerical representation, women did not influence the decision-making. They felt indebted to their parties and elites and therefore did not advance women's interests which are often in opposition with the party ideology.

Religion is another feature that differentiates Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. Yet, no clear conclusion could be drawn about whether religion impacts women's political representation. The case of Senegal counterbalances the idea that women's rights are less valued in Islam and consequently that women are better represented in a society predominantly Christian.

This comparative study provided a general analysis of the different factors impacting women's political representation. Therefore, each of these factors can be further explored. For instance, further research on women's socioeconomic status could be made. This study broadly analyzed the interaction of women's economic features with culture and their level of education. Still, there are probably plenty of other facets of women's socioeconomic status that could be subject to further discussion such as the involvement of women in the informal economy. For instance, in Togo, there is the phenomenon of the wealthy female merchants called the *mama benz*, which has probably spread around other sub-Saharan African countries. It means that the economic situation of women is not as bad as officially stated. Hence, why is there no correlation between economic power and the political representation of women?

Religion is also another factor that is interesting to analyze in more depth considering that no clear conclusion came out of this comparative research. Indeed, the fact that women are better politically represented in Senegal which is predominantly Muslim, means that Islam is not responsible for the *violence* against women. For instance, it would be interesting to do a comparative study of different Muslim countries in different geographical areas to determine whether religion shapes the culture and social norms, or vice versa.

The comparative research highlighted the existing regional disparities within the case studies, more particularly between urban and rural areas. Such disparities concern the urban and rural socioeconomic development and cultural practices whose impact on women's political representation could be further analyzed. The impact of rurality and urbanity is probably related to the district magnitude which overlooked in this comparative study, mainly because of the willingness to focus more on the cultural obstacles hindering women's political representation. The district magnitude is the number of representatives specific to one particular constituency and is, therefore '*the primary determinant of an electoral system's ability to translate votes cast into seats won proportionally*' (The Electoral Knowledge Network, n.d.). The magnitude of the district appears to influence greatly women's political representation since the more

representatives there are within one constituency, the more likely women would be elected because the intensity of competitiveness decreases. Hence, it is worth exploring whether this statement applies to the case studies or in sub-Saharan Africa in general.

The development disparities as well as the cultural conception of the role of women within society were exacerbated during the colonial period. Colonialism spread a strongly patriarchal Western model in the colonies and consequently consolidated the pattern of alleged inferiority of women, even though patriarchal trends already existed in the traditional societies. It would also be interesting to do a comparative and historical study whose purpose would be to compare the evolution of women's place in society. How were women treated in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial societies? Answering this question would probably enable us to understand the different paths that the countries have taken and consequently the impact of current cultural norms that continue to impede women's political representation today.

Kenya and Nigeria are constituted of three legal systems, namely Customary Law, Common Law, and Sharia Law. In Nigeria, the States have the freedom to choose to establish Sharia Law. How can we advocate for equal treatment before the law while having three different constitutionally recognized legal systems, each of them defending its values and granting different rights to the people over whom its prerogatives are exercised? This situation induces legal pluralism and consequently certain legal insecurity which renders even more difficult the implementation of laws promoting women's rights. Hence, there is a need to analyze the impact of such legal pluralism on women's political representation. Indeed:

*'Experts cautioned against the perpetuation of customary and religious practices which negatively affected the situation of Nigerian women and emphasized the need for the Government to take urgent action to harmonize its legal framework to ensure the uniformity of human rights protections.'* (United Nations, 2004)

These different directions of research show to what extent the political representation of women is a complex subject with various facets. This comparative study emphasized that an improvement in women's political representation in sub-Saharan countries tends to remain purely numerical. Although their legitimacy is controversial, quotas are the first and necessary step in the process of achieving gender equality in politics. They enable to highlight the abnormality of women's underrepresentation and to familiarize with an increased presence of

women in politics. However, while familiarization contributes to it, quotas do not directly address the issues of patriarchal culture and women's disadvantaged socio-economic status. Therefore, the strategies need to tackle these different aspects and deconstruct the gender stereotypes to generate a real change of mentality and consequently achieve a genuine political representation of women. However, because of the cultural roots of women's discrimination, reaching one day a complete and natural parity society, i.e. without the implementation of affirmative action, will be a long and perilous path.

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## **Personal Communications**

Interview of Yolande BOUKA about women's political representation in Kenya (December 16, 2021)

Interview of Olanike OLUGBOJI about women's political representation in Nigeria (June 25, 2022)

Interview of Nkiru UZODI about women's political representation in Nigeria (July 8, 2022)

Interview of Dr. Selly BA about women's political representation in Senegal (July 8, 2022)

## Appendices

### Interview of Pr. Yolande BOUKA, December 16, 2021

**What are the dynamics around the violation of the *gender principle* and the fact that in the national Parliament the one-third required is not reached? Why is it so easy to breach a constitutional mandate?**

I think the first answer to your question is probably the need to explore the relationship between the Supreme, or the Highest Court, and the executive and the legislative branches. Who has the authority or power to enforce rulings of the Supreme Court in Kenya? That's a bit challenging because historically you can find some scholarship on the relationship of the judiciary with other branches. The appointment to the Court is made in such a way that it made it difficult for the true independence of the judicial branch. That has changed with the new Constitution from my understanding. However, it appears that the judicial bodies have held the government responsible for certain things. There is already a history of difficulties between the Court and the other branches of the government. In terms of political parties themselves, I think there are a lot of people better qualified than me to speak to you about the dynamics of political parties. I do not think that any party, with the exception of a handful, one of which is the political party led by women, has any belief that they can gain political capital by taking on the issue of women's representation and there are various reasons for that.

Patriarchy is always the kind of easy culprit but also in the ways in which the two-third *system* was implemented with the creation of women's seats, reserved seats for women at the national level, and the lack of automatic trigger of the necessity of topping up at the national level while concurrently in the same document creating measures that force the counties legislature to top up. You definitely see an understanding in the drafter (at least that is my opinion, but I could be absolutely wrong) of the creation of a loophole that is present at the national level but not at the county level. And I think it's because there is also an understanding of, you know that even with devolution, there remains a strong belief that the center of power remains at the national level. The real decisions that have implications with large projects that may have international ramifications, all these decisions are taken at the national level. So, I guess one would want to have a conversation with a constitutional scholar or even somebody who was part of the

constitutional drafting to understand at what point this loophole gets created. I would be very curious, I never looked into it but there are a number of scholars who are still alive who were part of the process to explain you know... 'did you not see this as a glaring gap, that you were articulated the need for a top up, but you did not articulate it at the national level? And did you anticipate the consequences?' Because now, one of the excuses of the legislator was just complicit. I think that members of the National Assembly are in many ways complicit, they are seating in an unconstitutional body. But lot of this on my part is speculation because I am no longer on the ground, and I am no longer part of the conversation about the two-third *rule*. But I think these are the types of question one would want to ask because it is glaring that the two-third *principle* is one that the executive and the legislature is not committed to abiding by. But there are also other provisions that some people want to revise and review, and this is the reason why the government is engaging in a campaign to revise the constitution.

**Can you be more explicit about the difference in compliance with the *gender principle* between the county and the national level and how the counties manage to comply more easily with the gender principle?**

There is a provision that triggers automatically the need and the mechanisms through which the counties top up their level of women's representation and of course, it is not specifically defined for women because it is '*no gender will occupy more than two third.*' The counties are constitutionally mandated... not mandated but they have the mechanisms that are clearly laid out which make it easier. In some counties there was no question about how to get to the necessary threshold, there was no resistance and maybe it is because they are no *women representatives*. This is also the national versus local kind of difference. At the national level, politicians want to [*inaudible*] women's political participation through the *women representative* position and therefore make an argument that broader politics is men's business and if women want to be in office, they should compete for *women representative* seats and that should be sufficient. This is the main reason, there are two different constitutional designs between the national level and the county level.

