



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
ALTINBAŞ UNIVERSITY
Institute of Graduate Studies
Politics and International Relations

**ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION IN THE GAMBIA'S DECISION-
MAKING FROM COLONIALISM TO
POST-INDEPENDENCE**

Jonfolo JOBARTEH

Master's Thesis

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Adil USTURALI

İstanbul, 2024

ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE GAMBIA'S DECISION MAKING FROM COLONIALISM TO POST INDEDEPENCE

Jonfolo JOBARTEH



Politics and International Relations

Master's Thesis

ALTINBAŞ UNIVERSITY

2024

The thesis titled ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE GAMBIA’S DECISION MAKING FROM COLONIALISM TO POST INDEDEPENENCE prepared by JONFOLO JOBARTEH and submitted on 28/06/2024 has been **accepted unanimously** for the degree of Master of Art in Politics and International Relations.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Adil USTURALI
Supervisor

Thesis Defense Committee Members:

Asst. Prof. Dr. Adil USTURALI	Politics and International Relations, Altınbaş University
Asst. Prof. Dr. Deniz TÜRKER	Politics and International Relations, Altınbaş University
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selim Volkan İPEK	Politics and International Relations, Yeditepe University

I hereby declare that this thesis meets all format and submission requirements of a Master’s Thesis.

I hereby declare that all information/data presented in this graduation project has been obtained in full accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I declare all unoriginal materials and conclusions have been cited in the text, and all references mentioned in the Reference List have been cited in the text, and vice versa as required by the abovementioned rules and conduct.

Jonfolo JOBARTEH

Signature

XXXXXXXXXX

DEDICATION

I would like to thank Allah for granting me the gift of life and strength to complete my dissertation work. Although the journey was challenging, God's infinite grace and mercy have brought me to where I am today.

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my family, including my two mothers, Josephine and Nguye, my cousin Baba Saho, my uncle, Junkung, and my sisters, for their unwavering moral support and encouragement during my educational journey. I am especially grateful to my father, Mr. Madi Jobarteh, for being my pillar of strength both financially and emotionally throughout my education.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Adil USTURALI, for his invaluable guidance during this challenging phase of my education. Additionally, I would like to offer special thanks to Dr Ensa Touray, Mr Andrew Mendy, and Mr Biran Gai for their generous support and encouragement throughout my journey.

ABSTRACT

ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE GAMBIA'S DECISION MAKING FROM COLONIALISM TO POST INDEDEPENCE

JOBARTEH, Jonfolo

M.A., Politics and International Relations, Altınbaş University

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr Adil USTURALI

Date: June/2024

Pages: 91

The study's objective is to understand the factors that hinder women's political participation, including historical gender constructs that shape women's perspectives on decision-making and leadership roles. The study examines how colonial gender constructs have persisted in modern politics, resulting in the gradual marginalisation of women after independence. Comparative and exploratory research designs were utilised to identify gaps in Gambian history and to generate potential explanations for the decline of women in decision-making. The study found that the Gambia's political system was insusceptible to women's participation as a result of colonial administration and the arrival of Islam. The traditional gender roles and systemic patriarchal structure must be dismantled to achieve gender equality. It has revealed that women have always been interested and indirectly involved in the country's political development. However, women's confidence has effaced from the political space over time due to the shift in Africa's political systems to external influence. The study concluded that international assistance and legal measures alone are insufficient in eliminating patriarchal and traditional norms in private and public spaces. Full cooperation of the government is necessary. The government can effectively tackle the challenges that hinder women's political participation and counter the negative effects of conservative groups against women's representation.

Keywords: Colonialism, Political Participation, Patriarchy, Gambian Women, Decision-making.

ÖZET

SÖMÜRGEÇİLİKTE BAĞIMSIZLIK SONRASINA GAMBİYA'DA KADINLARIN KARAR ALMA SÜREÇLERİNE SİYASAL KATILIMININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

JOBARTEH, Jonfolo

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset ve Uluslararası İlişkiler, Altınbaş

Üniversitesi Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Adil

USTURALI Tarih: Haziran /2024

Sayfa: 91

Çalışmanın amacı, kadınların karar alma ve liderlik rollerine ilişkin bakış açılarını şekillendiren tarihsel toplumsal cinsiyet yapıları da dahil olmak üzere, kadınların siyasi katılımını engelleyen faktörleri anlamaktır. Çalışma, sömürgeci toplumsal cinsiyet yapılarının modern siyasette nasıl varlığını sürdürdüğünü ve bunun sonucunda kadınların bağımsızlıktan sonra kademeli olarak ötekileştirilmesini inceliyor. Gambiya tarihindeki boşlukları tespit etmek ve karar alma süreçlerinde kadınların azalmasına yönelik potansiyel açıklamalar oluşturmak için karşılaştırmalı ve keşfedici araştırma tasarımları kullanıldı. Araştırma, sömürge yönetimi ve İslam'ın gelişi nedeniyle Gambiya'nın siyasi sisteminin kadınların katılımına karşı dayanıklı olduğunu ortaya çıkardı. Cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanması için geleneksel cinsiyet rollerinin ve sistemik ataerkil yapının ortadan kaldırılması gerekiyor. Kadınların her zaman ülkenin siyasi gelişimiyle ilgilendiğini ve dolaylı olarak dahil olduğunu ortaya çıkardı. Ancak Afrika'nın siyasi sistemlerinin dış etkilere kayması nedeniyle kadınların kendine olan güveni zamanla siyasi alandan silindi. Araştırmada, özel ve kamusal alanlardaki ataerkil ve geleneksel normların ortadan kaldırılmasında uluslararası yardım ve hukuki tedbirlerin tek başına yeterli olmadığı sonucuna varıldı. Hükümetin tam işbirliği gereklidir. Hükümet, kadınların siyasi

katılımını engelleyen zorluklarla etkili bir



şekilde mücadele edebilir ve muhafazakar grupların kadınların temsiline yönelik olumsuz etkilerine karşı koyabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sömürgecilik, Siyasi Katılım, Ataerkillik, Gambiyalı Kadınlar, Karar Alma.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
ABSTRACT.....	vi
ÖZET.....	vii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	3
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	4
1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.7 METHODOLOGY.....	5
2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
2.1 THEORIES.....	6
2.1.1 Feminist Theory.....	6
2.1.2 Political Participation Theory.....	9
2.1.3 Patriarchy Theory.....	10
2.1.4 Postcolonial Theory.....	11
2.1.5 Social Capital Theory.....	12
2.2 MAIN CONCEPTS.....	13
2.2.1 Legislation and Policy.....	13
2.2.2 Cultural and Social Norms.....	14
2.2.3 Barriers and Challenges.....	14

2.2.4 Education and Policy.....	15
2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
3. THE STATUS OF WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION- MAKING DURING COLONIALISM AND POST-COLONIALISM.....	23
3.1 SUDANO SAHARA INFLUENCE.....	23
3.2 EXPANSION OF WESTERN SUDANIC POLITICAL SUZERAINTY AND CONSOLIDATION OF PATRIARCHY IN THE SENEGAMBIA REGION.....	26
3.3 GENDER AND SOCIO-POLITICAL REFORM: TRANSITION IN GENDER ROLES DURING THE MEDIEVAL AND MODERN ERA.....	30
3.4 COLONIAL CONQUEST AND REINFORCEMENTS OF PATRIARCHAL DOMINANCE IN THE 20TH CENTURY GAMBIA.....	34
4. THE LEVEL OF WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION AND INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS AND INDEPENDENCE.....	39
4.1 CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN.....	40
4.2 POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN AFTER INDEPENDENCE.....	41
4.2.1 Political Parties, Politics and Access to Political Offices.....	43
4.2.2 Masculinity in Politics.....	45
5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL STATUS IN THE GAMBIA: JAMMEH AND BARROW’S REGIMES.....	50
5.1 SECOND REGIME: SYSTEMS INHERITED BY JAMMEH IMPACTED THE LEVEL OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION.....	50
5.1.1 Patronage Politics.....	51
5.1.2 The Patriarchal Society.....	53
5.1.3 The Politicization of Religion/ or Religion as a Political Tool.....	54
5.1.4 Depending on NGOs and Aid Donors.....	57
5.2 THIRD REGIME: ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL AGENDAS	

OVERSHADOWING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.....	59
5.2.1 Gender Disparity in Barrow Cabinet and National Assembly.....	59
5.2.2 Impact low Representation in Decision-Making Institutions (Draft Constitution 2022 and the Private Members Bill).....	60
5.2.3 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Debate and the Status of Women.....	63
6. RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION.....	68
6.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	68
6.2 RECOMMENDATION.....	70
6.3 CONCLUSION.....	71
REFERENCES.....	73

ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	:	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CRI	:	Commitment to Reducing Inequality
ECOWAS	:	Economic Community of West African States
FGM	:	Female Genital Mutilation
FIDH	:	International Federation for Human
Rights GNDU	:	Gambia Native Defensive Union P39
ICTJ	:	International Centre for Transitional Justice
IRI	:	International Republican Institute
NCP	:	National Convention Party
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
UDP	:	United Democratic party
UN	:	United Nation
UP	:	United Party
PHD	:	Pulling Her Down
PPP	:	People's Progressive Party
WIN	:	Women In Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Academic scholars have been neglecting the role and contribution of women in social and humanistic sciences, creating a mystery of women in decision-making and a cause for concern. The colonial system in the Gambia indirectly reinforced patriarchy through its administrative structure and systems of operation. The colony followed a protectorate system introduced in 1985 by an ordinance that aimed to provide certain powers and jurisdiction to Native Authorities and Commissioners in the Protected Territories (Colonial Reports- Annual, 1937: 11). In 1933, the Native Authority and Native Tribunal ordinances were enacted to promote local self-government by the Seyfolu (Head Chiefs) who were mainly men. The appointment of the chieftaincy position was traditionally patriarchal. The Alkali, whose position is confirmed by the commissioner, is obligated by custom to seek and consider the advice of the village's elder men. This reinforces a patriarchal system of government which limited the participation of women in decision-making (Colonial Reports-Annual, 1937).

As a result of vesting power and authority on only men through legal instruments, women were excluded from participating in important decisions for a long time. This led to a misconception about African women, who were seen as mysterious and unfamiliar to the foreign world. Marion G. Mendy and Assan Sarr (2017) pointed out that during the European exploration in the 19th century, anthropologists, Christian missionaries, and later Western feminists portrayed African women as "victims of patriarchy and backward customs". However, these critics failed to acknowledge that African women were already taking control of their lives and leading towards a better future.

Before the Malian patriarchal ruling system expanded during the pre-colonial era, women used to rule kingdoms and states. These women were eligible to rule due to their hereditary connection to the founder of the state or kingdom and were known as 'lingerers' (Sallah, 1995, 28). They ran specific state affairs and sometimes assisted kings in political matters (Sheldon, 2016: 25). In the past, women played a crucial role in food production as they were responsible for cultivating and producing food (Sheldon, 2016: 1). They worked as

primary food producers and owned lands for these activities (Akyeampong and Fofack, 2012: 8). Africa was a traditional and partially patriarchal society, but research shows that those were not the main obstacles women faced. Some prominent women excelled and thrived politically, socially, and economically. One example is Queen Wulending Jassey of Sanyang, who led her people to safety and broke alliances for peace in the Gambia (Touray, 2014).

Looking at the history of female monarchs in Senegambia, we find fewer female monarchs than male ones. From the history of female leaders or monarchs, societal attacks against women in leadership were not prominent at this time. What is apparent is a disproportionate number of female monarchs compared to men, especially after contact with the outside world. This encounter has changed and shaped the political disposition of the Gambia. Today, women in Gambia are legally empowered but still underrepresented in leadership roles such as the national assembly and executive. While there may be various reasons for this phenomenon, it is not due to a lack of participation.

The lack of confidence in women after the colonial era has hindered their participation in high positions, such as the presidency and national assembly, where they compete with male colleagues. During an engagement with stakeholders on women's participation in politics in 2022, Ms Salama Njie, the West Africa Network for Peace Building -The Gambia (WANEP) coordinator, stressed that women need more confidence in politics (Ceesay, 2022). She points out that the patriarchal system and lack of confidence in women pose a hindrance to political participation and representation.

Western politics practised in the Gambia still retained patriarchal aspects from their colonial heritage. To understand why Gambian women have low participation rates, it is essential to identify the barriers preventing them from achieving their goals. This research employs intersectional feminism to examine discrimination against women in decision-making in the Gambia. Discrimination against women is a global issue, although not all women experience it in the same context. In the West, discrimination is often based on gender and biological differences. In Africa, scholars such as Filimena Steady, Cymone Fourshe and Aseni Oseni Taiwo attribute the hindrance of women's progress to colonialism and gender issues. Colonialism resulted in the unequal distribution of power between

African women and men,



reducing them to second-class citizens. It created gender-based challenges arising from traditional beliefs and practices that impeded women's political participation. As a result, Gambian women who aspire to become successful in politics must relinquish all feminine qualities in modern times, unlike Queen Wulinding Jassey and other female leaders in the past. In Nigeria, political success is often associated with violence and strength, highlighting the importance of competitiveness and self-reliance. (Agbalajobi, 2009: 78). Due to the absence of gender diversity and inclusivity, society imposes an unrealistic standard of masculinity on women, which reinforces harmful gender norms. This begs whether politics is inherently masculine despite the diversity of its ideologies, doctrines, and beliefs.

1.2 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

More knowledge and research are needed on the contributions of female leaders who have played significant roles in shaping the Gambia. Most studies indicate few women pioneers in male-dominated or patriarchal spaces like the press, national assembly, and political parties. Despite their significant success, women have yet to be inspired to pursue equality with men due to the lack of historical knowledge and consciousness. Women should have equal rights and opportunities as men to participate in decisions that affect their lives and exercise their duties as citizens. Unfortunately, historical events, such as the struggle for independence, have often failed to recognise women's contribution and development after independence. Men have typically dominated the narratives and received credit for their participation. Since independence, Gambian women have been unable to adopt a historical heroine or model to reposition themselves against male dominance in political governance. The British colonial system instituted and continued this historical change. It is essential to acknowledge the central role and contribution of pre-colonial matriarchies dominated by queens and women warriors to end the obscurity of women's marginalisation attributed to black Africans and clarify the central role played by the British colonial system in the alternate African pre-colonial political structure. Furthermore, this study will reveal the construction of the patriarchal structure created by the British in the Gambia during the indirect rule system.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. What was women's political participation and decision-making status pre- and post-independence?
- b. What was the level of women's contribution and involvement in politics and post-independence?
- c. What are women's political Status in the Gambia: Jammeh and Barrow's Regimes?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study:

- a. It will explore the involvement and status of women's political participation and decision- making pre- and post-colonial independence.
- b. It will examine women's active involvement and factors limiting their position in decision-making and leadership roles.
- c. It will assess the progress of women's participation in both Jammeh and Barrow's regime.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to provide an accurate historical account of the role of women in the pre-colonial era and highlight the changes that occurred due to the shift in power dynamics during the colonial conference in the Gambia. Moreover, this thesis will analyse the status of women in the Gambia during the presidencies of Jawara, Jammeh, and Barrow. During these periods, we will delve into the opportunities and challenges women face in politics and examine the barriers that prevent women from entering the political arena.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to create a framework for assessing women's political participation in governance, providing insight into their historical marginalisation from the colonial period to the present day. It will explore women's involvement in significant events that have profoundly impacted the Gambia, such as the colonial era, the struggle for independence, and the post-independence period. The study will also focus on the extent to which women

participated in the fight for freedom, clarifying any assumptions that the system perpetuated their underrepresentation during and after the colonial period.

The study aims to bring women out of obscurity and reclaim their rightful place in history by highlighting the role of prominent women at the forefront of these events. This initiative will help women reclaim decision-making powers by eliminating negative attitudes towards women in government and society, which may facilitate increased representation of women in political positions, including counsellors, parliamentarians, and presidents. Finally, reinstating the confidence and role of women in decision-making in the Gambia is a salient asset.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The research utilised exploratory, comparative, and qualitative methods. The exploratory research design was employed to investigate the history of Gambia's political development through a feminist lens. The aim was to understand and observe the nuanced involvement of women in decision-making. In doing so, comparative analysis was employed to identify the differences between men and women concerning power and opportunities during colonialism and the struggle for independence. The research deployed a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of women in the decision and dynamic of the political process. Hence, this approach examined the participation of Gambian women in decision-making during colonialism leading toward independence.

The primary source of information is secondary data from desk research, which includes published and unpublished materials, including books, journals, historical documents, newspaper articles, academic materials, and legal documents, to back up the evidence. Moreover, the content analysis will envisage feminist and post-colonial approaches to understanding women's decision-making decline by the Gambia's patriarchal system.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THEORIES

2.1.1 Feminist Theory

Heywood (2014) defines *feminism* as a crucial social movement dedicated to advancing women's rights and interests by striving for gender equality and improving women's status in society. The feminist theory comprises diverse perspectives, including liberal, radical, Marxist/socialist, psychoanalytic, care-focused, multicultural/global/colonial, ecofeminist, and postmodern/third wave. Each of these perspectives is a valuable tool for comprehensively studying women's roles in a predominantly male-centric world (Tong, 2009: 1). This rich diversity of viewpoints underscores the comprehensive nature of feminist theory, ensuring that women's issues are addressed globally. According to Heywood (2014: 13), the feminist perspective revolves around two essential poles: the relationship between the sexes and the marginalisation of women, shedding light on the historical absence and invisibility of women in state affairs and global politics due to disregarding their contributions.

The feminist movement has evolved through different stages known as waves, each advocating for specific rights. The first wave emerged in 19th and early 20th century Europe during a period of growing equality (Lorber, 2010: 1). During this time, women demanded political rights, including voting and property protection, seeking equal legal recognition with men to exercise freedom of choice without constraints from traditional male authority. In the 1920s, universal suffrage was implemented in the United States, following other European countries after the First World War (Lorber, 2010: 2). The second wave of feminism took place in the 1960s and 1970s, aiming to drive social change in both private and public spheres. Its objective was to address power structures in institutions and the relationships between men and women, striving to balance the roles and responsibilities of each gender (Heywood, 2014: 413). The third wave of feminism emerged in the 1990s to address various forms of inequality, such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality (Lorber, 2010: 14). This wave focuses less on the current state of women and more on broader gender-inclusive issues including peace, the environment, sexuality, and transgender rights (Lorber, 2010:14).