**Do women, once they are elected or nominated, hold decisive positions, or are they the mere instrument of political parties and therefore do not really have a say within the National Assembly?**

It depends on the women, on their trajectory. It depends on how they got to office. Women who are nominated by their political parties are often told that they are indebted to the party that put them in office. And even in the parliamentary debate...men on the floor would often tell women who are nominated as opposed to directly elected that they don't represent anyone, that they don't have a constituency. And if you don't have a constituency you are speaking on behalf of anyone. So, there is a difference between women who are elected and women who are nominated in terms of the level of power. But that is not a universal statement, some nominated women either have the political capital or the desire despite the challenges to propose bills that they hope the rest of the legislative body will support. So, it is easier to instrumentalize a nominated political legislator than an elected one because the elected one can argue that they are doing this on behalf of their electorate. That being said, you are still in a parliamentary system. It is a bit of a mixed system, but political discipline is relatively strong in Kenya. So, men and women are both definitely influenced by political parties. I think the dynamics vary very much depending on whether women are elected or nominated but they are still undermined by their male colleagues even from their own political party. And sometimes this undermining takes violent forms, verbal harassment and sometimes sexual assault.

### **Within the political parties?**

Yes, within the political parties. And that is actually stronger during the electoral process as opposed to after the election within the political party. There is the nomination process, often there is gender-specific violence against women to discourage them from office. And that happens within the political party because you try to secure your place on your party ticket and this is when intra-party violence takes the most place. And I think it is interesting because, in the case of Kenya, people are often (in the past few years since the 2007 elections) concerned about interethnic violence in the election but very little attention to intra-party violence at the nomination process before the general election takes place. And it varies from county to county and I think that is also important to note. We had an example in our research in the Nairobi county legislature of a woman being physically assaulted if I am not mistaken. I think that was somebody from a different political party and she ended up in the hospital because he was trying to force her to vote his way on a particular bill. And no discipline came from that man's political party. He just went back and continued his business as usual. So, there is a broader level, a framework that facilitates this type of harassment and violence against women in politics to intimidate them to vote one way or another.

**The next question was about the impact of the Kenyan electoral formula on women's political representation, and the fact that it is a plurality system.**

Kenya has a first past to post system and any scholar will tell you that this system is less likely to yield a broader representation of underrepresented groups whether we're talking about ethnic, racial, or gender groups. So that is already challenging because you do not have a proportional representation in Kenya. It would look differently ethnically but also in terms of gender because political parties are able to take more risks about whom they nominate and whom they put on their electoral lists based on party magnitude and district magnitude and so on and so forth. So, that is already a challenge. On top of that, on the national level, different rules create different pathways for women's representation. We already talked about the counties and at the national level, we also talked about the role that *women representatives* play in this architecture and how it is probably a good entry into politics because they do not have to compete against men and at the same time there is a question about whether *women representative* position ...In the last elections, women have moved away from dual gender competitive seats at the national level and flocked towards the *women representatives* position. What does that do? Within this architecture, it pushes women to [inaudible] their participation in the *women representatives* position. So that changes the dynamics. It is perceived to be the easiest seat to run for because you don't have to compete against men. That definitely influences women's representation. The number of *women representatives* seats does not change. What can expand is the dual gender competitive seats and if women move way from those to move towards the *women representatives* then you are pulling away out of a potential tool.

**Do rurality and urbanity but also the socioeconomic regional disparities have an impact on women's representation in Kenya?**

That question is broad. I'm not sure I have a straightforward answer. Being in an urban context changes gender dynamics and access to power and representation. Part of the reason why devolution is popular in Kenya is that it allowed remedying some of those challenges in terms of reducing the power differences between urban elites and people who live in rural areas, particularly in counties that are far away from the capital. But within those counties' legislature, you will still have the same percentage of women more or less. Unless you are a particular progressive county and you surpass the one-third that is usually expected. I do think rural and urban will make a difference in terms of access to national politics, and the visibility and

possibility of trajectories to national politics. I don't really know how to answer that question because it is not something we tested. We do numbers, we did surveys but we never cut it in urban, and rural divisions. I am sure the answer is yes, but I couldn't tell you how.

### **The impact of religion and ethnicities and women's representation.**

Religion definitely has an impact in terms of creating possibilities for women who have the desire to run for office. There is often conversation about women who are capable of running for office and those who have the actual desire. And sometimes you have women who are able and have the capacity, the skills, and the required education and so on and so forth, but they have no desire to run for politics and part of these reasons has to do with the level of violence, verbal and physical, but also because of social norms about what is acceptable to do for women. This is the same challenge that you find when you're looking at women's participation in the military in Kenya. It is very difficult to recruit women in the military in the North Eastern part of the country that is more predominantly Muslim because some of the women that were interviewed would say *'I want to get married one day, what kind of men would marry a woman who is in the military'*. It is not that they do not have the skills, but they are fully aware that they would be stepping outside of the gender role and then jeopardizing their connection to their community. That being said, in highly Muslim counties you still maintain gender violence. What would be interesting for you to look at through Kenyan electoral numbers, is whether Muslim-led counties end up having more nominated women representatives than other counties that are Christian-nominated counties.

Ethnicities play a role in... You would have a leading ethnic group within each county, so if you are a minority outside of that majority, it may be more difficult for you to access politics, and if you are a woman on top of that. Ethnic politics in Kenya at the county level is really underexplored. For instance, if you're trying to reach a governor position, you have a couple of women governors in Kenya, their ability to run for this position was predicated on previous political ties that are linked to ethnicities, and ethnic coalitions. We know that this person can win the particular governorship because she is from that group in that county. It is not just the question of ethnicity but it is the intersection of ethnicities' previous political connections and then where exactly that person is going to be elected... It is much more complicated.

## **What is the impact of education and colonialism on women's political representation?**

I think the colonial past across Africa has definitely reduced the influence of women and not just descriptive representation. I think that is something that you want to differentiate when you ask this question. The colonial encounter influence political configurations and replicated Western European political representation model and completely abandoned, maybe for the better but mostly for the worst in my view how decisions were made in a collective group of people. I don't know how things were in precolonial Kenya but in many societal formations in West Africa, there were many stakeholders to account for. There were different groups, age was often kind of a determinant and then there were women groups, elders groups, trade groups, etc. I am not romanticizing the precolonial era as a time of democratic consultation but the consideration of power was quite different. And the modern post-colonial configuration of politics makes it very... [inaudible] divide between what is public and what is private and this is one of the colonial corrections that relegated women to the private sphere. That artificial binary division between public and private, in addition to Europeans imposing women exclusively into the private sphere, has definitely impacted the ability of women to have substantive representation. Putting the number aside, in terms of their ability to speak for themselves, on behalf of women, has been jeopardized because of their interests, their safety, and their material condition. In many African states despite the legal framework that argues that all individuals have equal access to the law, have equal access to representation, have equal access to employment, the reality of the material condition of women across the continent even in a country like South Africa that has the most progressive laws, all the way to Kenya that says two-third across all government agencies including the military, judiciary entities and so forth still refuse to buy this principle. So that was one of the most colonial legacies, the coloniality of the constitution of gender and where power [inaudible] definitely disrupted the ways in which women can represent their interests.