Liberal feminism is focused on achieving gender equality through legal reforms and policy changes (Bryson, 2016: 139). It will scrutinise efforts to increase female political participation through affirmative action, quotas, and gender-sensitive legislation. This will involve delving into topics such as electoral quotas, reserved seats in the legislative council during the colonial period, party quotas, and capacity-building programs in contemporary times.

On the other hand, radical feminism delves deep into analysing the underlying causes of women's oppression within patriarchal structures and aims to bring about fundamental societal changes (Bryson, 2016: 163). It will be employed to investigate how patriarchal power dynamics are deeply ingrained in political institutions and culture in Gambia.

Intersectional feminism delves into the intricate landscape of African feminism, shedding light on the unique challenges faced by African women due to both gender-based discrimination and the enduring impacts of colonialism on both men and women. Heywood (2013) explains that Western feminist theories orbit around the unequal treatment of genders in society and the overarching dominance of men. This narrative encapsulates the sociopolitical history of Western women, presenting men as the dominant force in the struggle for equal representation, often marginalising the experiences of non-Western women.

The feminist movement of the 1840s and 1850s marked a seminal period in Western history, ushering in equal opportunities for women in various spheres, including politics. However, the narrative regarding African women takes a radically different shape. Instead of attributing their grievances solely to male dominance, African women have exhibited empathy towards men as victims of colonialism.

Several African writers, including Gwendolyn Mikell and Buchi Emecheta, have expressed resistance to being labelled as feminists due to their aversion to certain aspects of masculinity. Mikell criticises the predominant nature of feminism as defined by Western scholars, pointing out that African women perceive Western attempts to assimilate them into a movement marked by "extreme individualism" and "opposition to patriarchy" (Mikell, 1995: 406). Emecheta also challenges the notion propagated by feminism that all men are

"brutal" and "repressive," questioning whether she should reject her male family members (Mikell, 1995: 406).

Filomena Steady characterises African feminism as a relentless battle against numerous forms of oppression (Mikell, 1995: 407). She emphasises that black women confront a myriad of struggles in their pursuit of gender justice and in combating social and economic injustices, which are deeply intertwined with historical forces such as the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism, Apartheid, and racial discrimination on a global scale (Steady, 2007: 183). Steady underscores the poignant reality that black women grapple with difficult choices as they strive for gender justice and resist social and economic injustices. African women have given rise to a brand of feminism that catalyses development and sociopolitical transformation.

In applying the theory to the study, the theoretical framework facilitates an in-depth examination of the involvement of women in political processes within The Gambia. It allows for a thorough exploration of the obstacles and potential pathways to attaining gender parity within the political sphere. This approach highlights the importance of confronting ingrained structural and cultural impediments while emphasising the indispensable role of feminist initiatives and lobbying efforts in effecting societal and political transformation."

This study aims to use intersectional feminism to examine women's challenges in pre-colonial societies. It seeks to analyse the shifts in women's status and political engagement during the colonial era. Additionally, it will investigate the influence of colonial policies on gender roles and women's political agency while also exploring the impact of education and economic opportunities on women's participation in political spheres.

In examining the post-colonial era, we will delve into the advancements and obstacles that have shaped women's political involvement in The Gambia since gaining independence in 1965. This exploration will shed light on pivotal historical landmarks in women's political activism and leadership within the country.

Furthermore, the study will evaluate effective initiatives that have bolstered women's engagement in politics to pinpoint the systemic and cultural impediments that hamper

women's political participation. These hindrances may include discriminatory legislation,



limited resources, and societal norms. The research will also investigate how these barriers influence women's political ambitions and their capacity to impact policymaking.

2.1.2 Political Participation Theory

Verba and Nie (1972) explain what political participation means. They highlight how citizens can take direct actions to affect who is chosen for government roles & how these leaders decide things (Teorell and Torcal, 2007: 335). When looking at political participation, many factors encourage people to get involved in politics. Trevor Munroe (2002) mentions that these factors can be grouped into two categories: conventional and unconventional.

Conventional participation includes activities that are widely accepted by society, like joining political groups, going to meetings, or being part of a political party (Munroe, 2002: 4). In contrast, unconventional participation takes a radical stance which includes actions like protests and demonstrations (Munroe, 2002: 4). Verba and Nie (1972) also stress that what everyday citizens do is important in shaping the decisions made by government officials (Teorell and Torcal, 2007: 335).

During the colonial times, Gambian women mostly had an indirect say in local decisions. They also grouped together to stand against colonial rule. In the post-colonial period, women started to make their voices heard in government processes. They began to vote and get involved in politics, even though men still held most of the power. This theory will take a look at two models to evaluate how women participate politically: the Resource model theory & the Civic voluntarism model theory.

The resources model theory talks about how important resources enable political participation. Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, & Kay Lehman Schlozman explain that political participation depends on what people can access, like time, money, & civic skills. These factors boost people's chance to join in on politics. Without these resources, a citizen can't engage. consequently, It was key for Gambian women to have access to education, time, & economic resources if they wanted to participate in politics and gain representation from colonialism. As these resources were at the disposal of mostly men, the political participation of Gambian women became scarce.

In the civic voluntarism model. Scholars like Aldrich (1997), Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, & Henry E. Brady (1995) look at how "political voice" is not spread evenly across America. The participation in politics is not equal due to factors such as citizens' resources, motivation, and access to networks. The civic voluntarism model provides insight into the evolution of women's political involvement from colonial times to the present day. It dives into why people want to get involved in political processes with three main parts: resources, recruitment, & psychological engagement. The theory considers the available resources such as time, financial means, and skills. It also evaluates how support networks facilitate individuals' participation, encouraging them to acquire new skills. Moreover, it examines individuals' psychological engagement, including their interest in politics and their willingness to effect change. This engagement can be influenced by formal groups or networks that promote a strong sense of civic responsibility within the community.

2.1.3 Patriarchy Theory

Feminists use the patriarchal theory to comprehend the oppression and subjugation of women, as stated by (Beechey, 1979: 66). Weber's definition of patriarchal government refers to a system where men hold power through their status as heads of households (Walby, 1989: 214). The practice of patriarchy exists in both domestic and communal Gambian society structures. With the arrival of Islam and colonialism, traditional African practices were replaced with foreign systems, resulting in the transfer of women's power and authority solely to men. The patriarchal system has created gender roles that unfairly separate men and women. For instance, during the colonial period in Gambia, women were excluded from participating in state affairs and the monetisation of the economy. This led to limited or no opportunities for women to benefit from the structural system in the country. The theory posits that women face significant limitations in participating in various aspects of society, including politics, economics, social contexts, institutional environments, and historical contexts (Buckley, 1986: 4).

In the context of our study, this theory can be a valuable tool for examining the entrenched barriers that women encounter and the prevailing cultural norms that sustain gender inequality in the realm of politics. To achieve this, we can delve into the historical

evolution of patriarchy in Gambia, closely examining the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial



periods. For instance, by scrutinising the colonial era, we can uncover how colonial governance bolstered patriarchal structures and perpetuated policies that excluded women from socio-political and economic spheres while elevating male authority. The enduring influence of patriarchal norms in the post-independence era further solidified male dominance in Gambia's political system, relegating women to supportive roles and marginalising their participation in decision-making processes. These formidable barriers hinder women from entering the political arena, attributable to gender biases, social stigma, and limited access to resources. By considering these multifaceted factors, our study aims to comprehend the extent of women's representation in political offices and within decision-making bodies, as well as how male dominance is perpetuated and sustained.

2.1.4 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is a discipline that emerged after colonialism and European influence, based on the argument that the trajectory of the world is shaped by Western imperialism (Burney, 2012: 173). The theory as a tool is fundamental in deconstructing the colonial undertone in the structure, cultures and systems immersed in the present post-colonial territories. It explores how colonial structures have constructed societal norms and values in third-world countries. As a result, it has established a distinct political voice that separates itself from the universalist claims of liberalism and socialism (Heywood, 2011: 194). "This voice originates from a shared colonial history that seeks to condemn Western hegemony (Said, 1986: 44).

Gayatri Spivak (1985) believes that it is important to recollect imperialism to create a story in the history of literature about the global impact of what we now refer to as "the Third World". In her book, she addresses the realities of the minority groups that are dominated by the elite and powerful because of colonial legacy (Spivak, 1996:204). The subalterns, the non-elite or subordinate groups, exist without a story or significance. In referring to the third world, she rejects the essentialist positioning of the third world to Postcolonial theory. She examines intricate matters of identity, race, gender, and culture, emphasising the heterogeneous nature of these theories, contrary to the uniform perception of Orientalism. In the context of the Subaltern as a marginalised group within a traditional power structure, Gambian women, as this marginalised group, were marginalised in political discourse.

Consequently, they sought ways to amplify their voices and enhance their experiences. The use of community and solidarity to foster grassroots resistance against colonial policies and practices is pivotal throughout this research.

The utilisation of this theory as a framework will provide concrete insights into the historical and ongoing forces that shape the political landscape and the specific role of women within it. It will delve deeply into how colonial rule not only established but also perpetuated patriarchal structures while also analysing the colonial policies that disrupted existing societal norms, including gender roles and the dynamics of power. Additionally, the theory will investigate the process of decolonisation and the subsequent emergence of independent states in Africa, examining how achieving self-rule and independence in 1965 impacted women's political rights and participation in The Gambia. By scrutinising the persistence of colonial systems, such as gender biases in post-independence social and political establishments, particularly within political parties, the study will uncover historical barriers, challenges and the entrenched gender roles of women in political processes and Gambian society. Furthermore, the framework will consider and acknowledge the intersection of gender with other identities, such as class, ethnicity, and religion, in empowering women in decision-making processes. Finally, the study will evaluate the significance and influence of women's networks in challenging colonial and post-colonial power structures and advocating for the equal political representation of both men and women.

2.1.5 Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory examines how social relationships that share values can help everyone achieve mutual benefit. Scholars like Francis Fukuyama, Pierre Bourdieu, and Robert Putnam connect ideas like trust, values, & reciprocity to these relationships to gain resources. According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is a mixture of current or potential resources tied to lasting informal networks of mutual support. He identifies several types of resources that help development: economic (which can be changed into money), cultural (linked to things like education and shared values), & social capital (that comes from friendships & established connections) (Bourdieu, 1986: 16).

The theory shows how essential resources relate to social networks as a capital for the attainment of resources. For women in The Gambia, this idea highlights the importance of social networks, norms, & trust which encouraged collective action during colonial times. This increased women's roles in decision-making and leadership. They built strong ties with local women's groups and organizations like Kompins & Kafolu and connected with national movements that aimed for shared goals against colonial rule. These strong bonds create a "radius of trust," which Fukuyama (2001) highlighted. Putnam (1994) also stresses how important trust is for getting good results within these networks. These results usually bring resources like money & political success. Putnam concludes that communities with strong social ties often do better because of their solid networks (Putnam, 1994: 9).

The social capital theory will serve as the main idea of this research. It will help explore the networks and teamwork formed by Gambian women to boost sociopolitical empowerment. Fatou Janneh (2021) and Assan Sarr (2014) show how Gambian women played a crucial role. They utilized social networks and community groups to advocate for women's empowerment during colonial times and the nationalist movement. These women collaborated based on their shared history, which helped cultivate social capital, as stated by Francis Fukuyama (2001).

Groups like Kafolu and Yayi Kombins are noteworthy for creating movements that helped women gain economic independence, access better education, and become involved in politics. They also supported political leaders and local figures who resisted colonial rule. The trust and solidarity among these groups enabled women to unite and work together to improve their lives. Their activism was crucial for raising political awareness and supporting political causes during the nationalist era. They aimed to promote gender equality and empowerment, uniting Gambian men and women in their fight against colonial oppression.

2.2 MAIN CONCEPTS

2.2.1 Legislation and Policy

A policy is a crucial tool to effectively guide actions towards a specific goal (The British Ecological Society, 2017). In examining gender-specific laws, it becomes evident that the framework in legislative processes often leaned toward a patriarchal system within

administrative and bureaucratic institutions. Policies like the indirect rule, the tribunal



ordinance, and economic programs, such as cash crop production, mostly favored men. Because of this, women were mostly excluded from decision-making, leaving Only men to take part in patriarchal policies that empowered local & religious leaders to choose Gambian men for the legislative council. Colonial policies that addressed or empowered women in decision-making were scarce, restricting them to private or community-based activities. Due to the absence of affirmative action policies, women were excluded from the political process until post-independence, a change driven by social networks and national and international advocacy.

2.2.2 Cultural and Social Norms

In The Gambia, where the liberal gender analysis in this article underscores most prominently how crucial a cultural and social variant is. All of these can contribute very positively to the levels of economic decision-making by women or hurt that cause. Integrating these ideas with the civics voluntarism model allows us to analyze different factors that affect women's political participation. It must be noted that in the historical context, most African societies were patriarchal during colonial rule and traditional gender roles limited women's political activity. Thus, even during the post-colonial period such practices did not permit the full involvement of women in decision-making.

2.2.3 Barriers and Challenges

The multiple-faceted and deep-rooted barriers to women's active participation in political processes are reflective of the wider social, economic and cultural context. These can refer to unequal access to resources and labour market participation, gendered discrimination in education as well as grander system-level biases and structural constraints. While improvements – such as increased legislative provisions, awareness campaigns and educational & training programs – have been implemented around the world to tackle these challenges in past years, their presence today highlights a necessary shift in how we conceptualise women's political participation. In focusing on the complex interaction of economic, educational and institutional considerations that might explain those barriers to full political participation for women.

2.2.4 Education and Policy

From colonialism to post-colonial times, the very foundation of political participation and its relation with women has been only possible due to education. Both of these ideas are linked to the Civic Voluntarism theoretical perspective and affect women's human resources, patterns of recruitment and psychological engagement in The Gambia. The colonial period was accompanied by severe limitations and discrimination in the field of education. The educational system was geared towards meeting the needs of a colonial administration and effectively disenfranchised large segments of the native population, mostly women. As a result, women had essentially no education until the late 1980s barring modest vocational and competency-based training needed to become active within many social networks but not political or civic spheres. These gender differences continued even after gradual changes in the post-colonial era. Boys, for their part, understood better and often took over the lead. Girls were still more likely to be left out of school, as boys had precedence. These reinforced levels of inequality which applied both to women as recipients, given restricted access to other kinds of educational resources and participation or engagement in political actions.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of Gambian women in decision-making dates to pre-colonial times. Despite their significant contributions to the country's independence and development, their involvement in decision-making after independence was met with opposition and challenges. In the early days of independence in The Gambia, the government used gender politics to appeal to local and religious leaders to gain support from the conservative population. (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005: 3). In the early stages of the country's independence, advocating for women's rights and their presence in the public sphere was not welcomed or encouraged due to the prevailing societal mentality at that time. The state was not prepared to promote women's rights in the country. An investigation conducted by FIDH (International Federation of Human Rights) emphasises that religious and local leaders initially obstructed the political and legislative power needed to advance women in the public sphere. Women's empowerment in decision-making was significantly opposed by local leaders and elders, who argued that Gambian society would not accept it (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005: 3).

However, in the history of West African ethnic groups and kingdoms, which encompassed the Gambia, women held power and positions in the administration of the society before the coming of Europeans. In pre-colonial times, ethnic groups in the Gambia had a centralised and decentralised system of administration (Fourshey, 2019: 5). Titles such as kings and chiefs were not explicitly men-dominated titles; women also held high positions of power in the society, contrary to colonial and our newly independent nation. For example, In Ghana, the Ahemaa, known as the Queen Mother, shares power and responsibility with the chief in the governing of the kingdom (Sheldon, 2016: 23). Women who were queens and part of the royal families in Senegambia were known as *lingerie* in the Wolof kingdom, and Musu Mansa in the Mandinka Kingdom also exercised political power in the pre-colonial era (Touray, 2015; Sallah, 1995: 28). Thus, Women's political participation is not a current phenomenon that the current narrative would appear to be. In the early history of Gambia, specifically the Nuimi region, the first known settlers of Kombo, who were called Bainunkas, established the oldest settlements in the Gambia (Touray, 2014). A research documentary conducted by Ensa Touray at the University of Gambia revealed that a female monarch called Queen Wulengding Jassey ruled over one of the settlements known as Sanyang and other settlements such as Tujereng, Kartong (Touray, 2014). She was unanimously chosen by her people after the death of her father to be his successor because of her charismatic and spiritual leadership (Touray, 2014). Her effeminate nature was not seen as a drawback or weakness by her people, as such a notion had not yet been realised by the Gambia people. Queen Wulending Jassey contributed immensely to her people politically and also in terms of security. For example, when her kingdom was facing chaos and insecurity, she moved her people to the north-south and requested them to settle there forever, which is now called 'Tujereng' (Touray, 2014). A Mandinka word meaning 'stay there forever'. In most kingdoms, succession to the throne was patriarchal, but interestingly, for Wolof, inheritance to the throne was matrilineal meaning through the king's nephew (Sallah, 1995: 28). The women from the royal families oversaw the political, social, and economic affairs of the state and the affairs of women (Sallah, 1995: 28). For example, "Ndate Yalla Mbodj", *lingerie* (Queen) was one of the four states of the Wolof kingdom in Senegambia (Y, 2015). She became the ruler of Waalo after the death of her elder sister, queen Ndjeumbout Mbod. The two sisters were known as "the most powerful women in the 19th century" because of their resistance against French

colonisation and Moorish invasion



(Y, 2015). Ndate Yalla Mboj and her second husband, Maaroso Tasse, protected the territory from encroachment from the Moors and Trazars and the "French colonialist army led by General Louis Faidherbe" (Y, 2015). In Ghana, even though women were restricted from military action and ritual activities, the Ahemaa, known as the Queen Mother, shares power and responsibility with the chief (Sheldon, 2016: 25). Despite cultural constraints, African women still engaged in military issues, particularly in resisting British influence during colonialism. Yaa Asantewaa, a Ghanaian queen, was known for her courage when the men were afraid to defend their territory against the British (Fuller, 2014: 58). Queen Ndate Yalla of Senegambia also became famous for being a threat to the French and defended her kingdom from the Moors. She also raised a women's army to protect her territory against imperial forces such as Louis Faidherbe. (Ahmed, 2019: 14). Afua Kobi (1815- 1900), a Ghanaian queen Mother, gave advice to the military chief to convince them against going into battle with the British as it would be futile. The chiefs lost, and the king was replaced by her son, Mensa Bonsu. (Sheldon, 2016: 23).