## **Interview of Mrs. Olanike OLUGBOJI, June 25, 2022**

### **How does the Nigerian political system constitute an impediment to women's political representation?**

So, over the years, it's always been two major parties whether the names have changed, coalitions have formed and you end up just having like two parties becoming the dominant parties, and one of the things that I have realized from my interactions with female politicians... you know party system is run in a manner that pays little attention to getting women really informed. You find out that in most parties, they have something that they called *women's leaders*. So, at the end of the day, the women leader's role is more mobilizing women to join the party or vote for the party. So, it is not really that she is involved in the decision-making process within the party. Also, the system is so monetized, that a lot of women cannot afford the financial implication. For example, recently, so much is actually happening politically now in Nigeria because of the elections of governors and presidential elections. The major political parties bend some of their rules saying that women are not going to pay the same amount of money. You can imagine if you are interested in the presidency, for one of the major political parties you have to pay as much as 100 million Naira. **And why do they need so much money?** I don't know! It is just crazy. You know, for some of the political parties, they say that it is a way to avoid situations where anybody could put out themselves to vie for the position. So, in that sense, it becomes very restrictive because it is only the people who have the money. How many women can afford this kind of money?

And there is also the aspect of harassment, sexual harassment, asking women to compromise like sex or relationship with some of the politicians in exchange for whatever position the woman wants. Some of the things that restrict women are money which a lot of women cannot afford. And there is also the aspect of patriarchy as it relates to cultural and religious beliefs, especially in Northern Nigeria where women are kind of really relegated based on religion.

### **Is there any strategy put in place by the government to promote women's political representation?**

Yes, there are some treaties that the government signed but at the end of the day, they are not domesticated. Even though they are making effort, there are bills that were sponsored, that requested that women must have at least 30 percent of representation at all levels but of course, that has never seen the light of day. Though there are certain state governors who have

actually... based on a personal note or based on their political promises, that they would engage women, quite a number have fulfilled that. For example, in the state we are based, the governor has a deputy that is a woman but if we look at the percentage across the states, we have 36 states and with the Federal capital territory let's just say 37 states, there is no female governor in Nigeria, there has never been any to date. So, despite all the promises that the government makes, the treaties that are signed or conventions or whatever, they are not actually domesticated in a manner that encourages or enables the actualization of these intentions.

**And there is no sanction for the non-compliance?**

No sanctions... just promises and when it does not happen, nothing happens.

**I know that you already partly responded to the next questions about the influence of political parties on women's political representation, but I don't know if you have anything else to add.**

I find the system quite sexist, quite restrictive, and does not provide a level playing field for women. So, it is just more like empty campaign promises that women will be given a fair chance. They have to go through primaries and the men end up so dominating because they have the money, they are more in numbers within the political party. The men or the sexist system just pays the least service to drive agendas that favor women. There is no political will, there is no real interest in bridging the gaps in women's representation within the parties.

**And do women once they are elected or nominated hold decisive positions or are they the instrument of political parties and therefore do not really have a say?**

The situation is such that it can be better. You know... It can be better because most of the time, certain factors have influenced the ability of women to get elected or nominated. So, most of the time, even when these women are elected or nominated, they are more liable to whoever helped them to get there. But for those who were able to get there to their own merit or determination or ability to gather support, they are able to wield their influence. So, we have certain women who are in a position of power that they could have used to really improve the situation of women, but they are not doing that.

### **And why?**

For some women, they really do not have a vision of what to achieve or they just have an interest in holding power and not necessarily to influence, or use power to improve women's condition. So, it just depends on what is on individuals' agenda or interests or reason for really wanting to get into power. Strangely, sometimes it is a particular man who is driving the feminine agenda or agenda around women and Parliament, gender equality, and all that. You see some women are not particularly interested or do not really use their access to power or decision-making to improve the situation of women. Strangely, you find certain women get into power and they antagonize other women and do not really use their power and their access to power to improve women's situation. They use it merely for themselves and their families and inner circle, sadly so.

### **Are there economic regional disparities? What are their causes, and could they be related to the low percentage of women in politics?**

When you have more women in politics, usually they are very family oriented and anything that is going to affect their immediate family, their immediate communities,... I am not saying all women but I am sure that we have quite a number of women who will prioritize issues that relate to... for example the issue of peace. Challenges around security which is very grave in Nigeria right now. These things are not discussed on the decision-making table, it is not on the front banner. I can imagine if we have a woman as a President or Vice President, the current issues around insecurity will be more important. I think that women are very sentimental, and very much concerned about issues that relate to welfare, and well-being, unlike men. So, the regional disparities also stemmed from the fact that when you compare the North to the South, you have more educated women in the Southern part of Nigeria because of all the issues around traditional belief systems, around religion that relegate women to the background or do not allow women to acquire knowledge. Illiteracy also... you have more women who are illiterate, you have more girls who are out of school. So, all that at the end of the day has an effect when it comes to regional disparities because when you have more women who are educated, they are better positioned to explore economic opportunities than those who are illiterate or not even given any opportunity to find expression or engaging in productive activities and basically when it comes to intellectual exploits. So, that reinforces such disparities between the North and the South. And even the issue of religion and ethnicities...when you try to compare the level of

exposure and the opportunities that women can explore, I think the Christians are still better positioned.

**Do you think that rurality and urbanity play also a role in determining women's political representation and socioeconomic status?**

Yes, it does. Based on their opportunities they are able to explore and of course, in an urban setting, they have better opportunities.

**Do you have any idea about the impact of colonialism in Nigeria regarding these economic and educational disparities between regions and indirectly on women's political representation?**

The South-West has always been ahead of other regions when it comes to access to western education and all that. So, the Southeasterners are more of a very economic kind of ethnic group that explores business a lot. And for the North, they were more farmers, a lot was going on in Northern Nigeria around farming. So, when the colonial masters came in from my own understanding of history, they came in through the South basically because the South has a lot of water bodies. So, for example, Lagos is connected to the Atlantic Ocean, unlike the Northern area which is more restricted. So, the colonizers came in through the south and met a lot of resistance because of the exposure of people living in that part of Nigeria. At the end of the day, they were able to mingle with the Northerners and so at the end of the day, they handed over power to the Northern region. The resistance they met in the North was less, but right now it is believed that the colonial masters deliberately handed over power to the north to dominate the Southern part because it was just their way of making sure that things never stabilized. It is the case of '*divide and rule*'...

**Do you have a more specific answer to give regarding the education of women?**

In northern Nigeria, young girls are deprived of education, because of early marriage. Over ten years we've been experiencing insurgency and a lot of schoolgirls (inaudible) to kidnaping, (inaudible) bandits in on their way they go to school and all that has spread a lot of fear. So, when the girl child is not protected or not assured of being protected, it creates a situation where she does not feel free or comfortable to go to school. When there is no assurance of protection for a woman or our daughters in the community, within the workplace, school, and all that, all this continues to reinforce gaps that continue to allow women to be relegated or restricted from

opportunities. So, there are such specific factors around insecurity, early marriage, cultural restrictions, and the belief that a boy is better than a girl. At the end of the day, some would not even allow their daughter to go to school because they believe that at the end of the day she is going to get married to somebody else and all the investment in her is going to belong to someone else. The female gender is seen as commodities that can be used to earn some money, make some money, or pay off debt, and therefore the girl child becomes vulnerable.

**Do women face electoral violence during electoral campaigns and how do the instability and insecurity issues in Nigeria influence women's political representation?**

I personally know a woman who was beaten. She was deprived of her political wining. She won an election, and she was deprived, and she was trying to explore a way to get back her mandate but at the end of the day, she was attacked. I also know a particular political woman, not personally, who was killed in her house. Women are kind of more vulnerable because society sees women as second-class citizens or less than men. So, at the end of the day, because of the system that is already in place...you find out that when men have come to fight, it is the women and the children who up being the victims. The system is so unjust that a lot of people do wrong things, and they are not penalized for it.

## **Interview of Mrs. Nkiru UZODI, July 8, 2022**

### **How does the Nigerian political system constitute an impediment to women's political representation?**

Impediments to women's political representation are seen more in the electoral system, which is the first-past-the-post/plurality majoritarian system. The single-member districts used in this system makes it difficult for women to be elected because it is a "winner takes it all" system. One that is dominated by men who are unlikely to make concessions to benefit women who want to run for office. Within the political environment, sexism, religious and socio-cultural stereotypes, gender-based violence, and lack of finances prevent women from running for office.

### **What are the strategies put in place by the government to promote women's political representation?**

At the federal level, Nigeria has a National Gender Policy originally drafted in 2006 but revised in 2022. While it contains strategies for improving representation, it is rarely implemented. There is no tangible or sustained initiative by the government to help more women attain political positions. However, some individual States, such as Kwara State, have made some effort to reverse the trend by adopting policies to increase the number of women in executive appointive offices.

### **What is the influence of political parties on women's political representation?**

It should be strong and positive, but it is not. Nigerian Political parties are not deeply committed to women's political representation even though their Party Constitutions say otherwise. They are also not known for actively recruiting and training women. Apart from giving free nomination forms or reduced costs for buying the forms, there is no other significant effort they make to push their female members to the top, either as members of their executive committee or as candidates.

**Do women (once elected or nominated) hold decisive positions? Or are they the mere instrument of political parties and therefore do not really have a say?**

Women who are elected have been known to hold decisive positions, including membership in key legislative committees or the leadership of the National Assembly. For instance, Nigeria has had a female Speaker once, even though she was eventually impeached.

**Are there economic regional disparities and what are their causes? Could they be related to the low percentage of women in politics?**

There are regional disparities. For instance, collectively, there are more women elected in the Southern region than in the Northern region. Most Northern States do not have a single woman in their State legislatures. Religion seems to be a bigger challenge for women politicians from the Northern region. However, the Southern region is just marginally better and still does not set a good standard or meet the benchmarks for women's representation. The poor attitude towards women in politics is more of a national problem than a regional one. There are economic disparities between men and women. Men have better access to finances and credit, and so are better able to fund their campaigns than their female counterparts.

**Is there a big difference between rural and urban areas concerning women's political representation?**

There is not much of a difference in terms of numbers. Underrepresentation is a national problem. Moreover, Nigeria's federal system is poorly developed which means that it is generally difficult for both men and women to build strong political careers from the grassroots level because the local governance structures are very weak. However, in terms of enlightenment, women in urban areas have better access to formal education and resources necessary for a political career. Rural women are however known for being good political organizers/mobilizers but lack access to real power or decision-making.

**What is the socio-economic status of women in Nigeria in general and is there any regional disparities? What are the causes of these potential regional disparities? How can these socioeconomic features prevent them from pursuing a career in politics?**

The socio-economic status of women differs from urban to rural areas and by region. There are regional disparities as girls from certain regions tend to get married earlier and have lower school enrolment/ completion rates. Child marriage is also an issue in certain parts. Lack of access to formal education, early marriage, and teenage motherhood/ family constraints are certainly barriers to pursuing a political career. You can check out this British Council report for more details: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/british-council-gender-nigeria2012.pdf>

**What is the influence of colonialism in Nigeria regarding economic disparities, education, and the status of women and indirectly (or not) on women's political representation?**

Colonialism disrupted the way of life of African societies and communities. Repressive colonial policies- forced labor, dispossession and commercialization of peasants' lands, increased taxation on women, etc. nurtured local resistance which led to the fight for independence. The Aba women riot of 1929 was triggered by the exploitative imposition of tax by the colonial government on women, which was vehemently resisted by women organizations in the Eastern region of Nigeria. However, it also fundamentally changed ways of life as the governance and administrative structures such as the composition of legislative houses, rules for elections, participation in politics, ownership of property, etc. which were modeled after the British were carried into the new republic. Before then, women participated in public life. Foremost Nigerian female historian, Professor Bolanle Awe in her discourse 'Impact of colonialism on the status of women said that "colonialism resulted in significant loss of power and influence on the part of women compared to pre-colonial times.

**How can ethnic groups influence women's representation?**

Not sure this can be framed this way because underrepresentation is not an ethnic group problem. Also, political parties are currently not organized around ethnicities. It is more of a socio-cultural problem.

**What is the level of education of women in Nigeria and what are the impediments to its access? How does it impact female political representation?**

See answer to no. 7 above. The British Council report would give a better indication of data and statistics. Also see this PWC report: <https://www.pwc.com/ng/en/assets/pdf/impact-of-women-nigeria-economy.pdf>

### **What are the social norms/ cultural obstacles to political representation?**

That women are to stay at home and take care of their families. And that men and women are not equal or should not enjoy equal rights.

### **Do women face violence during electoral campaigns? How can it prevent them from pursuing a career in politics?**

Yes, they do. It is a huge impediment. Please see these links:

- <https://www.ndi.org/Stop-VAWIE-Nigeria>
- <https://www.stopvawip.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Kogi-and-Bayelsa-Stop-VAWIP-Report.pdf>
- <https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2015/09/26/vawie-halting-violence-against-women-in-nigerias-electoral-process-by-armsfree-ajanaku/>

### **How does the instability and security issue in Nigeria influence women's political representation?**

See no. 12 above. Insecurity and instability affect the electoral process overall. Its negative effect on women is just a dimension of the problem because citizens generally are discouraged from exercising their political rights in cases of insecurity. It exacerbates the issue for women.

### **What is the impact of religion on women's political representation?**

In Nigeria, religion has been cited as one of the barriers to women's participation as adherents of the two major religions in Nigeria mostly preach that men should be the ones leading. This further worsens the cultural stereotypes of women being expected to focus more on being homemakers.

**Is there still tension between the north and the south? Does this tension between the persistence of Muslim traditions and the more secular national institutions impact women's representation? Does it have an impact on the policies put in place to promote women's rights and their success?**

Currently, the tension between the two regions is mostly flamed by politics/politicians for personal interests and goes beyond gender or women issues. While Muslim traditions are generally seen to be less permissive of women to participate in political life, it is difficult to just draw a straight line from the religion to poor women's participation because there are intersecting issues of class, power, privilege, and access even among women from both regions and religions. There are many educated Muslim women that hold positions of power and are supported by their men. Conversely, there are Christian/Southern women who don't get the support they need and vice versa. While the stereotypes are there and are not unsubstantiated, (e.g. child marriage being more prevalent in the North) it is a very nuanced issue especially when politics is brought into it.

**How can the three legal systems of Nigeria have an influence on women's rights?**

Too broad to give a definitive answer. Influence can be good or bad depending on the law or practice in question. But overall, there are many discriminatory aspects of the system that need to be changed. Some effort has been made for reform. See Appendix III to this PLAC publication. It lists laws and practices based on the 3 systems, how they discriminate against women and how they can be changed.

<https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Women-Political-Representation.pdf>

**What is the impact of clientelism/patronage/corruption on Nigerian politics and more specifically on women's political representation?**

The most visible is the worsening money politics in Nigeria i.e. increasing the cost of running for elections and maintaining political power. This has effectively locked women, young people, and other marginalized groups out of any meaningful representation.

## **Interview Dr. Selly BA, July 8, 2022**

**Ma première question consistait à savoir en quoi le système politique et électoral constituaient un obstacle à la représentation politique des femmes au Sénégal ?**

Avec ce nouveau système où on a intégré le parrainage. Je ne sais pas si tu as une idée du parrainage ?