According to Afisi (2010), women gained economic influence through their involvement in agricultural activities and fishing, where both men and women benefitted equally. Carny and Watts (1991) and Fourshey (2019) highlighted the success of women working alongside men in agriculture before British reforms were introduced. These reforms created gender roles that limited women to subsistence farming in the Gambia.

Moreover, the arrival of colonialism diminished the ability of women to be self-sufficient, as it replaced rice cultivation with groundnut cultivation, leading to a cash crop system that did not benefit Gambians and further reduced the influence of women in the Gambia (Fourshe, 2019: 9). Additionally, colonialism undermined the authority of women by focusing solely on male local leaders and confining women to their homes with the influence of Christianity.

So, how did women's authority and power decline during colonialism, with colonial authorities concentrating and conducting affairs with only male chiefs and local leaders?

After gaining independence, Gambian history entered a new era of self-determination. The emergence of political parties became crucial for democracy as they sought the opinions and support of influential elders in the community. These elders, who were all men,

held



significant ascendancy over the Gambian population. Leaders of political parties would often convene with these elders at a meeting place known as a Bantaba to secure support and influence for their party (Bellagamba, 2006: 107). The reason why men's opinions were considered more important was that the elders believed a man's voice carried more authority than a woman's. (Bellagamba, 2006: 107). Scholars such as Agbalajobi (2010) argue that because men possess physical superiority such as height, weight and strength, they are able to force or bend the wills of people through violence, and women are "vulnerable because of their role of childbearing and nursing". At these Bantabas, historical accounts were predominantly told by male storytellers, leading to a need for more reliable information about the roles and significance of women in past events (Bellagamba, 2006: 107). This omission and bias have created a historical mystery surrounding women's participation. Writers such as Sheldon (2016) have highlighted the limited attention given to African women in African history. Despite the crucial role of African women in agriculture, their presence and contributions have been scarcely documented in academic studies of African history (Sheldon, 2016: 1).

Additionally, Fourshey (2019) acknowledges the lack of knowledge about Gambian women and their historical activities, which has resulted in a historical gap and emphasises gender bias in the political, social, and economic context. This omission not only conceals the contributions of Gambian women in decision-making and leadership roles but also obscures their challenges and experiences. As a result, it highlights the unexplored and overlooked knowledge of African women, particularly Gambian women, in the social structure of society.

In an article written by Paxton, Kunovich, and M. Hughes (2007), a gender gap is described that causes an ideological division between those who support women's rights, typically leftists, and those who prefer the previous status quo and take a conservative stand. These challenges and more impede the level of representation of women in offices. This separation exists not only in the general population but also in the political arena between men and women. According to Paxton, Kunovich, and M. Hughes (2007), the political career of a woman is different from that of a man. While men are taken seriously, women's recognition or achievement is often based on the recognition of a male relation. Positions typically held by women are mostly in areas such as education, health, and

women's affairs, while fields



like the presidency, military, and internal affairs are dominated by men. These disparities are not forced upon women but are influenced by historical mindsets and systems that have weakened the confidence and courage of women to compete with men in positions traditionally held by men. This is not to say that women would do better, but it would be fair for women to have the opportunity to explore and challenge the collective views of the masses.

Furthermore, during the early days of independence in the Gambia, political gatherings were controlled and limited exclusively to elderly and young men, who were allowed to participate in political matters and leadership (Bellagamba, 2006: 108). The government at that time failed to address this gender-exclusive space as they were complicit and preoccupied with amassing legitimacy from influential men in the communities. With women excluded, their involvement in state affairs was seen as a man's prerogative, thus shaping the perception and roles of women for years to come. As a result, this discouraged and hindered women's aspirations to participate in politics.

In recent years, a strong push has been made to encourage and advance women's participation in politics and governance. Legal measures have played a crucial role in giving women the opportunity and confidence to engage in public life. For instance, the Gambia signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980, and the 1997 Gambian constitution expressly prohibits gender-based discrimination. These legal developments have set essential precedents at both international and regional levels for women's rights (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005: 7). Additionally, the establishment of the National Council for Women in 1980 aimed to empower the government to address women's status (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005: 8). These efforts are crucial because women have long faced historical barriers. Therefore, as Kumar (2017) suggested, it is essential to provide significant representation for women in politics to empower and include them in society. Amongst other endeavours and efforts of empowering women in decision-making, the National Assembly of the Gambia, which consists of 53 members and five elected members, proposed to pass a bill that will increase the number of seats in parliament and reserve 16 seats for women by the Civil Society Gender Platform and other stakeholders on 10th April 2021. Its success would constitute 20% of women in

parliament (Taylor, 2021). If the bill passes, (a) 53 elected



NAMs unchanged from the current legislation;(b) an additional 14 seats reserved for women, two elected from each administrative area; (c) an additional two elected members elected by the Disability Society with one of those elected being a woman; and(d) two nominated members by the President with at least one of those nominated being a woman.

During the bill's proposal, Consultant Janet Sallah Njie shed light on the underrepresentation of women in parliament, which constitutes 10.3% of the members, only 3 out of 58 members, three elected and three nominated (Taylor, 2021). This underrepresentation might be alarming, but on the brighter side, Tabu Njie of Gender Platform acknowledged the fact that the Vice President of the Republic, the Speaker of the National Assembly, and the two Supreme Court Judges were women at that time (Taylor, 2021).

However, it becomes more difficult when it comes to ordinary people who believe that a man would do a better job in the office than a woman because of her feminine nature, which is often associated with the incapability or weakness of women. In June 2022, Mr Peter Gomez, the Managing Director of West Coast Radio, hosted "A Conversation on the Political Empowerment of Women in The Gambia" and discussed the challenges facing women in politics with High-ranking officials and female politicians (Maccarthy, 2022). The participants mentioned that boys are encouraged to take on leadership positions, while girls are often encouraged to step back from such roles (Maccarthy, 2022). These cultural norms shape the thinking of young girls, as they are not given the same teaching and encouragement to pursue leadership roles in public institutions. A common phenomenon is the global treatment and upbringing of boys and girls since the start of history, which is the assignment of different sets of rights and privileges resulting in "gender-specific entitlements" (Latham, 2010: 41). This is apparent in West African households where girls are assigned chores in the house, and boys are only responsible for being good students playing all day on the weekends. Latham also emphasises the distribution of food, healthcare, etc., compared to the girls, thus instilling and building self-confidence and the perception of having superior rights. In African households, the father and boys always dish a large portion at lunch, with the biggest eating, while the other women and girls get a less moderate portion. Sallah highlighted the traditional discrimination that existed in the Gambia in the late 1980s, where women and children faced "serious nutritional

deficiencies" due to the unequal distribution of food and nutrition. This reality was proven in a study done in 1981, which showed that



male members of the family received the best nourishment, followed by women and children, and the least newborn (Sallah, 1990: 627). This is supposedly a sign of respect shown to the father and his rights. It could be argued that men were out there in the fields doing hard physical labour to provide food and resources in primitive times, which is true. However, when Gambia gained independence and reinvented itself, women were regarded as the "backbone of the country's food-crop production," particularly in rice production, with some assistance from men (Sallah, 1990: 627). Without food nourishment and security, working in these fields becomes challenging when one is practically surviving off scraps and expected to bear children and breastfeed. It is also important to note that proceeds from rice cultivation are not fully benefited by the women. The man gets to keep the earnings and share it for supplies and house use (Sallah, 1990: 627). Arguably small systems like these serve as major disadvantages for girls as they silently teach the women to stay behind and let their male colleagues compete for positions, promotions and especially candidacy for President, which also trickles to the voters.

Although there are not a lot of attacks on women's participation in politics compared to the past, women's candidacy in top offices such as the presidency has not been widely encouraged, and the patriarchal element in the political system of the Gambia is not conducive and inclusive for women due to structural and historical barriers. Gambian women have a brief track record of joining the contest in presidential elections alongside men who have significantly dominated.

Subsequently, 2016 was an epoch in history for women in the Gambia as we had the first woman, Dr Isatou Touray, to ever voice interest to contest not just any president but a dictator who encroached on citizens' right to expression (Bah, 2016). Former president Yahya Jammeh came to power through a bloodless coup in 1994 to drive Gambia to development and prosperity. According to an article in *The New Humanitarian*, this aim did not completely materialise as the economic condition in the country exacerbated, which impelled the youth and men to embark on the dangerous road to Europe for greener pastures. Being aware of the implications of speaking against the former President, Isatou did not fear criticising the incumbent and accusing him of utilising the country's resources for his gain (O'Grady, 2016). Her courage and involvement disprove the preconceived notion of women's frailty and lack of survival in leadership, reconstructing gender roles in

the political



climate of the Gambia. She initially stood as an independent candidate after the arrest of the leader of the second largest political party, UDP, for protesting the government, and later ended up joining a coalition to remove the incumbent from power (No Peace Without Justice, 2016). The last 2021 presidential election in the Gambia was the second time history was made when another woman, Marie Sock, courageously stood amongst other male candidates to run for office (Nabaneh,2022). Unfortunately, she got disqualified from the race as her application was "rejected by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)" (Nabaneh,2022)". People only vote through tribal and ethnic lines, so for a woman for President would change the minds of people about their belief. Hence, Marie Sock was unable to amass enough of the "legally required number" of registered voters to be able to support the nomination contest and in the election (Nabaneh,2022). Thus, singling out the only female candidate for the 2021 presidential election in the Gambia.

In conclusion, as much as women are outrun and left behind in politics, development is key in blurring the lines of race. In rural areas, the poverty crisis is a defining factor of the obstacle of women in official spaces.

3. THE STATUS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING DURING COLONIALISM AND POST- COLONIALISM

This chapter investigates the level of external influence on African culture and history. It also analyses the changes conditioned by the introduction of Islamic cultural flow and Christianity that occurred due to African interactions with the Middle East and Western civilisation. It further demonstrates the period that marked the decline of women's active involvement in politics and state affairs. The chapter significantly explores the transition from matriarchy to patriarchal dominance owing to the rise of Islamic dominance and 19th- century colonial reform and policies. The chapter additionally examines Gambia's development trajectory, which has profoundly shaped its socio-economic and political landscape.

3.1 SUDANO SAHARA INFLUENCE

Before the arrival of Arabs and the rise of European colonial conquest, many African societies, including those in The Gambia, had institutional organisations where women held important social, economic, and sometimes political status. During the precolonial era, the constitutional system of inheritance and succession in West African states and empires like Ghana, Mali, and Songhai underwent significant structural changes. These changes resulted in the emergence of patriarchal dominance and societal influence. The Gambian society shifted from matrilineal to patrilineal succession, which meant that the succession through the female line was replaced by succession through the male line. This change significantly impacted social dynamics, power structures, and gender roles. It affected various aspects of development, including governance, family structure, and labour division. According to Diop (2012) families had the opportunity to inherit the throne, specifically through the king's nephew. This practice was not rooted in any rationale. Instead, in the belief that it established the legitimacy of the future king as the king's nephew (Diop, 2012, 8). Geiger, Allman, and Musisi (2002) made inferences regarding gender parity in the Buganda Kingdom. The kingdom acknowledges a system of leadership in which the Queen Mother wields a significant amount of power comparable to that of the king. In the Asante kingdom of Ghana, matrilineal societies share political power with

male leaders in the governance of their



subjects (Akyeampong and Fofack, 2012: 5). This underscores the historical significance of gender dynamics in African societies. This topic is sure to intrigue and pique the curiosity of academic researchers. Female participation in political organisations was a fundamental aspect of African systems that endured significantly. Although patriarchy was present in certain aspects of social life, women were not entirely subjugated and disadvantaged in political, social, and economic structures when compared to the colonial and post-colonial periods.

After the decline of the Ghana Empire, West Africa was gradually influenced by Arab and Islamic traditions and decision-making processes. The Songhai Empire, the region's last great empire, was particularly affected by this influence. It was slowly Islamized and adopted structural systems such as the Caliphate of Baghdad and the Arab courts of the Orient (Diop, 2012: 50). One significant political change was the patrilineal inheritance of succession, widespread among the Arab and European dynasties. In Africa, it was adopted by African rulers due to the political patronage of Islam.

El Hadi became the Songhai Empire's ruler after his father's death, Askia Daud, which marked the end of matrilineal succession (Diop, 2012: 51). Subsequently, the peaceful transfer of power between monarchs ended, leading to instability due to rival claims to the throne. (Ewa, 2017: 4). As per the historical records, any male relative of Askia El Hadi had a legitimate claim to the throne. However, a dispute arose over his legitimacy when his brother claimed that their older brother, Muhammed Benken, had a stronger claim. Consequently, Benken's children went into hiding to evade assassination attempts by their uncle (Diop, 2012: 51). Askia Muhammad Toure met the same end as his predecessors by following in their footsteps. He added to the problem by appointing his youngest son to a high-ranking position, leading his other sons to revolt and overthrow him (Ewa, 2017: 4). power rivalry occurred because he failed to identify the underlying cause of the issue. The disruption of the empire's royal succession impeded progress and prosperity, leading to a halt in economic development in West Africa. For example, Askia Dawud's reign observed political stability, bringing peace and stability to the empire. As a result, the economy flourished under his rule compared to other regimes (Ewa, 2017: 6). Askia Dawud kept his family out of state affairs to avoid succession-related complications. However, disputes

arose about his successor after his peaceful reign ended with his death. The matrilineal customs in Africa prevented power-hungry kings and ensured smooth power transitions.

Before Western colonisation, West African societies faced institutional problems stemming from a patrilineal system. These internal factors contributed to the downfall of the Songhai Empire, as analysed by Ibiang Oden Ewa. Ewa argues that the fall of the Songhai Empire was not solely caused by the Moorish invasion but rather by internal forces such as political intrigues, succession disputes, and palace coups. These factors exacerbated the instability of the Songhai Empire (Ewa, 2017: 8). According to Ewa's analysis, internal factors such as succession weakened the Songhai Empire, which resulted in coups and rebellions. The decision to adopt Islamic and Arabic systems in the political and administrative structures of the empire weakened it from the beginning. Additionally, it paved the way for eliminating female leadership and influence in African decision-making, which began in the 10th century.

Initially, the political organisation of Gambia was less gendered, alluding to a system of sociopolitical fluidity of roles and inclusive concepts of gender. This allowed equality to be a principle in social structures where men and women could participate in governance and leadership. However, adopting new political institutions changed social hierarchies and positions within Gambian societies, marking a transition to a male-dominated system. While Islamic teachings preach the equality of all believers before God, regardless of their social status or wealth, it is arguably that less egalitarian interpretations were advocated considering the exclusion of women from decision-making and the level of male dominance in leadership positions using the introduction and spread of Islam. It consolidated power and influence among groups like religious scholars (ulama) and rulers who claimed spiritual authority upon adopting Islam in the Gambia.

According to Alieu B. Sanneh's study in 2016, the Soninke Marabout Wars in the Gambia during the 1850s initiated the "first wave of Islamization". These wars were led by religious figures such as Foday Sillah, Foday Kaba Dumbuya, Musa Mollah, Alpha Moloch, and Ma- Ba Jah, who aimed to spread Islam through military conquest between 1850-1901 (Saho, 2012: 54). Many Muslim scholars and clerics who aligned themselves with Islamic institutions or gained religious knowledge had the opportunity to improve

their social status



within Gambian society. In most Gambian villages, religious figures established Islamic institutions that served as the dominant force in the region under the guardianship of male religious leaders (Saho, 2012: 56). The interplay of these religious figures was between men who had significant power and influence over the population, led to the politicisation of Islam. Leaders and authority figures used Islam to exert control and legitimacy in Gambian politics, significantly altering decision-making processes and traditional structures, with lasting impacts on Gambian society. This shows the abandonment of Gambia's traditional political structure and practices and the politicisation of religion in the dynamics of Gambians, which has significantly altered the decision-making trajectory.

3.2 EXPANSION OF WESTERN SUDANIC POLITICAL SUZERAINTY AND CONSOLIDATION OF PATRIARCHY IN THE SENEGAMBIA REGION

The Gambia's political development trajectory was significantly influenced by two factors: the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy and colonial policies. The shift to patriarchal dominance has significantly impacted power dynamics, leading to the exclusion of women from decision-making processes and access to resources. As a result, it impacted women's political development by preventing a significant portion of its population from fully realising its potential. Additionally, colonial policies have favoured extractive economic activities and undermined traditional practices, potentially disrupting sustainable development pathways.

Assan Sarr (2014) provides a detailed account of Gambian women who became pioneers and role models for all Gambian women from the Atlantic to the post-colonial era. However, during the movement of elite Gambian women, other women faced obstacles like societal structures created by colonialism that prevented them from full socio-political and economic rights. According to Bala Saho (2012), scholars view colonialism as a system that oppressed and controlled African men and women. Hunter argues that women were oppressed by external forces brought in by colonialism, such as laws, religion, customs, and attitudes, which positioned them as subordinate to men (Taiwo, 2010: 234). Incidentally, women had to use the court system to advocate for their rights and secure property in the patriarchal society that undermined their position, as stated by Saho (2012).