**Non.**

C'est avoir le maximum de signatures, je ne connais pas le nombre de signatures demandées, mais ça bloque même les candidatures masculines parce que ça suppose que le candidat doit avoir une popularité au niveau national pour pouvoir être retenu comme candidat pour les élections. Déjà, on sait que les femmes ont des difficultés en terme de financements parce que faire de la politique, en tout cas au Sénégal, c'est avoir des moyens financiers et au-delà des moyens financiers, il y a aussi les conceptions culturelles. On est une société patriarcale mais ça je pense que c'est universel. Voir une femme diriger politiquement, c'est très compliqué. C'est pourquoi en 2019, on avait des candidatures à la présidence mais elles se retrouvaient avec des taux de 0,..%. Il y a ces résistances-là qui s'ajoutent et qui freinent l'acceptation d'une candidature féminine.

**Et les signatures, ce sont les signatures des sénégalais en général ?** Oui, des sénégalais, des sénégalais pour cautionner les candidatures.

**Quelles sont les stratégies mises en place par le gouvernement pour promouvoir la représentation politique des femmes ?**

Il y a la loi sur la parité qui est une loi politique de 2010 qui promeut une représentation numérique égale au niveau des instances électives et semi-électives. Que ce soit au niveau du Parlement, conseils municipaux départementaux, on exige qu'il y ait une parité et je pense que cette loi est positive parce qu'avant la loi sur la parité au Sénégal, quand tu prends l'exemple du Parlement, les femmes n'étaient représentées que 20% avant la loi sur la parité. C'est avec la loi sur la parité qu'aujourd'hui on a atteint les 43% de femmes au parlement. Maintenant pourquoi on n'a pas atteint 50% de femmes au Parlement ? C'est lié au mode de scrutin. C'est-à-dire les listes de candidatures qui doivent être paritaires, vu que la totalité des chefs de partis

sont des hommes, les listes commencent par les chefs de partis. Donc on commence par un homme, puis une femme, homme femme, homme ,femme... et du coup on se retrouve avec plus d'hommes. Les organisation des femmes n'ont pas intégré ce biais. Il y a eu beaucoup de réflexion et de plus en plus les combats sont tournées vers les partis politiques eux-mêmes parce que les partis politiques sont allergiques à la parité. Donc davantage de sensibilisation, que les organes des partis politiques acceptent la parité. On doit retrouver la parité au sein des partis politiques avant de la retrouver dans d'autres espaces électifs et semi électif. Donc ça c'est en termes politiques maintenant il y a d'autres acquis. Il ne faut pas être politique, politique électorale, il y a beaucoup d'acquis en tout cas, que ce soit l'égalité salariale, le fait que la femme puisse donner sa nationalité,... voilà. En tout cas dans la Constitution du Sénégal, nous retrouvons l'égalité homme femme depuis 2001.

**D'accord...Mais dans la pratique...** voilà le problème c'est dans la pratique, ces droits qu'on a, l'égalité de manière claire entre les hommes et les femmes, que ce soit l'accès à la ressource, que ce soit la terre ou autre, que ce soit les salaires, que ce soit à tous les niveaux, ça ce sont les textes qui le disent mais dans notre quotidien, dans notre vécu, c'est limité par encore une fois ces perceptions, ce système patriarcal qui est là et qui résiste, il y a l'interprétation masculine des textes sacrés aussi. Il y a ce cocktail-là qui fait que l'on n'arrive pas à jouir de ces lois juridiques..

**Vous avez mentionné l'influence des partis politiques, est ce que vous pouvez un peu plus développer en quoi ils peuvent influencer la représentation politique des femmes ?**

Pour moi les partis politiques, vu que... quand je prends l'exemple du parlement, les gens qui sont désignés... Ce sont les partis politiques qui proposent les candidats. Les futurs parlementaires viennent des partis politiques. Si le parti politique n'est pas sensible sur des questions de parité, ça pose énormément de difficultés.

**Et il n'y a pas de sanction en cas de non-respect ?**

Non, voilà en cas de non-respect, les listes ne sont pas recevables mais ils vont s'arranger pour avoir sur les liste le même nombre d'hommes et de femmes parce qu'il y a des sanctions. Le conseil constitutionnel va rejeter leur liste mais c'est juste ça, et après dans le parti il n'y a pas de respect des droits des femmes ni des jeunes parce que quand vous prenez le parti politique, ce sont les femmes et les jeunes qui sont majoritaires des partis politiques au Sénégal. Mais dans les bureau exécutifs, là où on décide au niveau du parti, ces deux composantes sont

faiblement représentées et ça aussi c'est un réel problème. Ce n'est pas la démocratie participative que l'on recherche. Donc on peut dire que dans nos partis politiques au Sénégal il n'y a pas de respect de cette démocratie participative que l'on souhaiterait. Eux, ils veulent prendre le pouvoir mais ne respectent même pas la démocratie représentative parce que les grandes composantes ne sont même pas bien représentées au niveau des instances de décisions. Et ça c'est à l'image du pays. Quand vous prenez nos institutions, le Parlement sénégalais par exemple, la moyenne d'âge tourne autour de 50 ans alors qu'on est un pays où les jeunes représente plus de 60%. Quel paradoxe hein ?

**Oui c'est ça... et donc les femmes au sein du parti politique ne détiennent pas de pouvoir de décision...**

Parce que les femmes qui veulent détenir le pouvoir, construire leur propre discours sont éjectées du parti. On les appelle les 'têtes brûlées'. Les femmes qui tiennent tête au chef de parti sont rejetées du parti. Les femmes qui ont une tête forte en terme de personnalité et qui ne veulent pas se ranger derrière le chef de parti ou derrière les autres ont d'énormes difficultés à émerger dans les partis politiques.

**Est-ce qu'on utilise les femmes dans les partis politiques pour attirer les voix, une sorte d'instrument de mobilisation ?**

D'habitude et c'est dommage, tu es respectée dans le parti parce que tu arrives à mobiliser, tu as un poids électoral, tu as un poids au niveau communautaire, tu pèses lourd. Tu ne pèses pas en terme d'idées, en terme de réflexion mais tu pèses juste en terme de mobilisation et c'est dommage. Ce sont eux qui vont prendre le pouvoir et s'ils n'ont pas d'orientation en terme de background, en terme de stratégies, mais on est foutu ! Tu es respecté dans le parti uniquement parce que tu arrives à mobiliser. C'est ça le problème. Et ces femmes qui arrivent à se frayer un chemin au niveau du parti politique, oui, elles arrivent à mobiliser, mais au-delà de la mobilisation, ce sont des femmes qui ne sont pas aimées parce qu'elles prennent des positions, tiennent tête des fois à certaines idées et ça d'habitude les hommes n'en veulent pas dans le parti. Les hommes veulent des femmes qui obéissent au niveau des partis politiques.

**Est-ce qu'on demande un certain apport financier pour faire partie du parti politique, ce qui peut constituer un obstacle justement ?**

C'est pourquoi on ne sent pas leur plus-value en terme de financement. En terme de financement c'est plus le chef de parti qui mobilise donc du coup... je pense que ça aussi c'est les limites, le problème de financement des partis politiques. D'habitude c'est le leader de chef de parti qui arrive à mobiliser, c'est vrai qu'il y a certains qui cotisent mais voilà... ça aussi c'est un réel problème. Et vu qu'en terme de pouvoir économique, les hommes ont plus de pouvoir économique que les femmes, du coup en terme de décision les hommes vont plus peser que les femmes ça aussi c'est un problème.