This analysis highlights the significant impact of intersectionality on women by the colonial and patriarchal system that



exists to this date. The intersectional challenges are highlighted in the different forms of oppression women overcame during the nationalism period.

The struggle for women's participation in decision-making in the Gambia is intertwined with the struggle for nationalism. It is important to note that the journey towards independence in The Gambia involved not only the fight for national liberation but also the struggle for women's recognition as active participants in shaping the future of their country. The marginalisation of Gambian women in political decision-making is highlighted by their recognition of the need to level the playing field. This struggle also marked the emergence of a definitive gender division in the political space, which began to take shape in the late 18th century. Men faced discrimination based on race during the colonial period, which compelled them to reclaim their sovereignty. Women, on the other hand, encountered discrimination based on both gender and race. This necessitated efforts to level the playing field and gain visibility and voice, ultimately advocating for self-determination and independence.

Fatou Janneh (2021) emphasised women's activism and proactive empowerment during the colonial era, laying the groundwork for future generations. During the colonial period, organisations such as Busy Bees and Women's Corona Society advocated for girls' education and highlighted the lack of support for them in decision-making. Gambian women also formed groups such as "kompin" and "kafulos" to promote women's economic and social autonomy and served as a driving force for political parties and nationalist movements, as noted by Janneh (2022). These groups focused on education, health, politics, entertainment, and humanitarian services in The Gambia, forming the first wave of Gambian feminism, which aimed to empower women in the country. This also reflects Filomina Steady's (2007) concept of "socio-centric interest," which prioritises society's advancement and the welfare of humanity, as outlined in 2007. After the Cold War, African women began participating in politics to achieve constitutional and legal reforms. According to Gwendolyn Mikell (1995), some African women engaged in national affairs to prevent self-interest from overshadowing national interest. It highlights the difference between Western and African feminism, with the latter emphasising altruism over individualism. The Women in Nigeria (WIN) movement is an excellent example of how African women address gender-related issues and societal injustice (Madunga, 2008: 667).

WIN's policy of inclusiveness welcomes all individuals,



regardless of their stance on feminism, to tackle struggles related to class and gender oppression. The movement's emphasis on gender cooperation is crucial for achieving genuine progress towards gender parity. One of WIN's goals is to uplift the living conditions of women and other underprivileged classes in the country (Madunga, 2008: 667). By promoting gender equality and empowering women, WIN is contributing to the progress and development of Nigeria, creating a more just and equal society. Discrimination against women is a global issue, and organisations like WIN can help create a more inclusive world. Therefore, women's interests should not be seen as solely gender issues but as concomitant to national issues. The impact of these initiatives and organisations extends beyond women's empowerment to encompass the broader welfare of the country. The WIN organisation faced criticism for one of its objectives, which aimed to address gender struggles as a form of social injustice (Madunga, 2008: 667). However, women's efforts to participate in politics and contribute to the development of the state were met with backlash and criticism from certain men, local leaders, and government authorities.

In The Gambia, universal suffrage was opposed by chiefs and local leaders who did not want women to vote because they feared it would lead to the subordination of their husbands (Janneh, 2021: 45). In 2021, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (The Gambia) held a conference on "Experience Sharing Conversation with Elected Women National Assembly Members and Lady Councilors". During the meeting, Bintou S.M. Jaiteh, a counsellor at the Campama Ward, shared her story about facing disapproval for her candidacy and how her husband was advised to reject and discourage her desire to run for office (Camara, 2021). The article highlights the prevalent fear among men that women may abandon their husbands and marriage after taking up leadership positions. The event also highlighted the need for more support from women towards female candidates and their political aspirations. A female National Assembly member expressed her confusion over why men support each other while women support other women who aspire to leadership roles differently (Camara, 2021).

The issue of women's underrepresentation in politics is not just limited to societal mindset but also the mentality of women themselves. Women often face numerous obstacles, including discrimination, gender bias, and societal pressures, which make it difficult for

them to pursue leadership roles. Unfortunately, women in some communities may face



societal stigmas and discrimination when running for office, which can lead to a lack of support from other women. This fear of stigmatisation and discrimination can discourage women from entering politics, even if they have the desire and qualifications to do so. In 2022, the Office of the Resident Coordinator released a SUMMARY REPORT titled "A Conversation on the Political Empowerment of Women". The report revealed that women were worried about their husbands and their family's rejection if they decided to run for office without seeking permission (Maccarthy, 2022). Going against their husband's wishes could result in severe consequences. This was highlighted by Gwendolyn Mikell (1995) in Nigeria, where a Muslim woman expressed her concerns about facing backlash from her husband for advocating feminist ideals. Other attendees also shared similar sentiments. Many women fear facing negative consequences from their families or communities if they openly support feminist agendas.

Moreover, in many societies, the idea of male superiority and traditional gender roles for women hinders progress towards gender equality. Patriarchal societies may interpret feminism differently based on cultural and religious beliefs about gender roles, which can stem from fears of male authority being undermined. These ideas are deeply ingrained in politics, as seen in 1958 when local leaders opposed the idea of women voting (Janneh, 2021: 45). The attack on women's participation in the Gambia is often based on traditional family structures, as mentioned above. These perceptions weaken women's empowerment and legitimacy to compete for high public offices and positions, as society needs more faith in women's leadership capabilities. As a result, women may fear social stigma, backlash, or even threats to their safety for advocating for gender equality. This has significant societal implications for women in high-profile positions, as societal expectations often limit their opportunities for engagement in decision-making processes and leadership roles. These experiences result from traditional and patriarchal structures perpetuated by governmental systems and policies inherited from historical constraints.

Furthermore, the lack of acknowledgement obscures women's significant contributions to national development and economic growth. By perpetuating patriarchy and ignoring the immeasurable impact of women, these views hinder the progress of The Gambia, a nation where women constitute half of the population. These views imply that women's experiences

are not a result of institutional and structural discrimination perpetuated by governmental systems and policies inherited from history.

3.3 GENDER AND SOCIO-POLITICAL REFORM: TRANSITION IN GENDER ROLES DURING THE MEDIEVAL AND MODERN ERA

The transition from matriarchal to patriarchal systems in The Gambia, along with the influence of Islam and colonialism, had a significant impact on women's participation in the sociopolitical realm. The transition from matriarchy to patriarchy led to a redefinition of gender roles in Gambian society, with men assuming primary positions of authority and leadership. The political dynamic shifted to conform with Islamic and Arabic standards and institutions, shaping the power dynamic and social hierarchy present during the arrival of colonial powers in the Gambia. This resulted in men assuming political positions while women were confined to their homes. Consequently, local leaders and older men were automatically involved and incorporated within the British colonial administration in the Gambia. In the colonial period, the decision-making process of the villages constituted the advice of older men, with Alkali as a representative between the village and the governor. (colonial report, 1937: 13,). The creation of the annual chief's conference and Tribunal Ordinance aimed at empowering native male leaders in the colonial administration (Hughes and Perfect, 2008: 41, Colonial Report, 1937: 12). The local leaders were chosen because they inherited power and legitimacy from past kings in the pre-colonial era (Colonial Report, 1937: 12). However, in the time of former kings, women held political power and were empowered in the Gambia. The exclusion of women from the political process indicates a deliberate ignorance of the significant influence of women during colonialism.

Taiwo Oseni Afisi's (2010) research on gender stereotypes highlights the fluid and complementary roles that reflect African society. Afisi (2010) argued that men and women had complementary and equally important roles, a departure from the rigid gender roles imposed after external influence and colonialism. This perspective emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing both men's and women's contributions to decision-making. For example, In the Gambia, men and women worked together in agriculture, including rice production. Colonialism imposed unfavourable practices that contributed to

the reinforcement of gender roles and traditional views of women. However, according to



Akyeampong and Fofack (2012), the economy of African colonies was male-centred. In the 19th century, Europeans began importing and exporting rice, leading to a decline in local rice production. As a result, the focus shifted towards groundnut production, which was controlled by Mandinka men (Carney and Watts, 1991: 657). The loss of economic opportunities for Gambian women due to colonialism created a significant power imbalance between men and women, as elicited by Fourshey (2019). The economic changes brought about by colonialism had a significant impact on gender stratification in Mandinka society, particularly in the agricultural sector. As men became more dominant in cash crop production and trade, women's roles became more confined to domestic spheres and subsistence farming. This shift in gender roles and economic opportunities contributed to the marginalization of women in decision-making processes. It created a gender division that impacted women in the household and decision-making. While men dominated the economy and benefited from the commodification of groundnut production, Women were excluded from economic opportunities and often relegated to traditional roles in the household and society.

Furthermore, the lack of economic establishment for women had lasting effects on their status and participation in politics in the Gambia, which prevented them from competing or elevating their status. Consequently, women became solely responsible for specific gendered tasks in the household, which consolidated traditional gender roles and a patriarchal structure. The opportunities for economic independence and authority in society were not established for women, contributing to the gender gap in the economy.

Furthermore, British officials recognized Gambian society's political dynamics. Historically, men held positions of power in The Gambia, which made them candidates for being conscripted by the colonial powers. The strategy to involve male African leaders in the colonial administration under the indirect rule system was a political move to gain more power and legitimacy in the protectorate. It reinforced the patriarchal system of government, further constraining women's participation in decision-making. The appointment and colonization of the position of chieftaincy were entirely patriarchal.

This approach also affected women's participation in the sociopolitical realm, excluding them from formal decision-making processes and institutions. The long period of

deprivation



and exclusion of women during colonialism upheld male dominance and gender imbalance in decision-making. Additionally, this resulted in a lack of diversity in perspectives and ideas in decision-making, as women's voices were not heard.

Due to the prevalence of Islam and the absence of separation between religion and socio-political aspects, many societies, as noted by Bala Saho, were greatly influenced by Islam. He depicts how Islam spread across the Gambia through religious wars, resulting in most villages headed by Muslim scholars. As a result, the British tried to establish a relationship with Muslim leaders to gain control and influence that benefited both parties (Saho, 2012: 61). This influence still affects the political interplay and activities in The Gambia. The British recognized the strong connection between Islam and the people of The Gambia and relied on Muslim support and influence by involving religious leaders in the administration. In 1940, the British devised a plan to gain support from the protectorate by using Sheikh Omar Faye, a Muslim leader, as a figurehead to promote the colonial image (Bala Saho, 2012: 97). The use of religious figures was presented as a 'benevolent gesture', as highlighted by Bala Saho (2012).

In 1935, prominent Muslims established the Jumhorial Society in Bathurst in response to British colonial rule. An imam was appointed the spiritual leader to oversee social and religious affairs according to Islamic principles. At the same time, an executive council was tasked with handling secular issues (Park, 2016: 12). This establishment reflected the colonial strategy of integrating religious authority into the government, enabling the British to uphold order and stability, while the local Muslim community asserted its identity and autonomy within the colonial framework.

The convergence of British colonial rule and the religious organization of the Jumhorial Society in Bathurst significantly influenced women's participation and representation in governance. The amalgamation of Islamic principles with the colonial administration's structures often solidified traditional gender roles, thereby constraining women's engagement in public and political domains.

Governance systems predominantly favored male dominance under colonial and religious influences. The British colonial authorities typically collaborated with male religious and local leaders, thus marginalizing women's involvement in decision-making. Similarly, the

Islamic framework adopted by the Jumorial Society likely adhered to conventional gender norms, further limiting women's roles in governance.

After achieving independence, politicians also became reliant on the support of religious and conservative local leaders for political backing. According to John A. Wiseman's report from 1985, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and National Convention Party (NCP) parties gained support from Muslim and Christian supporters in the late 1900s. The report concludes that Muslims in the Gambia perceive politics as predominantly Muslim affairs, even though it is not specifically Islamic (Wiseman, 1985:19). During the second regime of The Gambia, Islam underwent its fourth wave of Islamization with the creation of the Supreme Islamic Council by the government (Sanneh, 2016: 128). Consequently, it excluded women from leadership or decision-making roles in religious institutions. According to a study conducted by the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) in 2005, the close relationship between religious leaders and parliamentarians slows the promotion of women's rights in the legal system. The study highlights that NGOs believe religious leaders to be the groups most opposed to developing women's status. The relationship between religious leaders and politicians can significantly impact women's participation in decision-making roles. In some instances, this relationship has been used to advocate for the restriction of women from leadership roles through the interpretation of religious texts and traditions since politicians are known to use religious texts and expressions to gain support from the public (Nyang, 1984: 23). While they were also known to legitimize colonial rule in the Gambia, their involvement in the nation's development has made them custodians of societal expectation and cultural norms (Nyang, 1984: 24). They are crucial to women's issues due to the power and influence they wield at shaping societal norms and values. This can be a significant barrier to women's progress and needs to be addressed to ensure that women are not excluded from decision-making processes based on their gender or religious beliefs. It is essential to promote a more inclusive approach to decision-making that considers the perspectives and experiences of all members of society, regardless of their gender or religious affiliation.

Islam, while recognizing women's rights, also introduced certain practices coupled with colonial legal systems that limited women's participation in society property rights and seclusion under the institution of marriage disadvantaged women in establishing their

position in the Gambia. The colonial administration established qadi courts to maintain



order, as Bala Saho mentioned. The colonial legal system and courts were biased against women, as they mirrored the gender roles of the colonial era. Some court rulings in disputes between husbands and wives were unfair to women. In some cases, women who struggled to repay their dowry to their husbands were forced to remain in the marriage (Saho, 2012: 109). The Qadi courts were known to reinforce unfair treatment and patriarchal norms that subordinated women in both the private and public spheres. This often resulted in women being stripped of their agency and decision-making power. In cases of domestic abuse and violence against wives, husbands taken to the Qadi courts were not adequately punished. Instead, they were given a slap on the wrist or their assaults on the woman were simply ignored. This is incredibly challenging; considering the economic status of most women in the colony, women could not quickly end their marriage or start a new life as single women.

The issue of inheritance also disadvantaged women in acquiring property and wealth. With the recognition of the Sharia law, Qadi courts do not allow wives to inherit their husband's property. It was a significant shift from the pre-colonial customary law that ensured the wife the right to inherit some shares of her husband's property and wealth and allowed her to continue residing in the late husband's compound at the same time she was single (Saho, 2012: 229). Women who decide to end their marriage in The Gambia often face financial difficulty due to the amount of bride price that needs to be paid (Saho, 2012:113). This shift to external influence had an enduring impact on women's political authority and empowerment. It secluded women and left them utterly dependent on them.

3.4 COLONIAL CONQUEST AND REINFORCEMENTS OF PATRIARCHAL DOMINANCE IN THE 20TH CENTURY GAMBIA

It is crucial to recognize the role of historical colonial factors in shaping gender roles rather than solely attributing them to cultural and traditional norms. Arguably, men predominantly occupied most leadership roles during the arrival of the Europeans. When European explorers arrived in the Gambia in the 15th century, they encountered a patriarchal society. Men held prominent positions in political affairs, decision-making, and trade. Most Europeans interacted with male leaders who influenced The Gambia's land and future. J.M Gray details Diego Gomez's introduction of Christianity to the Batimansa and

Nomimansa tribes following his friendly encounters with them upon his arrival. In the 17th century,



Powerful kings ruled kingdoms of Wuli, Cantora, and Saloum and received tributes from minor kings within their kingdoms, as highlighted by Florence K. Mahoney. As a result, European missionaries focused on engaging with men as their first point of contact.

Additionally, due to the rise of colonialism in Africa, Africans were forced to adapt to new reforms in authority and legal systems. The colonial reforms deliberately reinforced gender norms and hierarchies, perpetuating inequality and discrimination against women in the Gambia. These constructs have led to women's lack of participation in politics and gender discrimination in society. It perpetuates patriarchal systems and gender roles that discriminate and marginalize women politically, socially and economically. Bala Saho's (2010) research highlights the adverse effects of colonialism on women's standing in society. Men mainly dominated African societies, and access to education and leadership positions became reserved for men and not women.

Despite the claims of missionaries to civilize the indigenous people of The Gambia, colonialism had no intention of educating Africans to empower them to fight for their rights and freedom. Mahoney explains that during the colonial era, education was not provided by the colonial administration but was initially overseen by voluntary organizations such as the church. Although Europeans established schools for both boys and girls, gender disparity in education and opportunities continued to persist for a prolonged period. The second school established in 1926 initially sought to educate the sons of chiefs and their relatives in the eighteenth century, which created a bias towards educating boys over girls (Mahoney, 1963, 154; Thakur, 1969: 68). In 1882, the Education Ordinance was created, which rewarded scholars for their proficiency in subjects (Thakur, 1969: 47). It is interesting to note that male scholars were granted two shillings and sixpence for every subject, while female scholars were rewarded the same amount in needlework.

By 1845, middle-class parents in Bathurst only sent their sons to boys' secondary school, while some parents from the middle class sent their daughters to school. Underprivileged girls had limited options and were sent to learn "domestic subjects" such as dressmaking and needlework (Mahoney, 1963). These skills became the only available source of employment opportunities for women. According to Foursey's 2019 research, women had

fewer opportunities than men in European educational classrooms. For example, Thakur (1969)



highlighted not only the low performance of students but particularly the low performance of girls compared to boys (Thakur, 1969: 187). This was consequently related to the interruption of domestic chores, less qualified teachers and lack of free mixing to challenge their minds in 1947, 1948 and 1949 (Thakur, 1969: 189). This indicates that the lack of prioritization of female education prevented them from acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in decision-making. Inadequate formal education disadvantaged women in the new European system as it required them to learn critical thinking, literacy, and knowledge about the internal colonial governance system, which was often designed to benefit men. This made it difficult for women to participate in decision-making and leadership positions.

The significance of education before independence cannot be overstated, as it was primarily educated men who initiated groups, associations, and organizations against colonial rule and formed political parties. Many of these men had served in the British administration and civil service and were politically aware teachers, students, and senior secondary school pupils (Hughes and Perfect, 2006: 201).