**Et quand vous dites que les femmes ont un moins de ressources financières que les hommes c'est du à leur niveau d'éducation qui est moindre et du coup elles occupent des postes qui apportent beaucoup moins d'argent ?**

Oui, parce que les postes stratégiques très importants sont occupés par des hommes même si on a eu beaucoup d'amélioration ces dix dernières années au Sénégal. Mais ça reste que les postes stratégiques aujourd'hui sont détenus le plus souvent par les hommes donc il nous faut encore du chemin à faire pour aller à l'équilibre. C'est dû au départ à l'éducation au fait que pour certains postes stratégiques il y a des résistances pour qu'on puisse mettre des femmes. Dans le monde du travail, pour certains postes stratégiques, on dit que la femme n'est pas disponible avec sa maternité et autre. Donc il y a beaucoup de choses qui rentrent en jeu et ce qui fait que même au niveau international, au niveau universel, l'égalité de salaire, quand on évolue un peu la masse salariale des hommes et des femmes, même si on a une loi sur l'égalité des salaires, on n'arrive pas à respecter cette masse salariale. Quand on voit que pratiquement majorité des postes stratégiques sont occupés par des hommes et qu'on les paie mieux, les gens qui occupent des postes stratégiques sont mieux payer que les postes secondaires. Donc du coup on a ce déséquilibre-là. Du coup en terme de masse salariale les hommes vont plus gagner de l'argent et aussi en terme de ressources comme les maisons, la terre, ce sont plus les hommes qui sont propriétaires. Ce sont des choses ressources, des garanties.

**Et donc les femmes ont un accès beaucoup moins facile à l'éducation que des hommes ?**

Actuellement?

**Oui.**

Actuellement pour l'accès à l'éducation ça ne pose pas de problème, c'est plus le maintien à partir du niveau secondaire. Quand je dis le niveau secondaire, c'est à partir du lycée,

l'université où on a ces chute mais en primaire les filles sont plus nombreuses que les hommes et ça aussi c'est un travail à faire au Sénégal, il y a plus de fille que de garçons dans l'école primaire mais plus on monte, le supérieur, elles disparaissent parce qu'il y a le mariage, la maternité,... ces aspects sociaux-là. Cela aussi le gouvernement sénégalais la comprend et il travaille et il y a beaucoup de mesures qui sont mises en œuvre pour pouvoir maintenir ces filles à l'école surtout dans les filières qui sont d'avenir : le technologique et le numérique.

**Je ne sais pas si vous avez fait une observation là-dessus mais est ce que tous ces obstacles à l'éducation peuvent être liés également à la religion ? Est-ce que dans la religion chrétienne ou musulmane on observe davantage une chute des jeunes filles éduquées à partir du lycée et à l'université ?**

Quand je prends les internats, parce qu'il y a des école religieuse hein. Il y a bcp de filles également dans les internats. Donc l'éducation il y a bcp de filles maintenant c'est dans la pratique. Une fois qu'on est éduqué parce qu'il faudrait trouver quelque chose etc. C'est là où il y a des limites parce qu'après on va revenir avec cette interprétation masculine des textes que la femme doit privilégier son ménage ses enfants et du coup on responsabilise davantage les femmes dans l'espace domestique et ce qui fait que c'est une pression terrible. Et il y a certaines qui arrivent à ne pas tenir, qui ne pensent même pas à faire carrière. Il y a des femmes qui ne pensent pas à faire carrière. Elles sont intelligentes, elles sont diplômées mais elles ne pensent pas faire carrière simplement parce qu'elles sont tirées vers le bas par des responsabilités au niveau familial. Pour moi, l'éducation, les défis c'est plus dans le niveau supérieur pour les filles et surtout dans les filières considérées comme masculines.

**Et quand vous parlez d'interprétation des textes, vous parlez de quel textes ?**

Des textes religieux.

**Du Coran en particulier ?**

L'Islam oui parce que je travaille sur l'Islam particulièrement. Il y a des interprétations masculines des textes parce que l'islam en tant que tel, pour moi il n'y a pas de frein. Pour moi l'Islam a donné tellement de poids à la femme que ce soit en terme de savoir, en terme d'avoir des positions stratégiques... Dans l'islam les femmes ont été milliardaires, ont été cheffes d'entreprise. La première femme du prophète était une milliardaire et une cheffe d'entreprise.

Et on avait des femmes qui étaient des savantes donc pour montrer que dans l’Islam, Dieu nous a donné des exemples de femmes qui ont beaucoup de pouvoir, qui ont beaucoup d’autonomie et ces femmes aussi on les retrouve aussi dans la Bible, ces femmes qui avaient quand même une forte personnalité, autorité en terme de richesses etc. Donc voilà pour dire aujourd’hui un parle d’autonomisation économique des femmes mais je pense que Dieu nous a montré des voies pour dire que la femme aussi doit et peut avoir cette autonomisation économique jusqu’à recruter de hommes parce que le Prophète était recruté par une femme. Moi je renvoie le plus souvent à des images parce que je ne me limite pas seulement aux textes juridiques parce qu’on est dans un pays où le religieux est très fort et régit presque toute la conscience collective donc pour se faire entendre, dans les plaidoyers, dans les débats moi je sors du cadre juridique, je sors de la laïcité et aussi j’emprunte ce que la religion offre aux femmes en termes de savoir de possibilité pour pouvoir convaincre.

**Et c’est vrai que la religion peut en soi être utilisée comme un instrument de pouvoir par les personnes dominantes pour soumettre d’autres groupes....**

Ici, la religion est utilisée pour dominer les femmes. Et nous on a un programme au niveau des radios communautaires en langue nationale pour déconstruire en tout cas ce discours conservateur religieux qu’on a sur les femmes. On ne peut pas dire que notre constitution a dit ça, sachant qu’on est dans un contexte religieux. Il faut renvoyer à ce que réellement Dieu a dit parce qu’il y a toute une manipulation des textes.

**Exactement. Tant qu’on est dans le thème de la religion, de manière peut-être plus globale, en quoi elle peut impacter de la représentation politique des femmes ?**

Oui, la religion peut impacter parce que dans la politique aussi on avait des femmes responsables politique, des femmes conseillères politique... le plus possible pour donner plus de moyens, d’outils aux femmes pour dire que nous aussi on a notre place. Dans certaines zones du Sénégal, surtout dans les villes religieuses, on intervient pour que la femme puisse se positionner politiquement parce que vous savez avec la loi sur la parité il y a une ville religieuse comme Touba qui ne respecte pas souvent la parité et malheureusement leur liste n’est pas rejetée, c’est paradoxal hein ? Voilà, donc moi je dis pourquoi ? Rien n’est fondé parce que dans la religion on privilégie les femmes. Je donne souvent le cas de Oumou Salamata qui était une conseillère politique du Prophète. Dans les moments extrêmement difficiles, on a chargé

une femme pour être une conseillère qui devait élaborer la stratégie politique durant la guerre. Donc ce n'est pas cohérent, ça pose problème. Donc nous on essaie d'utiliser nos arguments pour déconstruire ce discours conservateur sur les femmes que ce soit en politique, que ce soit économique, etc.

**Et je sais qu'il y a une minorité chrétienne au Sénégal, est-ce que dans cette minorité on retrouve moins ce genre d'obstacles ?**

C'est vrai que c'est une minorité mais même avec cette minorité-là il y a aussi un discours assez progressiste, les femmes doivent être bien positionnées dans l'Église, avoir plus de responsabilités mais c'est vrai que comme c'est une minorité, elle n'est pas trop visible par rapport à cette masse-là quoi. Mais dans cette minorité il y a des réflexions qui se font pour davantage... et ça c'est au niveau aussi international comme national il y a des réflexions sur la place de la femme dans l'Église qui est assez conservatrice. Aujourd'hui, nous avons les protestants où il y a plus d'ouverture, où les femmes prennent plus de responsabilité, etc. En tout cas il y a un débat même au niveau de l'Église.