For key Gambian figures like Dawda Jawara, education played a pivotal role in the fight against colonial rule, as it provided Africans with the necessary skills and language to comprehend and advocate for their autonomy. In the 1920s, eligibility for native representation in the legislative council required literacy in English or Arabic (Nabanneh, Abebe, and Sowe, 2022: 9). Men predominantly founded nationalist movements, political parties, and trade unions due to their literacy. In the early 18th century, Arnold Hughes highlighted the challenges illiterate Muslim Wolof artisans faced in forming an influential trade union. This led them to a supportive role within the educated Aku association (Hughes and Perfect, 1989: 553). This indicates that individuals with lower levels of education were constrained in their ability to participate in the country's political decision-making processes. Although a few women were educated abroad and were involved in politics like men, they were not selected to participate in governance until 1883. Many of these women excelled in other areas, such as teaching, journalism, and political mobilization.

In 1868, the Governor-in-Chief established a policy to appoint qualified Africans for junior

clerkship positions (Mahoney, 1963: 176). In the mid-nineteenth century, colonial



authorities primarily restricted colonial posts to men (Mahoney, 1963: 171). Bala Saho notes that during the early days of establishing Bathurst, young men travelled to the protectorate for employment opportunities in petty trades and took jobs at the social amenities created by the colonial administration. These job opportunities were designed to help them provide for their families back home (Saho, 2012: 36). Despite the limited opportunities for African men in colonial clerical roles, it is essential to acknowledge that African women faced even greater marginalization and exclusion due to entrenched gender biases and discriminatory practices within colonial administrations.

While the first African was appointed to the legislative council in 1883, only Gambian men held consecutive unofficial positions in the council (Hughes and Perfect, 2006: 48). Administrator Gouldsbury appointed J.D Richards as the first African member of the Legislative Council in 1883 (Hughes and Perfect, 2008: 200). In 1886, Samuel Forster became the second unofficial African council member (Hughes and Perfect, 68). No woman was appointed to the decision-making institutions until 1977 through nomination by Former president Jawara (Hughes and Perfect, 2008: 164).

In gaining independence, the political dynamics between British officials and Gambian politicians resulted in the exclusive appointment of male ministers and MPs during the establishment of internal self-governance. As the British colonial government primarily engaged with male politicians, negotiations and agreements were conducted solely with male leaders, creating a political advantage for men. Consequently, all appointed ministers and MPs, as well as the first prime minister who later became the president of the first republic, were men (Nabanneh, Abebe, and Sowe, 2022: 16). Although Jawara, the leader of the negotiations for self-rule, could include women in the executive, no woman was involved in the discussions alongside him and other male leaders or appointed as ministers. This can be attributed to the prevailing gender norms and societal structure at the time, which limited women's participation in formal politics due to restricted access to education and traditional gender roles that confined them to the domestic sphere. As a result, their visibility and influence in politics were significantly reduced. Despite this, it is essential to recognize the instrumental role women played in supporting political parties and ensuring the success of the 1970 referendum for the establishment of the Gambian Republic. This overlooked aspect of Gambia's political history deserves acknowledgement and

recognition.



This historical context emphasizes the need for ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and inclusivity in all spheres of society. The exclusion of women from formal and political positions during colonialism indicates the interaction of colonial powers with Gambian men, entrenching male dominance in the political system, which had a lasting impact on the modern state of the Gambia. Despite legal empowerment, women's political situation in The Gambia remains underrepresented in leadership roles such as the national assembly and executive. This is due to a lack of confidence and the persistence of patriarchal aspects of Western politics, coupled with the European perception of Gambian women, which harmed their political and decision-making roles. This perception created gender stereotypes that denied women the opportunity to participate and showcase their abilities in leadership roles.

However, the resilience of Edward Francis Small and other prominent figures resulted in the enfranchisement of Gambians and their securing seats in the legislative council. This significant milestone led to a woman securing a seat in the legislative council in the late twentieth century through nomination by the first president, Jawara of The Gambia (Hughes & Perfect, 2006: 173). This was a step forward towards gender inclusivity, as studies indicate that women are more likely to assume leadership roles and contribute to decision-making when they are involved in the legislature (Coles, 2020: 27).

In conclusion, the political system of Gambia has been shaped by the influences of colonialism and external factors which have constructed traditional gender norms in the political participation of the country. During colonial administration, gender equality was not fully implemented in Gambia's education, political development, and access to employment. Consequently, Gambian society has been structured in a way that reinforces male authority, both in domestic and public spheres.

4. THE LEVEL OF WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION AND INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS AND INDEPENDENCE

This chapter delves into the complexities of Gambian politics and the active role of women in the country's struggle for independence and during former president Jawara's regime. The chapter explores the intricate political parties and government landscape, shaped by historical factors limiting women's representation in formal politics. Addressing gender inequality requires a multifaceted approach that may be implemented from various angles, including individual, political, societal, and community perspectives. By studying the development and evolution of the women's movement and their contributions, practical solutions and agencies can be found to fight for women's empowerment.

During the colonial era, Gambia men were subjected to unfair treatment and discrimination by colonial authorities in the formal setting. In response, they established associations that advocated for their rights and demanded respect. Small and Benjamin J. George both experienced unfair and unethical termination of their positions due to trivial disputes with white authorities, as noted by Hughes and Perfect (2006). These associations were born from personal experiences and encounters with the colonial authorities, which sparked agitation and a sense of solidarity among African men. Ultimately, this led to the formation of the Gambia Native Defensive Union (GNDU), a significant milestone in the Gambian nationalist movement. Through various organizations such as political parties, trade unions, and cultural associations, Gambians could express their grievances and gather support to fight for greater autonomy and self-determination. The transformation of the GNDU into the Gambia Committee in 1919 marked a shift towards more organized and concerted efforts to advocate for the rights and interests of Gambians under colonial rule.

It is worth noting that even though organizations such as the GNDU and later the Gambia Committee mainly were made up of men, their goals and determination for self-rule and representation were similar to women-led movements. Women in Gambia and other parts of Africa played a crucial and active role by utilizing advocacy, grassroots organizing, and mobilization to resist colonial rule (Janneh, 2021: 4). This indicates that the struggle for political representation, economic opportunities, and social justice during the nationalism period in The Gambia was not limited to men but also involved women's movements.

However, Gambian women faced intersectional discrimination that disconnected them from their male counterparts despite sharing a common oppressor in the colonial administration. Women faced unique challenges due to their gender and other intersecting identities, which resulted in a lack of participation in decision-making processes in The Gambia.

4.1 CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN

Learning about the courageous efforts of Gambian women who fought against colonialism and pushed for greater political participation is crucial. Women like Foon, Moore, and Camara faced significant resistance and societal pressures, including oppressive anti-press laws. Despite these challenges, they continued to advocate for their rights and aspirations, significantly impacting the struggle for independence. Their actions created spaces for alternative viewpoints to be expressed, serving as a powerful reminder of the importance of standing up for what is right and fighting for a more just society.

Throughout African nationalist movements, women were crucial in advocating for independence from colonial rule. They actively participated in protests, organised community initiatives, and contributed to the struggle for self-determination. Women took part in various forms of resistance, including boycotts, strikes, and demonstrations, and played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of their respective countries. Despite facing numerous challenges, including marginalisation and discrimination, African women's contributions to the struggle for independence cannot be overlooked. They were instrumental in achieving independence and continue to play a vital role in shaping their countries' social, economic, and political development. The Gambia women also followed a path of collective action through the "Kompins and Kafolu" system, which has allowed them to become allies of politicians and political parties (Janneh, 2021: 42). It enabled them to have a voice in decision-making processes and to advocate for their rights. The participation of Wolof women in politics is notable, especially in supporting the United Party. They were associated with "yayi kompins," groups of women who provided support and mobilisation for political parties. Their efforts and support served as a moving force toward political victory and official posts. These women played a crucial role in the political landscape of The Gambia, pushing political parties to aspire to greater heights

(Hughes and Perfect, 2006).



Gambian women played a vital role in shaping political discourse and mobilising support for various causes through their involvement in political parties and grassroots organisations. They actively recognised the harmful consequences of colonial rule in Gambia and supported the PPP in the referendum for a republic and the removal of the monarchy (Janneh, 2021: 41). It is evident that Gambian women have been actively participating in political affairs, demonstrating their commitment to bringing positive change and progress to the country. Their support has played a crucial role in advancing the goals of political parties and movements, highlighting the significance of gender inclusivity in political participation. This is a testimony to the resilience and activism of Gambian women throughout history.

Recognising the crucial role Gambian women played in political movements is essential. Their participation broadened the base of nationalist movements and political parties. By acknowledging the contributions of women, we can better understand the impact of their efforts and work towards achieving greater gender equality in decision-making. Women associated with social groups like "yayi kompins" were instrumental in advancing the goals of political parties and movements, highlighting the relevance of women as key influencers and mobilisers within Gambian society.

4.2 POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Most women played supportive roles, crucial for the success of political parties and nationalist movements. Fatou Janneh (2021) and Gwendolen Mikell (2009) both argue that African women were excluded from active participation after the colonial defeat due to the patriarchal nature of politics, According to Fatou Janneh (2021). With men assuming most senior positions in the political arena, only a few women were actively involved during the struggle for independence. Since Africa gained independence in the mid-eighteenth century, women were elected presidents in 2005.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf broke boundaries as she became Africa's first female president, leading Liberia from 2006 to 2018. She faced significant challenges throughout her tenure, including gender biases from those sceptical about a woman in such a high position (Fletcher, 2026). Her impressive educational background includes a degree in economics and a master's degree in Public Administration from Harvard, and she has gained

valuable experience



working at Citibank, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (Haddad & Schweinleand, 2009: 103; Waweru, 2017).

During her election, Helen Cooper (2017) drew comparisons between the progress of women's participation in Liberia and the racial dynamics in the US during Obama's presidency. Cooper (2017) pointed out that women supporting Sirleaf greatly increased her chances in the election. This underscores the transformative power of women's political support in Africa. The significant role of Liberian women's social networks, which made up over half of the voters in the 2005 election, in Sirleaf's historic victory as the first female president of Liberia, is a clear example of the potential for positive change. This research recognizes the profound impact these women had on the political landscape and the potential for further transformation.

The research emphasizes the journey and challenges faced by Sirleaf, highlighting the important factors contributing to the low participation of Gambian women in politics and their struggle to establish political authority after independence (Fatou Janneh, 2021). One of the major hurdles faced by Gambian women was their limited access to education, which served as a significant barrier preventing their active involvement in decision-making processes. In contrast, Sirleaf's remarkable educational and professional background played a pivotal role in her political success, highlighting the importance of educational equality. Her education not only equipped her to challenge and overcome gender biases and stereotypes but also enabled her to showcase exceptional leadership and capability.

During her presidential campaign, doubts and scepticism about Sirleaf's ability to govern the country due to her gender were prevalent. However, she effectively utilized her education and professional experience to refute any claims undermining her leadership skills (Thomas and Adams, 2010: 120). Education empowered Sirleaf and instilled the confidence to thrive in a male-dominated arena, challenging prevalent gender norms and stereotypes.

In contrast, Gambian women faced deep-seated gender norms and stereotypes, which significantly influenced public perceptions and hindered their support in decision-making roles. Had Gambian women enjoyed equal access to education, they could have more

effectively combated criticism regarding their ability to participate in politics from the outset, helping to eliminate gender stereotypes. Furthermore, despite efforts by social



networks and women's associations to promote gender equality, Gambian women were marginalized by political parties and were often assigned less challenging roles compared to men. Notably, after independence, former president Jawara failed to appoint any women to his cabinet despite having the opportunity to do so. On the other hand, international organizations played a crucial role in supporting and backing Sirleaf during her political journey, enhancing her political prospects.

Mikell (2009) emphasizes the significance of female leaders as influential role models, empowering Sirleaf to follow in the footsteps of esteemed figures such as Ruth Sando and Perry in restoring political order and participating in democratic processes in post-civil war Liberia. Sirleaf's prioritization of women's needs as part of her four-point strategy, acknowledging their majority representation among the impoverished, resulted in notable executive actions fostering gender equality. Her appointments of women to key positions in finance, commerce, justice, youth and sports, and as director of police, underscored her dedication to empowering women (Mikell, 2009: 21). Furthermore, her advancements in gender equality in education and legal reforms to enhance economic and property rights for women have played a pivotal role in elevating their status (Fletcher, 2016).

4.2.1 Political Parties, Politics and Access to Political Offices

Unfortunately, despite women's significant contributions in various roles, such as freedom rights fighters, voters, organisers, and political mobilisers, men predominantly led political parties and nationalist movements in many historical contexts. Similarly, in the Gambia, no political parties were established by women. The existing parties did not reinstate women's leadership after independence (Nabanneh, 2013: 43). Gambian women's lack of representation and participation in decision-making has hindered their progress in leadership positions. It continues to be a significant challenge to this day. Fatou Janneh pointed out that women could not secure political authority to make their contributions after independence. Without establishing women's positions in leadership roles, their access to opportunities and resources became limited, which ultimately reduced their representation in decision-making institutions, creating a barrier to women's political authority. The political parties' role in negating women's empowerment snowballed into a series of gender discrimination and stereotypes in decision-making spaces. It can be

argued that Gambian women found it



difficult to build political authority in an environment that prioritised political survival in the government, as mentioned by Sulayman Nyang (1977). Unfortunately, political leaders had no clear plans or interest in involving women in political endeavours after gaining independence. The priority of self-preservation and a lack of ideology clouded the interests of women. The prevailing political culture prioritising political survival and self-preservation can be a significant obstacle for women in building political authority.

Carlene

J. Edie's research discusses adopting the British competitive party politics system in the newly independent state, which preoccupied political leaders in securing support and popularity. This meant appealing to ethnic groups for support since ethnic groups tend to follow the same party. Interestingly, the ruling party, PPP, had many voters in the rural areas where most of the Mandinka ethnic group resides. President Jawara's successful strategy was based on the coalition and alliance of ethnic groups, especially the largest ethnic group, Mandinka. This approach helped him defeat his opponent, UP, who later withdrew from the race (Carlene J. Edie, 2000: 164). These local leaders affected women's issues as Alkalo, Kabilos (heads of lineage units), and Seyfolus (chiefs) were empowered by the ruling party for political advantage (Carlene J. Edie, 2000: 171). Therefore, Given the patriarchal nature of rural areas, political parties and the government prioritised men's support over women's empowerment. This highlights the historical and contemporary challenges faced by Gambian women in their pursuit of political leadership.

Political parties in The Gambia traditionally rely on the support of older men to win elections. Ballagamba reveals in the first regime where elderly men and local leaders convene at male-dominated spaces called "Bantabas", which prioritise male voices and opinions. Members of these meetings discuss views and opinions through personal experiences, carefully considering issues that would not spark "disruptive potentialities" of memories (Ballagamba, 2006: 107). Moreover, it creates a gender bias in the history and contribution of Gambian women, concealing the monumental impacts of their contribution. These "Bantabas" were crucial to the nation's development since political parties consider the opinions and complaints that arise from them, according to Alice Ballabamba. The access was limited to elderly people only, and women were excluded. (Ballagamba, 2006: 180). Such exclusionary spaces maintain a status quo that perpetuates the traditional power

dynamic that is resistant to change. In a situation where women displayed competence and



ambition, they were often subjected to male prejudice, as described by Hughes and Perfect. The PPP party defeated Mrs. Fatou Sonko, the only female candidate running for the legislative council. They achieved this by taking advantage of various factors, including male prejudices against women holding office, generational hostility towards youths attempting to take their place, and geographical rivalries (Hughes and Perfect, 2006: 186). Fatou Janneh (2021) also mentions that some chiefs were against the idea of female suffrage because they believed it would diminish the power and authority of men, especially the husband.

This gender disparity in leadership positions reflects broader societal norms and power dynamics that historically marginalised women from formal political leadership roles. Women have often been active participants in political struggles, contributing in numerous ways to advancing various causes and movements. Their contributions have frequently been overlooked or undervalued, particularly in formal leadership roles within political organisations. Even when former president Jammeh appointed the first woman vice president after his coup, women's status in the Gambia still regressed, as Bittaye (2021) concluded.

4.2.2 Masculinity in Politics

The transition from colonial rule often resulted in power struggles, instability, and sometimes authoritarian regimes. Such regimes, usually characterised by masculine environments, promoted unhealthy rivalry, brutal competition, and self-preservation in power. This dynamic can be analysed through a feminist lens in international relations, which highlights how patriarchal power structures can shape political systems and marginalise women. In environments where aggressive competition and displays of masculinity dominate, women may find it difficult to gain recognition and participate fully in political processes. Anifowose (2004) suggests that the perception of the physical differences in capabilities between men and women relies on the ability to enforce their will through "physical violence". According to Haddad and Schweinle (2009), men and women have distinct leadership styles, leading to differences in decision-making. He suggests that men tend to exhibit a transactional leadership style characterised by competitiveness, self-confidence, dominance, and the ability to influence others. In

contrast, the transformational



leadership style is less aggressive and more reliant on interpersonal strategies and social networks than individual strength (Haddad and Schweinle, 2009: 98). this transactional leadership style in politics excludes women from traditional political processes as it paints them as incompatible with the desired leadership traits.

In the 2005 campaign for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, political slogans such as "She is our man" and "Iron Lady" were used by supporters to emphasise her assertive traits with masculine traits, highlighting her suitability for the presidency. Thomas and Adam (2010) argue that her victory was based on capitalising on masculine traits. While this contributed to her success, it could also be argued that people associated those traits because of ingrained societal beliefs that traits are inherently separated between the sexes. Costa and McCrae (1992) introduced the Five-Factor Model of Personality, which highlights five dimensions of personality: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Their research indicates that while there are differences in the expression of these traits based on gender, these disparities are not rigid as they vary significantly among individuals. According to Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae (2001), gender differences can be attributed to two primary factors: biological differences stemming from hormonal disparities and social psychological theories, which suggest that gender distinctions are primarily a result of the assimilation of specific gender roles. Consequently, traits can be more universally possessed interchangeably depending on the context or environment. However, societal constructs have contributed to the notion that men and women are confined to exercising masculine and feminine traits.