**Donc vous n'avez jamais vraiment observé de différence entre la situation des femmes dans une communauté chrétienne par rapport à une communauté musulmane ?**

Ici, non parce qu'ici les frontières sont complètement... on a pas trop de frontières... c'est la même femme musulmane qui va subir la même chose. Ici la religion n'est pas vraiment un problème... pour l'instant parce qu'il y a des choses qu'il faut travailler. Le Sénégal est un exemple en terme de dialogue Islamo-chrétien à cause des liens de parentés avec nos consœurs et confrères chrétiens. Vous prenez une famille, une partie est chrétienne une partie est musulmane. C'est à cause du sang, des liens de parenté, il faut jamais se faire la guerre donc on ne fait pas la différence. Ces mêmes femmes chrétiennes qui sont dans les partis politiques vont subir la même chose que les femmes musulmanes. Parce qu'elles sont impactées par les normes et les règles du parti politique qui sont complètement masculines. Parce que quand vous prenez aujourd'hui les grandes décisions, les grandes discussions vont se tenir à partir de deux heures du matin. Quand il y a assemblée générale, les hommes s'arrangent pour que les décisions soient prises à partir de deux heures du matin.

**Et pour les femmes qui ont une vie de famille c'est un peu compliqué j'imagine ?**

C'est ça. Donc il faut que les femmes dans les partis puissent travailler pour changer ces règles et ces normes. Les partis politiques fonctionnent sur la bases des règles masculines.

**Mais les femmes qui arrivent à être élues dans le parlement, pourquoi elles n'arrivent pas à changer les choses, les mentalités ?**

Les femmes qui sont proposées au parlement et qui viennent des partis sont restées parce qu'elles sont derrière l'idéologie du parti. Je t'ai dit que les femmes qui ont les 'têtes brûlées' et qui veulent produire leur propre discours de femmes à l'intérieur du parti sont exclues du parti. Donc la femme qui est à l'Assemblée Nationale, quand on lui tend le micro elle va dire que (inaudible) parce que grâce à mon chef de parti je suis là. C'est pourquoi la parité au niveau du Parlement ne marche pas. On peut avoir un projet de loi qui va valoriser les femmes mais si le chef de parti n'est pas d'accord, même si la femme voit ses intérêt c'est le chef de parti qui prime d'abord. Donc ce sont des questions politiques, c'est la décision du parti d'abord avant qu'elle puisse penser à l'intérêt des femmes. Ce sont les limites de la parité à l'Assemblée Nationale.

**Est-ce que vous pensez que le colonialisme peut aussi avoir impacter l'interprétation des textes religieux ou la représentation que l'on se fait de la femme dans la société sénégalaise ?**

Oui le colonialisme a fortement impacté sur la place des femmes dans notre société. Parce que nous on a été une société hybride, on a d'abord été une société colonisée par les arabes quand l'Islam est rentré au 11<sup>e</sup> siècle au Sénégal avec cette culture arabe fortement patriarcale ; et par la suite il y eu le colonialisme avec aussi ce système patriarcal. Parce que avant l'islam on avait nos propres religion. on était quand sur des sociétés où la place des femmes était (inaudible) on était des société matrilineaire où même l'enfant portait le nom de la mère. La femme occupait quand même des places extrêmement importantes. En matière de politique, on avait des femmes à la tête des trônes. Maintenant, quand l'islam est arrivé au 11<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'Islam est rentré avec la culture arable où c'est fortement patriarcal et ça a commencé à déstructuré ce système matrilineaire pour ne pas dire matriarcal parce que pour moi on n'a jamais eu de société matriarcale, ça c'est un débat. Et quand la colonisation est rentrée ça a complètement détruit ce système. C'est pourquoi, la première école qui a été mise en place du temps de l'Afrique occidentale française, c'était destiné uniquement pour les garçon, les filles n'allaient même pas à l'école parce que l'homme c'était l'école et à l'école c'était pour assurer l'administration

coloniale et les filles étaient exclues. Donc la colonisation a fortement impacté, a dégradé et a contribué à rendre vulnérable la position de la femme.

**Pouvez-vous développer davantage le statut socioéconomique de la femme et en quoi il constitue un obstacle ?**

Les cultures de rentes sont des cultures destinées à la transformation et à l'exportation comme l'arachide, le coton etc. Donc ce sont des cultures qui sont très valorisées. C'est différents des cultures maraichères qui sont destinées à la consommation. Quand la colonisation est arrivée c'est comme ça qu'elle a organisé les colonies et aussi en terme d'éducation, les filles n'avaient pas droit à l'école. Mais en terme de date, la première école a été mise en place dans la partie occidentale française en 1817 mais on a attendu en 1936 pour intégrer, officialiser l'éducation des filles au niveau des colonies. Tout ça a un impact et c'est ce retard qui a fait que le Sénégal a mis en place des politiques uniquement pour les filles pour se rattraper. On a eu la SCOFI, la 'scolarisation des filles', qui a aidé quand même fait que aujourd'hui au niveau primaire on n'a pas ce souci.

**Vous parlez de culture patriarcale mais de manière plus concrète en quoi cela consiste au Sénégal ?**

Comme partout, que ce soit en France on a toujours ce système patriarcal qui met au centre l'homme, l'autorité, l'homme est au centre et c'est ça qu'aujourd'hui on parle de féminicide surtout en Europe. On tue les femmes. Les femmes sont agressées, violentées c'est lié pour moi à la culture, à ce système patriarcal qui donne plus de pouvoir de domination à l'homme qui se croit tout permis. Et moi je me dis qu'on a tout fait et je pense que 'metoo' a fait que en tout cas nous ça a impacté les femmes qui sont plus organisées, mobilisées, il y a eu beaucoup de lois au Sénégal, on a même en 2020 eu une loi qui criminalise le viol et la pédophilie. Dans les autres pays, on corse en terme de réglementation mais apparemment il n'y a pas d'impact. Il y a toujours des féminicides, les violences sont toujours là. Et moi je dis souvent : mais est ce qu'il ne faut pas s'arrêter pour voir si l'approche est bonne ou pas ? Parce que pour moi si on ne met pas le lien entre les violences et ce système patriarcal, on ne va pas avoir de résultats. Notre système patriarcal donne beaucoup de pouvoir, par exemple. Tu as un ton garçon, tu l'éduques à être comme un roi, ce garçon a la possibilité de conditionner sa grande sœur, ce petit garçon il peut dire à sa grande sœur tu me fais mon lit, etc. Mais quand il grandit comme ça et qu'il épouse une femme intellectuelle, en discutant cette femme lui dit 'mais ce que tu dis

ce n'est pas vrai'. Elle se sent trahie parce qu'elle voit qu'il a été formaté à être autoritaire à ne pas être contredit et formaté à ne pas sortir leurs émotions. Mais ça devient rapidement de l'agressivité, de la violence. Et malheureusement ce sont les femmes qui produisent ce système patriarcal parce que ce sont elles qui socialisent. Donc tant que nous n'avons pas des femmes conscientes que ce système que l'on est en train de reproduire nous est finalement fatal, comment déconstruire, repenser le contenu de la transmission intergénérationnelle, comment le repenser... tant qu'on n'est pas dans cette dimension, on va toujours encore parler de féminicide, de violence de viole, etc.