The acknowledgement of the historical foundation of gender relations, as noted by Connell (1990), is crucial in understanding the state's role in perpetuating gender norms and stereotypes. According to him, Gender relations evolve and are influenced by historical, economic, and social factors, creating a division of labour and gender stratification within a given state. In describing a state's gender regime, Connell (1990) notes that men assumed the "elite" of political roles, while women undertook roles centred around caregiving, teaching, and secretarial work.

As roles for men and women changed over time, traits in each context became inherent and labelled as masculine and feminine. In "Doing Gender", West and Zimmerman (1987)

propose that assertiveness, decisiveness, and competition are masculine traits, while empathy, nurturing, and cooperation are feminine. They argue that these traits are performed due to societal expectations and beliefs. According to Judith Butler and Gender Trouble (1990), these performances of gender traits result from repetitive acts or behaviours that adhere to cultural norms and expectations. Consequently, Butler and Trouble (1990) argues that repetitive behaviours are perceived as natural and are thus adopted by individuals. This explains why men continue to dominate politics and are seen as naturally suited for such roles due to their repeated involvement.

On the other hand, women, like Gambian women, who were excluded from decision-making roles, struggle to gain sociopolitical recognition. For instance, the exclusion of Gambian women from decision-making spaces during Jawara's time reinforced traditional gender roles, marginalising women from participating in politics. The bantaba, a male-dominated space symbolising male authority, served as a platform for politicians to gain legitimacy and popularity within specific Gambian communities. The prolonged male gatherings at the Bantaba reinforced the concept of male leadership and their involvement in political processes. During these gatherings, men could express their views on national matters. At the same time, women were excluded from participating on the belief that their opinions lacked assertiveness, as observed by Ballagamba (2006). The absence of women in these spaces, which prevented them from demonstrating assertiveness and decisiveness traits, led to the misconception that women were unable to thrive in male-dominated environments due to their perceived lack of masculine traits.

Therefore, according to Butler and Trouble (1990), if gender is not inherently linked to sex, men and women can exhibit both societal constructs of masculine and feminine traits, depending on the situation or context. Hence, concerning the labelling of Sirleaf as an "iron lady," it is not because she displays traits typically associated with men but because she is fulfilling the role best suited to her particular situation and context. Furthermore, her assertiveness and decisiveness challenge gender stereotypes that undermine and exclude women from participating in high public offices.

Ellis and Ter Haar (2004: 98), observed the scarcity of women assuming high public offices in Africa, underscoring the significant gender gap in leadership. They also

propose that



women may succeed in exerting influence in politics through indirect means such as spiritual possession.

The suggestion of using indirect means to gain power has harmed women's authority and influence in leadership positions. It has led to the reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes in politics and other institutions. When women are not able to use the same channels as men to participate in politics, it creates a distinct and inferior role for them. This means that women are often relegated to supporting roles rather than being seen as equals. This pattern can be seen in the role of African women during the nationalist movements and struggles for independence, as they were often relegated to supporting roles rather than seen as leaders in their own right. Moreover, the emphasis on traditionally masculine traits such as strength, dominance, and assertiveness can reinforce gender stereotypes, further excluding women from positions of power and influence. Excluding women from post-colonial political systems had far-reaching consequences for women's empowerment and gender equality.

Ultimately, promoting a more inclusive and equitable society is essential, where all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to succeed. Women often face discrimination and marginalisation in politics due to gender stereotypes and societal expectations. Damilola Taiye Agbalajobi (2009) pointed out that men exhibiting traditionally masculine traits like strength, competitiveness, and self-reliance are often perceived to be better suited for political leadership roles that require force. This further marginalises women viewed as timid and unsuited for such positions. Consequently, women are not encouraged to adopt these characteristics or pursue political leadership roles, which limits their representation in decision-making processes. According to Tong (2009), men and women should be encouraged to render their feminine and masculine sides to feel whole. Tapping into both feminine and masculine decision-making and leadership institutions may promote a more equitable and acceptable society for both genders. Radical cultural feminists stand on the argument that if society can learn to appreciate feminine traits as much as masculine traits, women's oppression will be a thing of the past (Tong, 2009: 3). This approach helps both genders understand and effectively address gender equality. Therefore, it is necessary to break down these gender stereotypes and create a more inclusive political environment that values diverse perspectives and

leadership styles.



In conclusion, despite women's progress in politics, a significant gap exists between political power and economic freedom, particularly in The Gambia. This gap highlights the persistent gender inequality and structural obstacles, such as societal norms and patriarchy, which continue to curtail women's empowerment and limit their representation in decision-making processes. We must continue to push for more inclusive political environments that value diverse perspectives and leadership styles to address these issues and achieve gender equality. The fallout of women from political endeavours can be attributed to several factors. The colonial legacy of patriarchal politics in the Gambia has created a culture of male dominance in decision-making positions. This has translated into a lack of representation for women in leadership roles such as the national assembly and executive. Additionally, discrimination against women is a global issue, and in Africa, it is often linked to colonialism and gender issues. Women's lack of confidence in competing with male colleagues and traditional beliefs hinder women's political participation. Addressing these barriers and creating more inclusive and equitable political environments for women is essential.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL STATUS IN THE GAMBIA: JAMMEH AND BARROW'S REGIMES

This chapter conducts a comparative analysis of women's status in Gambian politics under the leadership of former President Jammeh and current President Barrow. It examines the efforts made by the government and civil society actors to address women's issues through legal instruments and proactive measures. By evaluating policies, legal frameworks, and societal changes, this study aims to provide insights into the modern dynamics of women's status in Gambian politics.

The political landscape of The Gambia has witnessed significant shifts in recent years, particularly concerning women's participation and status in governance. This chapter explores the evolution of women's political roles under two contrasting regimes – former President Jammeh and the current administration led by President Barrow. It aims to assess progress in advancing women's rights and representation in political decision-making by analyzing government initiatives and civil society interventions

5.1 SECOND REGIME: SYSTEMS INHERITED BY JAMMEH IMPACTED THE LEVEL OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION.

Jammeh claimed the government through military intervention and accused former president Jawara of corruption and malpractice in his regime (Perfect, 2010: 54). His presidency is termed as an authoritarian government comprised of multiple human rights violations (Thompson, 2015). Looking past the countless human rights abuses he had committed, Jammeh has contributed to the infrastructural development of the Gambia and improved the education system, especially regarding gender equality. He tackled challenges of girls' access and right to education by increasing the number of school enrolment to over 92% at lower basic level in 2006–2007, establishing the first university in the Gambia (Perfect, 2010: 57, Sanneh 2016). His government introduced some initiatives ostensibly aimed at empowering women, including establishing the Women's Bureau, enacting laws like the Women's Act, and appointing the first female Vice President. However, these measures often lacked meaningful implementation and were criticized for their superficiality. CRI index (Commitment to Reducing Inequality)

studied the African government's commitment



towards gender equality, and West Africa was listed as the least committed. The study agrees by saying, "Inequality and poverty are not preordained: they are the products of political choices and public policy" (Hallum and Obeng, 2019: 5). The Gambia scored 0.25, ranking fifth place in its commitment (Hallum and Obeng, 2019: 22). In political representation Nigeria women constitute 5.8% in parliament, Benin is 7.2%, and Mali constituting 8.8%. Gambia constitutes 6 % of women in parliament. An investigation done in 2005 revealed that most of the Gambian population are illiterate, with 65.8% of adult women and 51.8% of men. In education, girls are in the lowest percentage in primary school, secondary, and even in the University of the Gambia, making up to 39% (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005: 4). The study also showed that these percentages translate in the employment of girls as maids. While there were initiatives for women's advancement, certain factors hindered progress.

5.1.1 Patronage Politics

The African Bank Group's report (2011) on The Gambia's Gender Profile highlights the importance of governance as a crucial component of gender equality and women's advancement in the country. However, The Gambia has a long history of men dominating political offices due to historical colonial practices and patriarchal privileges. Despite affirmative action, men still outnumber women in the political space since independence. The inequality of representation in the government, coupled with the patronage system of the first and second regimes, further undermines the advancement of women's participation and representation in The Gambia. Women are often excluded from certain positions due to the patronage system perpetuating their obscurity.

The patronage system established by leaders like Jawara and Jammeh exacerbated the underrepresentation of women in the Gambia. This system benefited men loyal to the government since the colonial period, perpetuating a cycle of male dominance in political appointments. Former president Jawara has a history of rewarding political loyalties and was criticised for placing unqualified personnel in his government during his period (Hughes and Perfect, 2006: 171). Jammeh also inherited this system, favouring those loyal to him over actual qualifications and exacerbating the underrepresentation of women in politics. According to Rhode (2016), in-group favouritism affects women's

representation as it



creates fewer opportunities for women with educational qualifications and political competence to compete with men who have always been in proximity to power. This favouritism also reinforces gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles rooted in the colonial period that relegated women from public offices.

Furthermore, the patronage system emphasises gender disparity unequivocally eradicates any possibility for equal opportunity and political representation. The Gambia faces a significant gender imbalance in political representation, as evidenced by the African Development Bank's report on the country's gender profile and supported by Satang Nabanneh's (2014) study. The low representation of women in Local Government councils, as observed by Turner (2012), and their limited presence in the National Assembly and Local Government Councils, as indicated by Nabanneh (2014), highlight the extent of this disparity. The current representation of women in public offices is less than 10%, which challenges their ability to effectively influence policy and advocate for issues that directly impact them. Despite Jammeh's appointment of Isatou Njie Saidy as vice president and minister of Women's Affairs, her role had a limited impact on women's lives, as Isatou Bittaye (2021) noted. Rather than effecting meaningful change, her position seemed more of a symbolic gesture, highlighting the constraints of symbolic representation without a genuine commitment to structural change. The patronage system reinforced power dynamics, constraining significant progress in women's rights and representation. The underrepresentation of women in political spheres hinders their participation and recognition and affects diversity in policymaking that may not address the needs and concerns of the entire population comprehensively. Addressing gender disparity in government requires focused efforts to promote gender equality in political participation. This can be achieved through implementing gender quotas, providing leadership training for women, and creating a more inclusive political environment that encourages and supports female candidacy. Proactive steps can help improve representation and promote advocacy for women's issues in the political sector.

The underrepresentation of women in political and leadership roles transcends policy influence, extending to their political participation and public perception. Women often face biased judgment and criticism, which perpetuates harmful stereotypes regarding their performance. With a lack of substantial data on women's overall performance in public

offices, bias criticism, amplified by low representation, often paints the perception of women as incompetent, unaggressive, and unqualified compared to their male counterparts. The existence of these negative perceptions discourages women from leading roles. It creates a significant barrier to their political careers, perpetuating a cycle where their underrepresentation negatively impacts societal views of politics and decision-making. However, this perception does not deter women. However, they make it harder for women in senior positions to succeed and be perceived positively. Moreover, the prevalent patronage system in many political environments compounds this obstacle, favouring men over women. As a result, the disparity between the two genders in public spaces reduces the opportunities for women to ascend to more impacting roles.

5.1.2 The Patriarchal Society

The efforts made by Jammeh to empower women were hindered by a patriarchal government that employed a politically motivated religious strategy, which restricted women's opportunities for participation. Cultural barriers and discriminatory practices restricted women's access to education, economic opportunities, political positions, and decision-making roles. The reluctance of authorities to address the cultural and social norms perpetuated issues such as forced and early marriages, undermining efforts to improve the situation for women (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005: 4). This perpetuated the idea of male superiority over women, reinforcing a social construct where men are perceived as leaders and women as supporters (Nabanneh, 2014: 40). The Research by Santang Nabanneh (2014) on the political participation and representation of women in the Gambia highlighted structural and cultural obstacles such as family and the status of a wife as factors hindering women in political positions. She noted that young unmarried women face challenges and judgment and are often encouraged to marry because unmarried women receive less support, as stated by a young councillor. This points to a significant emphasis on a woman's domestic life, such as her marital status. Societal norms linking a woman's candidacy with her husband or a male figure significantly limit the individuality of women in Gambia. It creates a barrier and violates free will, as some female candidates require permission from their husbands to run for office. According to a women's political empowerment conference, participants openly shared their fear of rejection by their spouses and their spouse's family if they were to run

for political office (United Nations, 2022). This



is normalized because society has constructed these narratives backed by religious texts and cultural norms. Women's involvement in the public sphere is considered abnormal, creating a pervasive space for women.

As a result, interest among female candidates in participating in politics increases and the relegation of women in supporting roles. This leads to a situation where women do not support other women running for leadership positions. Some female political figures have described this as the PHD (Pulling Her Down) syndrome, in which female voters undermine female candidates (Nabanneh, 2014:41). For instance, in the 2021 election, Mari Sock, the only female candidate, was disqualified due to a lack of the required number of registered supporters to endorse her candidacy (Nabanneh, 2022). Her lack of female support perpetuated male dominance in the 2021 presidential election. While it was not explicitly stated that she lacked the votes of women, the observation that political parties and candidates receive a significant amount of support from women, as noted by Nabanneh (2014), suggests a potential concern regarding female voters. For example, in 1969, Jawara faced political opposition after a referendum but secured political success with the support of women in Saba and Fass Chabo (Janneh, 2021:51). These examples strongly suggest that there may be a correlation between Mari Sock's candidacy and the support of women for a female candidate.

5.1.3 The Politicization of Religion/ or Religion as a Political Tool

Anthonia M. Essien, Donatus P. Ukpog, Jaco Beyers, and Momodou Darboe agree that religion is a powerful influence in a nation. Jaco Beyers argues that religion, by its very nature, is used for political advancement and is not separated from everyday life. Anthonia M. Essien and Donatus P. Ukpog suggest that religion and traditional culture are the main reasons behind female subjugation and intimidation.

Religious and local leaders, who are often influenced by patriarchal norms, have played a significant role in marginalizing women from leadership positions. Religious leaders and local leaders have been known to resist and slow down women's empowerment by influencing government policies. Religious teachings are believed to primarily affect the perception of women's status in Gambian society. The hierarchy of the family is highly valued, and the empowerment of women is often met with resistance from religious

leaders.



Women are typically defined in a narrow and stereotypical role as mothers and wives, with an emphasis on modesty, appearance, and obedience. This limits their participation in public life. This has significant implications for women's issues in The Gambia, as the government gives these leaders authority to exercise power in their communities, especially in rural areas. We must investigate the relationship between religious authorities, institutions, and the government to understand how policies are implemented and the dynamics of ideology and power. This close relationship between state leaders, religious authorities, and local leaders can be problematic and make it difficult to address specific issues, such as women's empowerment and gender equality.

The Gambia is a secular country with a 90% Muslim population. The concept that God puts a leader in power and only God can remove him from power prolonged the first two regimes in power for more than two decades. This belief, as recorded by the ICTJ report (2019) on "Women's Experiences of Dictatorship in the Gambia, Indicates the exploitation of religion by politicians in the Gambia, potentially manipulating the electorate and controlling the government in favour of the president. According to the report, this concept prevented women from voicing their concerns and standing against mistreatment due to the president's influence.

Former president Jawara used Islamic interpretations and symbols to represent divinity and gain political support from the Muslim community, especially the religious leaders (Nyang, 1984: 20). Religious leaders' role in shaping women's status and position in leadership roles is significant. A country's development and empowerment are the government's and political leaders' responsibility. However, the level of interaction between the government and religious leaders can affect policy and governmental projects in the state.

During colonialism, the governor appointed local leaders such as chiefs, alkali, and seyfolu. Later, in 1958, political parties began using local leaders, especially chiefs, as spokesmen in the protectorate (Hughes and Perfect, 2008:41). This move aimed to increase political support. President Jawara also expanded his control in the country's provinces by creating a portfolio in the Ministry of Interior Affairs that empowered the traditional Muslim Council. He used Quranic verses as a symbol in almost all of his political rallies to

gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muslim population (Nyang, 1984:23). The previous chapter has highlighted how



political parties and the government rely on the support of religious and political leaders to push their political agenda.

During Jawara's period, the influence of religion was not significant, but the relationship between religion and politics was more pronounced during Jammeh's rule. Jammeh capitalized on faith to gain support and justify his coup in 1994, creating his allies in the Islamic community and detaching himself from old religious leaders as he believed they represented the old regime (Darboe, 2004:73). He lost support from the old religious leaders who had previously supported the former president, therefore, to regain support, he gave the "Wahabbis" official authority and a platform to spread their teachings. This helped him to supplant his lost support. Additionally, he built a mosque on state grounds and established the Supreme Islamic Council, which the president backed. In The Gambia, the president allows religious leaders to use radio stations, TV channels, and newspaper outlets as platforms to give public statements, sermons, and teachings. Jammeh also chose Imam Fatty, a religious person informed by religious and conservative views, as his advisor.

This dynamic ranges from a conservative to a progressive standpoint as a religious leader. In 2015, a report revealed that the government and political leaders were reluctant to address women's empowerment due to the influence of religious and local leaders (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005: 3). State decisions and directives are influenced by the appeasement of particular leaders. For example, the former president issued a directive requiring women in public service to cover their hair during work hours (BBC News. 2016). Although this created controversy, the Supreme Islamic Council supported the directive (BBC News, 2016).

The perspective of their ideological standpoint can either be conservative or progressive, significantly impacting the direction of social views and understanding of women's position and participation in decision-making. For example, Barrows's religious advisor, Dembo Bojang, urged Imams to partake in the country's political matters and defend the president because he advocates for their cause (2021). This illustrates imams' significant religious and political influence in The Gambia and the blurred lines between religion and politics. Understanding and recognizing this dynamic provides a clear governance

landscape in pursuing gender equality. The views expressed on Islamic teachings can significantly impact



people's opinions regarding women in decision-making roles. Public attitudes towards electing women to hold office may be influenced by religious leaders who interpret Islamic teachings conservatively and traditionally about the position of women in family and society.