**Et d'un point de vue des ethnies, est ce que vous pensez qu'elles ont un impact sur la représentation politique des femmes ?**

Faiblement... Non il n'y a pas vraiment de relation, non.

**Est-ce que les femmes font face à de la violence dans le monde politique, durant les campagnes électorales ?**

Ah oui, même les hommes aussi mais c'est beaucoup plus violent pour les femmes parce qu'encore une fois c'est un terrain qui a été construit pour les hommes. Aujourd'hui, pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a de la violence dans la politique c'est parce que les hommes veulent de la violence. Les hommes, encore une fois, c'est la virilité, c'est l'agressivité. Mais les hommes règlent leurs problèmes par la violence.

**Et comment ce traduit cette violence ?**

Ce sont des bagarres, des coups de poings. C'est-à-dire que l'homme à un moment donné il se lève et il donne un coup de poing pour régler son problème. Et du coup la femme ne se retrouve pas dans cette violence. La femme a été socialiser à être pacifique. Aujourd'hui, il faut que les femmes puissent s'accaparer et changer le fonctionnement de ces partis parce qu'elles sont beaucoup plus nombreuses et moi dans mes actions de sensibilisation je leur dis que le pouvoir c'est vous parce que c'est vous qui élisez les hommes. Il faut qu'elles prennent conscience qu'elles ont le pouvoir. Parce que tant que les normes du fonctionnement de parti ne sont pas changées, la femme ne pourra pas évoluer.

**Mais est ce qu'on les menace, on leur demande par exemple d'abandonner leurs ambitions politiques ou est ce qu'on les harcèle sexuellement ?**

Certaines sont menacées parce que c'est le mari même qui demande d'abandonner. Il y a beaucoup de divorces. Imagine les importantes réunions qu'on tient à deux heures du matin sachant que les bureaux politiques c'est pratiquement des hommes. On destine ainsi les femmes aux tâches ménagères. Ce sont des problèmes, c'est l'entourage, c'est le mari qui dit '*c'est moi ou le parti politique*'. Donc il y a eu beaucoup de divorces, il y a eu beaucoup de femmes qui se sont dit que ça ne valait pas la peine et qu'il valait mieux démissionner.

**J'avais aussi une question par rapport à la corruption, est ce qu'on en observe et en quoi ça peut influencer les femmes ?**

Ici la corruption c'est terrible, c'est à tous les niveaux et c'est tellement profond parce que avant la colonisation... parce que avant en tant qu'africain on ne savait pas l'argent, c'était le troc, on n'était pas dans ce système monétaire et quand vous rendez service à quelqu'un vous lui remettez du sable en terme de symbolique, de remerciement. Quand la monétarisation est rentrée, même si vous êtes un agent de l'État, votre rôle c'est de rendre service, maintenant, c'est dans les mentalités de donner un billet pour remercier. Le chef de l'État inaugure et construit des écoles mais les populations remercient le chef de l'État comme si c'était quelque chose qui n'est pas dans son travail alors que lui il est élu pour régler nos problème. Il faut qu'on change nos mentalité en tant que sénégalais. C'est-à-dire que quand on vous a élu en tant que politique pour régler nos besoins, nos problèmes, c'est tout-à-fait normal parce que ça fait partie du contrat social. Mais vous dire qu'il faut remercier de le chef de l'État comme si c'était l'argent du chef de l'État alors que c'est l'argent du contribuable, je pense que ce sont des sensibilisation qu'on doit faire. Tout ça pour dire que la corruption c'est à tous les niveaux.

**Qu'en est-il du rôle des médias dans la représentation politique des femmes ?**

En ce qui concerne l'image des femmes quand on prend les média... c'est alarmant, c'est dégradant on dévalorise les femmes. Ce sont des femmes qui sont complètement dépigmentées déjà, artificielles et qui se soumettent à l'autorité masculine et qui sont prises en charge par l'autorité masculine. C'est pourquoi, les féministe se battent pour dire qu'on ne veut pas ce genre d'images-là. On veut des femmes responsables qui se prennent en charge et qui sont autoritaires. L'autre chose c'est que pour les médias, avant c'était des opérateurs économiques qui finançaient, qui investissaient dans les médias mais maintenant, ce sont les politiciens qui

ont leur propres médias... catastrophe ! Cela pose problème. On n'a pas de pluralité en terme de contenu médiatique et ça ce sont des menaces pour la démocratie sénégalaise. C'est un véritable problème parce que le rôle des médias c'est de consolider la démocratie. Aujourd'hui, vous prenez nos presse et il n'y a pas de contenu, ce sont des faits divers. On n'a pas d'information stratégique, on n'a pas la bonne information. C'est rare que l'on ait de la bonne information sur la croissance économique, des reportages intéressants. D'ailleurs tous les grands reportages sur les matières premières et autres c'est couverts par la presse internationale, on a aussi un problème d'investigation dans ce pays.

**Est-ce qu'ils ont tendance à couvrir davantage les hommes dans les campagnes électorales ?**

Oui, parce que ce sont les hommes qui dominent et qui paient plus. Et en termes de candidatures, les hommes sont beaucoup plus nombreux.

**Pensez-vous que l'urbanité et la ruralité peuvent impacter la représentation politique des femmes ?**

Pour l'urbanité, les grand centres se trouvent en milieu urbains donc du coup que ce soit en terme de métier, d'animation, de guerre politique, les centres urbains sont beaucoup plus animés que les milieux ruraux. Parce que les candidatures sont dans les centres, toutes les batailles se passent dans les centres urbains.

**Et par rapport à l'éducation ?**

Même s'il y a une démocratisation de l'accès à l'éducation mais à certains niveau on ne retrouve pas d'école, par exemple le lycée, on n'en retrouve pas dans beaucoup de villages. Les lycées, les université sont dans les centres urbains et ça aussi je pense que c'est la politique qui n'a pas encore achevé en terme de décentralisation. On retrouve moins de filles qui finissent leur cursus scolaire qui vont aller jusqu'à l'université parce qu'il y a le mariage précoce et énormément de chose surtout quand l'école se trouve dans un autre village et qu'il faut se déplacer. Des fois, s'il n'y a pas de mobilité ça pose problème. Les parents disent que le garçon peut marcher des kilomètres mais toi c'est pas sûr parce que tu es une fille. Toute la question de la sécurité encore une fois avec ce système patriarcal. La fille il faut la protéger alors que le garçon c'est le guerrier, il est aventurier. Ce sont des choses qui impactent sur les considérations et la fille se retrouve très limitée et ne peut pas trop s'absenter de l'espace familial alors que la garçon peut

s'absenter c'est pourquoi le garçon peut aller à des kilomètres de l'autre côté et c'est pourquoi en terme d'opportunité, en terme d'éducation, le garçon a plus d'opportunité que la fille.



## Abstract

For the past decades, many sub-Saharan African countries succeeded in considerably improving women's political representation, thus outperforming Western countries. Yet, little attention has been given to them. The objective of this master's thesis is to shed light on this phenomenon of progress in a continent that is nevertheless always portrayed as underdeveloped. It consists of a comparative study of the elements that led to or prevented the improvement of women's political representation in the respective National Assembly of Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. The purpose is to explain the contrasted performances between the three case studies and to attempt to systematize the factors impeding women's political empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa. It is assumed that the different level of representation is the result of *violence* as defined by the Peace Research approach which constitutes the theoretical framework of this study. Using Peace Research enables to give an overview of the issue of gender inequality. It emphasized the intertwinement of the different factors influencing women's empowerment, which all need to be addressed to achieve a genuine political representation of women.

**Key Words:** sub-Saharan Africa, Women's Political Representation, Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality, Peace Research