The Gambian government relies on religious and local leaders to promote support and legitimacy for its policies and projects. Therefore, if the government adopts a policy or project that concerns the community, consultation with the religious leader may influence enforcement, and the accommodation of such policy will reflect the acceptability of the spiritual and local leaders. However, a gender-ambiguous project could be subject to religious and conservative criticism. Unfortunately, men often dominate the debate on women's rights, such as the ongoing FGM ban debate in parliament. According to an NGO report, religious leaders are the most resistant group towards women's issues (International Federation for Human Rights, 2005:3). This acknowledgement of the conservatives towards gender issues precipitated the Beijing conference report (2015) to outline that its mission is not to replace men.

According to the African Bank Group, women are not appointed chiefs in the Gambia. Similarly, appointing a female as clan head in any of the 2000 villages is considered taboo in Nigeria. This means that women are excluded from holding such positions of authority and decision-making power. (Essein and Ukpong, 2012:1).

5.1.4 Depending on NGOs and Aid Donors

African feminists have taken a strong stance by separating themselves from Western feminism. They have recognized the need to confront their underlying intersectional issues. However, African feminists rely on Western aid and international donors to support their discourse and objectives to improve gender equality in Africa. This paper highlights the African governments' lack of emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment. It does not seek to belittle or undermine the international efforts to support this cause.

As a newly independent state, the Gambia received significant foreign aid to address its economic challenges (Sallah, 1990:683). The Gambia has benefited from various aid programs, but this has inadvertently led to a mindset of dependency on financial assistance to address its shortcomings. During Jawara's administration, a strategy was designed to

gain



more aid, which involved manipulating the country's disadvantaged situation in its foreign policy to attract funding from the international community (Wiseman, 1996: 932). Unfortunately, this mindset of dependency has also affected the country's efforts towards gender equality, which are heavily reliant on external assistance. It is typical for NGOs and donors to take on the responsibility of addressing women's issues, which unfortunately leads to the government becoming complacent in achieving gender equality. A report by the African Development Bank Group (2011) pointed out that Civil Society Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations play a vital role in creating awareness and promoting women's empowerment in the Gambia. Moreover, these NGOs provide support in areas where the government falls short (Turner, 2011:42).

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international organizations play a more significant role in addressing women's issues with less involvement from the state. This dependence on external assistance may result in less political will to address women's issues. The willingness of state officials and institutions to prioritize gender equality can vary, which may affect its enforcement. Governments prioritize matters ranging from national security to development. Although gender equality is considered a human right and a crucial catalyst for social and economic growth worldwide, it may receive low national priority due to competing state interests and external assistance on other issues. This situation has significant implications since the allocation of resources is limited based on the enforcement officials' perceived needs. Gender equality initiatives may receive minimal attention and resources due to competing state priorities. Relying on external assistance can hinder the development of sustainable solutions in the future.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often bear the brunt of running initiatives such as training women and girls, providing easy access to education, and advocating for women's rights. However, their work has its limits. Gender equality in the Gambia is deeply ingrained in the culture and tradition of the people. To effectively address these issues, it is crucial for other actors in society, particularly those with power and influence, to be involved. This task becomes even more challenging when the government is reluctant to engage local leaders and certain segments of society to fully recognize women's status. This underscores the urgency of collective responsibility in the pursuit of gender equality.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are beacons of hope in the global fight for gender equality. They are responsible for running and operating various initiatives and programs to advance gender equality. These initiatives encompass advocating for women's rights, providing education and training to women and girls, and working towards eliminating discriminatory laws and policies. NGOs tirelessly empower women and girls, enabling them to participate fully in all aspects of society, including decision-making processes. Through their unwavering efforts, NGOs are instrumental in creating a more just and equitable world where everyone, regardless of gender, has equal access to opportunities.

5.2 THIRD REGIME: ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL AGENDAS OVERSHADOWING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.

The third regime in the Gambia experienced a political and social shift that created a free and open atmosphere for socio-economic and political development, including gender equality. Barrow's administration sought a democratic state that would liberate and end the authoritative systems in the Gambia. In achieving this objective, he engaged experts and the CSOs to reform legal and institutional frameworks that would foster progress in the Gambia. For example, he launched the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparation Commission. He engaged over 80 civil society and non-governmental organizations to support the judiciary inquiry and TRRC process (African Center for Strategic Studies, 2018).

Despite significant progress in the status and representation of women in Barrow's government, there are still challenges that urgently need to be addressed to sustainably and meaningfully empower Gambian women under Barrow's government.

5.2.1 Gender Disparity in Barrow Cabinet and National Assembly

In several countries, including The Gambia, achieving gender balance in the government, especially in the cabinet, has been a global objective to promote diversity and female representation. Despite legal and constitutional reforms aimed at advancing women's participation and representation, women continue to be significantly underrepresented in crucial decision-making spaces. The current composition of Barrow's Cabinet is starkly imbalanced, with men dominating and only a few women holding official positions. This imbalance underscores the urgent need for more efforts to promote women's participation

in government.



In 2017, only one out of the eleven ministers appointed and the vice president were women. However, the vice president, Fatoumatta Tamberdou, was later replaced by Ousainou Darboe (Reuters, 2018). In 2022, the situation improved slightly as four out of the 24 appointed official posts were held by women.

While it is a positive development that women now occupy high-level positions such as vice president and secretary general, achieving equal representation of both men and women in leadership is not just a goal, but a necessity. The current level of female representation in the cabinet could hinder significant progress in advancing women's empowerment and limit the diversity of perspectives and experiences that are necessary for meeting the needs of all Gambians. The practice of assigning individuals to specific ministerial and official positions based on their gender perpetuates societal stereotypes and marginalizes women as mere supporters. This phenomenon still exists today, as women are often the most significant political supporters (Nabaneh, 2014: 31). Women were appointed to positions such as Secretary General and Head of Civil Service, Gender, Children and Welfare, Environment and Climate Change, and Basic and Secondary Education, and the remaining positions were predominantly held by men (The Point, 2022). According to a report by UN Women (2023), women are predominantly employed in positions related to social welfare, gender equality, and human rights portfolios.

Barrow's cabinet appears to have a limited representation of gender and diversity in appointments. Women are consistently chosen to lead institutions that focus on gender-related and less challenging issues. At the same time, men are predominantly selected to hold positions in defence, foreign affairs, transport, infrastructure, and others. This practice restricts women's opportunities and sustains gender imbalance at senior levels of the government.

5.2.2 Impact low Representation in Decision-Making Institutions (Draft Constitution 2022 and the Private Members Bill)

The preceding sections illustrate how political interests and manoeuvring have significantly hindered gender equality in the Gambia. Specifically, the president's unfulfilled pledge of a

draft constitution during his 2016 campaign to address term limits and presidential powers has highlighted the need for more tangible progress and the impending impact of political promises on critical societal issues. Moreover, the delayed and subsequent rejection of the bill in the national assembly, which aimed to bolster female representation, vividly demonstrates the intricate complexities and multifaceted challenges that hinder the journey towards gender equality in the nation.

The Draft constitution was supposed to address gender equality (Nabanneh, Abebe, Sowe, 33, Jaw, 2020). Interestingly, the opposers of the draft constitution were all Barrow sympathizers who raised concerns over language policy; the Constitution contained too many rights, and there was a need to adopt it (Jaw, 2020). Sait Matty referred to these issues as "distractions" and said they were an excuse to avoid the term limit. Borrowed later shocked the nation when he announced his party, the National People Party, in 2019, confirming the speculations (Nabanneh, Abebe, Sowe, 34). The discontinuation of the document was a significant setback in achieving gender equality, especially in leadership roles. It contained provisions that would promote gender equality and eliminate discriminatory gender-biased practices in the government. This provision would help restore confidence among women and encourage representation and participation in decision-making roles. The initiative's failure sparked debates and controversy over political issues. These debates centred around presidential term limits and other political considerations that may have had unintended consequences. One significant result was that crucial gender issues outlined in the draft constitution became sidelined due to these debates.

The draft constitution encompasses several significant provisions to promote gender equality and representation. It ensures women's participation in key leadership roles in the National Assembly and other government positions through the implementation of gender quotas and the fight against gender-based discrimination. For instance, the draft constitution proposed to increase the number of National Assembly members from 53 to 63, with 14 seats reserved explicitly for women. This provision and others would substantially impact gender equality in the Gambia:

- a. Section 32(2) subjects to respect for the rights and freedom of women and public

interest.



- b. Section 55 guarantees the same level of respect and dignity as men, political, economic and social, without discrimination or inequality.
- c. Section 68 ensures gender balance and fair representation of women.
- d. Section 69 (2b) protects women and marginalized groups from discrimination.
- e. Section 74(b) provides equitable gender representation in all elective public institutions.

Another significant setback towards gender parity and equality is the development of a Bill that would legally promote equal representation in decision-making in 2021, initiated by Touma Njai, a national assembly member, and the International Republican Institute (IRI) (Cham, 2021). Touma Njai is a prominent female politician who serves at the National Assembly, representing the Banjul South Constituency (Cham, 2021). She has been actively involved in politics and has a strong business and entrepreneurship background. As a notable public figure, she has dedicated her life to public service and relentless advocacy for gender equality and social justice.

Njai entered politics to bring about change and development in her community and country. In 2021, she announced herself as the leader of the PPP during a press conference after losing to a male candidate (Touray, 2021). Despite facing challenges as a woman in a male-dominated field, along with cultural biases and limited resources, her determination and resilience led to her earning a seat in the National Assembly as a respected member.

As a member of the National Assembly, Touma has highlighted the challenges she faces as a woman in a developing world, referring to it as "double jeopardy." However, she has embraced this challenge as an opportunity to advocate for women in the Gambia, using her platform to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights and social issues. She has championed various initiatives to improve women's and children's lives through legislative and policy instruments, aiming to enhance access to education and healthcare and promote economic opportunities for women.

In 2012, a bill was proposed to reserve 16 seats for women in the National Assembly, Increasing the Number of members to 71 (Cham,2021). For the bill to succeed, Njai urged both men and women to support it (Taylor, 2012). Unfortunately, it faced delays and lacked support from some male members, hindering its progress.

Undeterred, Njai reintroduced the bill in 2023 as a private member's bill, aiming to provide 16 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly (Ceesay, 2023). However, the challenges and reasons for the bill's failure indicate the impact of low representation of women in decision-making roles, hindering progress in gender equality and women's empowerment. The absence of a robust social network for women in influential positions impacts their ability to represent and participate in decision-making in the Gambia effectively. Those women holding senior roles must exert extra effort to achieve positive outcomes for gender equality and women's political involvement.

Njai advocates for gender parity and women's representation in senior institutions. She has actively collaborated with international organizations such as the ECOWAS Parliament and the International Republican Institute (IRI) to strengthen women's representation in decision-making and political processes (Manneh, 2022; Times, 2023). Furthermore, Njai has played a crucial role in promoting Women's Rights Advocacy as the chair of the Gender and Children's Welfare Committee in the National Assembly (Manneh, 2022). Her efforts emphasize the importance of implementing structural changes to ensure increased female participation in politics and advocating for legislative amendments to bolster women's representation.

5.2.3 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Debate and the Status of Women

It is crucial to use the debate on FGM as a platform to address other harmful cultural practices, especially for the advancement of women's political participation. The ongoing debate surrounding female genital mutilation could prompt a re-evaluation of different cultural customs, such as early marriage and women's confinement to domestic life. Over the past decades, the debate has hindered substantial progress in women's freedom and rights. It reinforces systemic and institutional inequalities, impeding women's autonomy and agency. It violates women's right to decide and give consent about their bodies, undermining their agency and self-determination. It also curtails their choice in society due to its stigma.

The FGM case is a poignant example of the challenges women face in society. It represents how the perceptions of others shape the destiny of women. The logic behind such practices is to remind women of their gender roles, emphasising attributes and behaviours that are

considered acceptable. Traditional gender roles can impede women from attaining positions



of power and authority because the qualities typically associated with leadership are often in contradiction with traditional feminine attributes. It idealises qualities such as marriageability, Modesty, purity, and femininity that create a narrow image of women. Ipinyomi (2014) argues that the desire to maintain female chastity is associated with male authority and control, which could limit their capability in leadership roles. Furthermore, it perpetuates a tame version of women, where their bodies are subjugated to control and manipulation.

The decision to not practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) can lead to social rejection by the community. FGM is considered a ritual for the rite of passage for women and girls, allowing them to physically and socially enter society (Country Profile: FGM in the Gambia, 2015: 59). This is why some argue that criminalising FGM by states may be challenging for people to accept because it denies them social acceptance in the community (Ipinyomi, 2014). However, it is essential to view FGM from a universalist perspective that recognises women's issues as human rights issues. Prioritising the well-being of all humans should outweigh any cultural or traditional practice that inflicts psychological or physical complications.

In certain cultures, women who do not adhere to certain practices may face criticism and be deemed unworthy. For instance, some cultures believe that an uncircumcised woman is not considered to be a mature woman or a complete human being. Such women are often excluded from society and denied the right to associate with others (Kaplan, 2013: 7). Gender discrimination and inequalities are likely to impact women's political participation and leadership positions. Women are often judged based on cultural and traditional norms, hindering their legitimacy and political acceptance. For instance, during the 2021 presidential election, Mari Sock, the only female candidate, faced criticism for not adhering to conservative modesty standards. In an interview with the Standard Newspaper, she responded to the criticism by stating that her mode of dressing was not what would carry the country forward and that what mattered was her ability to perform and deliver.

This indicates the unequal and biased treatment that women face in terms of their political participation, which is often due to cultural norms and traditional practices that limit and devalue their role in politics. Unlike male candidates, women are frequently subjected to

strict rules and standards such as dress codes and marital status. These rules are a form of control used to scrutinise women's choices and actions. For instance, women who reject female circumcision or are not circumcised may be labelled as unworthy or unacceptable to society (Wilson, 2015: 12). This questions their physical and psychological abilities, undermining their political acceptance and distorting their leadership positions. Moreover, as Mari Socks did, women may face judgmental questions about their attire. All these practices perpetuate gender inequality and limit women's involvement in political endeavours.

The societal acceptance of female subordination and traditional biased standards can have significant implications on their self-confidence and mindset. It makes it challenging for them to pursue leadership roles and positions of authority. One of the main barriers for women in leadership is a lack of confidence caused by historical colonial gender discrimination. Women have historically faced systematic marginalisation and discrimination in education, employment, leadership opportunities, and economic advantages.

Moreover, since the emergence of the FGM debate in the Gambia, the government, through the Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs, has not taken any affirmative position to push for the rights of women, which inevitably demonstrates the government's lack of commitment to promote and advance gender equality.

Unfortunately, during Jammeh's regime, some human rights violations impacted women's political participation. However, there were also positive developments, such as increased enrolment for girls and establishing the University of the Gambia, which promoted gender equality in education. It's worth noting that Jammeh made efforts towards women's empowerment by appointing the first female Vice President and creating the Women's Bureau. While these initiatives were criticized for lacking meaningful implementation, they still marked progress.

On the downside, Jammeh's administration practised a patronage system favouring loyal men, perpetuating male dominance in political appointments and promotions. This significantly affected women's representation and position in government. Additionally,

cultural barriers and discriminatory practices, supported by a politically motivated religious strategy, restricted women's opportunities in political spaces.

Overall, while there were notable strides in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, challenges also need to be addressed. Barrow's administration set out to build a democratic state, driving socioeconomic and political progress and championing gender equality through initiatives like the Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission and involving civil society organizations in advancing gender equality. Despite advancements compared to the previous administration, women still need to be adequately represented in Barrow's cabinet and in decision-making positions. This highlights the urgent need for increased efforts to promote female participation. The rejection of the draft constitution and the initial dismissal of Touma Njai's private member bill, influenced by political interests and a lack of prioritization, have hampered progress toward achieving gender parity and equality.

Both Jammeh and Barrow's administrations suffered from a lack of female representation. Jammeh's patronage system and bias towards male loyalists restricted women's opportunities and reinforced gender stereotypes and traditional roles. In Barrow's current government, despite a few women holding senior positions, the overall representation of women remains limited. Women are often confined to gender-related roles such as gender, welfare and education, perpetuating stereotypes and constraining their access to broader opportunities.

During Jammeh's tenure, the patriarchal society reinforced traditional gender roles and cultural norms with the support of religious leaders, which created obstacles to women's involvement in politics. While Barrow's administration has endeavoured to promote gender equality, deep-rooted cultural and social norms continue to shape women's political roles. This is evident in the ongoing debate over the ban on female genital mutilation (FGM), which has sparked discussions on how women's bodies should be treated. These entrenched cultural practices restrict women's autonomy and rights, significantly impacting their socio-political standing in the country.

Both Jammeh and Barrow have intricate and contentious relationships with the religious factions in the country. Jammeh strategically utilized religion as a tool for political

advancement by appointing conservative religious advisors and fostering close ties with the



Supreme Islamic Council. Conversely, Barrow's interactions were characterized by influence from religious leaders, as his advisors encouraged Imams to support Barrow and engage in political matters actively. This complex interplay between religion and the political sphere profoundly impacts state decisions and reinforces entrenched traditional gender roles. The overlapping realms of religion and politics cultivate a societal bias against women's leadership, perpetuated by religious interpretations, ultimately shaping public attitudes.

Finally, both political regimes' reliance on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and aid donors is clearly reflected in their approach to addressing gender equality. This dependence has contributed to a lack of political will to prioritize and champion gender equality initiatives, which can hinder the development of sustainable solutions and comprehensive efforts to achieve gender equality.

In conclusion, the status of women in Gambian politics was significantly constrained during the tenure of both presidents. Despite the efforts made by both administrations to address women's issues, persistent challenges have been observed. During Jammeh's regime, several initiatives were introduced but were not effectively implemented due to patronage politics, authoritarian practices, and cultural barriers. Conversely, under Barrow's leadership, a more open and democratic environment was fostered, involving civil society and enacting legal reforms. However, gender disparities within the government, the politicization of religion, and the reliance on international aid continue to affect women's political involvement and empowerment. To achieve lasting gender equality, focused initiatives are necessary to promote women's leadership, challenge cultural norms, and ensure solid political will and commitment from the government.

6. RESULTS, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction of Islam (Patrilineal and hierarchical system): Upon the introduction of Islam in most Gambian societies, a patrilineal and hierarchical system of political organization was established, leading to the emergence of gender roles and stratification in the sociopolitical setting. As a result, religious leaders, predominantly men, assumed leadership roles in many Gambian societies due to their knowledge of the faith (Bala Saho, 2012; Alieu Sanneh, 2017). Despite the ability of women to acquire Islamic knowledge, they were unable to wield political power or participate in the political sphere due to their gender. According to Fourche (2019), the advent of Islam in the eighteenth century created a social division and specific expectations of men and women in society, leading to the development of a political system deeply entrenched with traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures, predominantly under the control of men.

Looking at the Colonial Impact in The Gambia, the reinforcement of Indirect rule and gender stratification systems exacerbated gender inequality. The implementation of an indirect rule system brought men into the colonial administration. In 1944, the colonial administration established the Conference of Protectorate Chiefs to facilitate communication between the Governor and the chiefs, further reinforcing gender stratification. Men were involved in decision-making, while women were excluded. This research is consistent with the findings of Ballagamba (2006), who highlighted the exclusion of women from political spaces in Mandinka society due to the belief that women lacked authority compared to men during the Dawda Jawara regime.

The transition to colonial cash crop production in the 1830s had a detrimental impact on the lives of West Africans, including those in the Gambia. Colonial policies and the commercialization of groundnuts caused men to abandon rice cultivation, leaving it to the women. This shift resulted in strict gender roles, economically disadvantaging women who lacked control over finances and education and were burdened with domestic responsibilities of subsistence farming and childrearing (Brooks, 1975; Carney and

Watts, 1991). Even



though women became the primary rice cultivators, they were unable to generate income for economic independence, significantly affecting their social status and political involvement.

Political exclusion and resistance (legislative barriers): Entry of women into the legislative council was delayed due to biases in education and lack of access to formal employment (Mahoney, 1963). The first African was nominated to the legislative council, but it was not until 1962 that the first women joined, nominated by former Prime Minister Dawda Jawara. The first woman was elected to the council in 1982, and to date, no woman has been president. Fatou Janneh (2021) notes that despite women's support and loyalty since the 1965 referendum, political parties were reluctant to include them in decision-making roles to avoid alienating local and religious communities.

Modern Political landscape of the Gambia portrays a persistence in gender biases. The participation of women in Gambian politics remains significant but underrepresented. Despite playing crucial roles in the fall of former President Jammeh and constituting half of the electorate and political party members, according to Isatou Bittaye (2021), women's representation in President Barrow's cabinet has been low since his inauguration. Additionally, his administration's failure to pass the draft constitution due to political agendas and the debate surrounding FGM highlights ongoing gender biases.

case study of Isatou Touray:

During the 2016 presidential election, political parties united to remove the former president from office. This marked the first time a woman, Isatou Touray, ran for the presidency. Despite initially being urged to withdraw, Touray joined the coalition against the incumbent but expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of inclusion, stating she was sidelined due to her gender in a "highly male-dominated space" (No Peace Without Justice, 2016). This suggests that Gambia's political landscape continues to exclude women from high leadership roles.

The involvement of religious leaders in politics and the politicization of Islam have historically affected women's empowerment. The need for political endorsement from religious figures has often shaped policies and decision-making processes. This dynamic

has influenced political agendas, as seen in how colonial authorities used religious figures to build legitimacy. The influence of religious leaders on government decisions has affected



women's involvement in decision-making processes as portrayed by Saho, 2012 and Sanneh, 2017.

The gender stereotypes and social hierarchy in the Gambia have roots in colonial and external influences. For instance, the colonial agricultural policies favoured men's involvement in groundnut production, leaving out women from income-generating economic activities (Carney and Watts, 1991: 656). As a result, women were limited to domestic duties, further solidifying traditional gender roles and their exclusion from public and political spheres.

It is crucial to accurately record and acknowledge women's contributions to the national struggle and political development. This is essential for boosting their confidence and participation in politics. By doing so, we can provide a balanced understanding of both men's and women's leadership (Janneh, 2021; Fourshey, 2019).

Educational reforms into school curricula can serve to inspire and motivate future generations of female leaders by providing them with strong role models. This approach has the potential to influence young girls' mindsets and encourage them to pursue leadership roles without hesitation.

6.2 RECOMMENDATION

Despite numerous legal and international conventions, women's political participation remains stagnant and arguably regressed in the current discourse of gender equality. There needs to be a radical approach in addressing the issues of underlying colonial and historical factors.

This thesis suggests the following factors for consideration.

- a. Women's issues, affected by systemic and institutional discrimination, must be recognized as a national issue and not only as gender issues.
- b. The education system should incorporate a curriculum on the involvement and contributions of Gambian women in history. It would widen the younger generation's perspective regarding women's participation in decision-making.

- c. The government must lead in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through policy implementation and institutionalised compliance mechanisms.
- d. Policymaking on women's issues should be safeguarded from the influence of conservative and religious groups.
- e. Identify and eliminate inherent biases or cultural barriers that prevent women from advancing in political careers.
- f. Promote a media culture that values and supports women's leadership while respecting equality.
- g. It is essential to establish gender quotas in political parties' internal structures and state institutions to promote gender balance and representation.
- h. More sensitization among the Conservative and religious community for awareness of the significant role of women in government and senior positions.
- i. Separating politics and religion is necessary to prevent interference in women's issues.
- j. The state should work with civil society organizations to introduce capacity-building training programs for women's empowerment.

6.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the shift from African traditional to foreign and Western systems had a significant impact on the political landscape of The Gambia. Unfortunately, this transition also led to the exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership roles, which further defined their place in society. The research's objective is to provide a historical understanding of Gambian political development through the lens of feminist theory. This approach provides a different framework for studying the history of Gambia. Scholars often overlook women's presence in Gambian history, but utilizing gender tools could help fill in the gaps.

The spread of Islam and colonization unequivocally eroded traditional political structures and practices in The Gambia. Prior to colonization, governance was organized around kinship bonds, customary laws, and local councils. However, colonial administrations

imposed centralized governance structures, replacing the previous systems of governance. The new governance systems introduced for administrative had a significant impact on traditional decision-making processes and power dynamics in Gambian society. They have completely shifted political power and authority towards men, while diminishing the status and position of women in politics. The intersection of religion and politics in The Gambia has caused a notable shift in the way decisions are made. Religious beliefs can often influence decision-making processes, and political leaders may prioritize policies that align with these beliefs to appeal to their religious constituents. This phenomenon could delay decision-making for achieving gender equality, which has implications for governance. Government policies could be driven by religious ideology and beliefs rather than secular considerations.

Historically, legal and institutional reforms have been used to fight against gender inequality and discrimination against women. Although these approaches have been significant, it's also crucial to address the societal norms and values that hinder women's participation to tackle the issue truly. Government and state institution need to be involved and prioritise gender equality Understanding the historical context is important to comprehend the challenges women face today in decision-making. the adoption of Islam in The Gambia, along with the political changes brought about by colonization, has led to significant shifts in traditional structures and practices, including the politicization of religion. These changes have impacted the trajectory of decision-making in Gambian society.

The lack of acknowledgement and appreciation for women's contributions to the social and humanistic sciences is a major issue that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, the colonial system in the Gambia reinforced patriarchal structures through the indirect system, which restricted women's participation in decision-making. This deprivation and exclusion of women during colonialism nurtured misconceptions about African women, branding them as "victims of patriarchy and backward customs". However, it's important to recognize that African women have always been leaders in their own right. Historically, kingdoms and states were ruled by women before the expansion of patriarchal ruling systems. Women were major food producers and even owned land for cultivation. While Africa was traditional and partially patriarchal, women still excelled and thrived politically, socially,

and economically.



REFERENCES

- Afisi, O. T. (2010). Power and womanhood in Africa: An introductory evaluation. *The Journal of Pan-African Studies*, 3(6), 229. <http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol3no6/3.5PowerandWomanhood>
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2018, April 24). Gambia's road to democratic reform. Retrieved from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/gambia-road-to-democratic-reform/>
- Akyeampong, E., & Fofack, H. (2012). The contribution of African women to economic growth and development: historical perspectives and policy implications--Part I: The pre-colonial and colonial periods. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6051. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2045947>
- Aldrich, J. H. (1997). Positive theory and voice and equality review of voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics. *The American Political Science Review*, 91(2), 421–423. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952366>
- Amakoh, K. (2023). Gender equality in the Gambia: Citizens demand greater government efforts, Afrobarometer. Ghana. Retrieved from <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/11320718/gender-equality-in-the-gambia/12206432/>
- Ballagamba, A. (2006). Personal recollections, historical memories and political activism in contemporary Gambia. *Anthropological Yearbook of European Cultures*. 15, 93-115. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43234947>
- BBC News. (2016, January 14). Gambia's President Jammeh lifts ban on uncovered hair. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35318821#:~:text=Gambian%20President%20Yahya%20Jammeh%20has%20scrapped%20a%20decree,statement%2C%20adding%20that%20they%20were%20his%20%22best%20friends%22>

- Beechey, V. (1979). On patriarchy. *Feminist Review*, 3(1), 66-82.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1979.21>
- Beyers, J. (2015). Religion as political instrument: The case of Japan and South Africa. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 28(1), 142–164.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24805684>
- Bittaye, J. I (2021). "The Impact of State Violence on Women During the 22 Years of Dictatorship in The Gambia". CUNY Academic Works.
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/4142
- Bojang, T. (2021, August 4). Presidential adviser says imams not exempted from politics. *The Standard Newspaper | Gambia*. <https://standard.gm/presidential-adviser-says-imams-not-exempted-from-politics/>
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). The forms of capital (1986). *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, 1(81-93), 949.
- Brady, H. E, Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2), 271-294.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2082425>
- Brooks, G. E. (1975). Peanuts and colonialism: Consequences of the commercialization of peanuts in West Africa, 1830–701. *The Journal of African History*, 16(1), 29-54.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/181097>
- Bryson, V. (2016). *Feminist political theory*. Macmillan Education UK.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-59321-4>
- Butler, J., & Trouble, G. (1990). *Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Gender trouble, 3(1), 3-17. http://www.kyoolee.net/GENDER_TROUBLE_-_Preface_-_Butler.pdf
- Camara, C. (2021, March 19). Elected women politicians decry little solidarity from society. *The Point*. Retrieved from [https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/elected-](https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/elected-women-politicians-decry-) women-politicians-decry-

little-solidarity-from-society



- Carney, J., & Watts, M. (1991). Disciplining women? Rice, mechanization, and the evolution of Mandinka gender relations in Senegambia. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16(4), 651-681. <https://doi.org/10.1086/494698>
- Ceesay, A. (2023, March 20). Touma Njai to re-introduce women's empowerment bill. *The Standard Newspaper | Gambia*. Retrieved from https://standard.gm/touma-njai-to-re-introduce-womens-empowerment-bill/#google_vignette
- Ceesay, J. (2022, November 29). WANEP engages stakeholders on women participation in politics. *The Point*. Retrieved from <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/national-news/wanep-engages-stakeholders-on-women-participation-in-politics>
- Cham, M. (2021, April 12). Women seek 16 parliament reservation seats. *The Point*. Retrieved from <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/women-seek-16-parliament-reservation-seats>
- Cham, P. M. (2022, May 5). Barrow appoints new cabinet, chief of staff. *The Point*. Retrieved from https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/barrow-appoints-new-cabinet-chief-of-staff/#google_vignette
- Coles, M. C. (2020). *Women Political Leaders: The Impact of Gender on Democracy*. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl/assets/women-political-leaders.pdf>
- Constitutional Review Commission, (2020). *The Gambia Draft Constitution 2020*. Law Hub Gambia. Retrieved from <https://www.lawhubgambia.com/constitutions-2019-2020>
- Cooper, H. (2017). *Madame president: The extraordinary journey of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Simon and Schuster*. <https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=WSGMDAAAQBAJ&lpg=PP11&ots=m6MUsgTLZt&dq=Madame%20president%3A%20The%20extraordinary%20journey%20of%20Ellen%20Johnson%20Sirleaf.%20Simon%20and%20Schuster.&lrr&pg=PP11#v=onepage&q=Madame%20president:%20The%20extraordinary%20journey%20of%20Ellen%20Johnson%20Sirleaf.%20Simon%20and%20Schuster.&f=false>

- Costa Jr, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). The five-factor model of personality and its relevance to personality disorders. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 6(4), 343-359. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1521/pedi.1992.6.4.343>
- Costa Jr, P. T., Terracciano, A., & McCrae, R. R. (2001). Gender differences in personality traits across cultures: robust and surprising findings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(2), 322. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.81.2.322>
- Dampha, E. (2020, June 5). Marie Sock the lady who wants to be The Gambia's next President – The Standard Newspaper | Gambia. https://standard.gm/marie-sock-the-lady-who-wants-to-be-the-gambias-next-president/#google_vignette
- Danial, S. (2013, June 6). Cultural relativism vs. universalism: Female genital mutilation, Pragmatic Remedies. *The Journal of Historical Studies*. Retrieved from <http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/prandium/article/view/19692>
- Darboe, M. (2004). Gambia. *African Studies Review*, 47(2), 73-82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1514889>
- Dibba, S. K., & Barrow, A. K. (2015). Deeper than the cut: FGM/C after decades of advocacy in the Gambia. <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/98597>
- Diop, C.A. (2012). *Precolonial black Africa*. Lawrence Hill & Co, 48-51. <https://archive.org/details/PrecolonialBlackAfrica/page/n21/mode/2up>
- Edie, J. (2000). Democracy in the Gambia: Past, present and prospect for the future. *Africa Development*, 25(3/4), 161–198. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43658048>
- Ellis, S., & Ter Haar, G. (2004). *Worlds of power: Religious thought and political practice in Africa*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1, 8.
- Essien, A. M., & Ukpog, D. P. (2013). Patriarchy and gender inequality: The persistence of religious and cultural prejudice in contemporary Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 286–290. <https://doi.org/10.7763/ijssh.2012.v2.111>

- Ewa, I. O. (2017). Pre-colonial west Africa: The fall of Songhai empire revisited. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 26, 1–24.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48562076>
- Fletcher, B. (2016, May 9). Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (1938-, Liberia). *Gender in African Biography*. Retrieved from
https://genderinafricanbiography.wordpress.com/2016/05/09/ellen-johnson-sirleaf-1938-liberia/#_ftn19
- Fourshey, C. *Women in the Gambia* (2019). Faculty Contributions to Books.
https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/fac_books/179
- Fukuyama, F. (2001). Social capital, civil society and development. *Third World Quarterly*, 22(1), 7–20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3993342>
- Fuller, H. (2014). Commemorating an African queen: Ghanaian nationalism, the African diaspora, and the public memory of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, 1952–2009. *African Arts*, 47(4), 58-71. https://doi.org/10.1162/AFAR_a_00183
- Geiger, S., Allman, J., & Musisi, N. (2002). *Women in African colonial histories*. Indiana University Press, 219-237.
- Gray, J. M., & Palmer, H. R. (1940). The book of the quarter: A history of the Gambia. *African Affairs*, 39(156), 272-279.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a101032>
- Haddad, E. A., & Schweinle, W. (2009). The feminine political persona: Queen Victoria, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Michelle Bachelet. *Feminism and Women's Rights Worldwide: Heritage, Roles and Issues*, 3, 97-100.
- Hallum, C., & Obeng, K. W. (2019). The west Africa inequality crisis: How west African governments are failing to reduce inequality, and what should be done about it. <https://doi.org/10.21201/2019.4511>
- Heywood, A. (2011). *Global politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 13-413.

- Hughes, A., & Perfect, D. (1989). Trade unionism in the Gambia. *African Affairs*, 88(353), 549-572. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/723036>
- Hughes, A., & Perfect, D. (2006). A political history of the Gambia, 1816-1994. In Boydell and Brewer EBooks. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781580466820>
- International Centre for Transitional Justice. (2019, December 16). Women's Experiences of Dictatorship in the Gambia. Retrieved from <https://www.ictj.org/publication/women%E2%80%99s-experiences-dictatorship-gambia>
- International Federation for Human Rights. (2005). Note on the situation of women in Gambia - 33rd session of CEDAW. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/ifhr/2005/en/49321>
- Ipinyomi, F. I. (2014). Where the Rubber Hits the Road: The Limitations of the Universalism vs Cultural Relativism Debate Affecting FGM Control in Nigeria. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2510352>
- Janneh, F. (2021). Gambian Women's Struggles through Collective Action. *Studies in Social Science Research*, 2(3), 41. <https://doi.org/10.22158/sssr.v2n3p41>
- Janneh, F. (2021). Kafoolu and kompins: women's grassroots movements in post-colonial gambia (Master's thesis, Ohio University). OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ohiou1636105424164425
- Jaw, S. M. (2022, October 20). The Gambia: Why MPs just shot down the popular new draft constitution. *African Arguments*. Retrieved from <https://africanarguments.org/2020/09/the-gambia-why-mps-just-shot-down-the-popular-new-draft-constitution/>
- Johnson, E. S. (2009). *This Child Will Be Great: Memoir of a Remarkable Life by Africa's First Woman President*. HarperCollins. <https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=PSfIFNBOWqcC>

- Kaplan, A., Hechavarría, S., Bernal, M., & Bonhoure, I. (2013). Knowledge, attitudes and practices of female genital mutilation/cutting among health care professionals in The Gambia: a multiethnic study. *BMC Public Health*, 13, 851. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-851>
- Kumar, D. P. (2017). Participation of women in politics: Worldwide experience. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 22(12), 77-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.9790/0837-2212067788>
- Latham, G.J. (2010). Power, privilege and gender as reflected in poverty analysis and development goals. In the international handbook of gender and poverty. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781849805162.00014>
- Lorber, J. (2010). Feminisms and their contributions to gender equality. *Gender inequality: Feminist theories and politics*, 1-20.
- Maccarthy, P. (2022, August 1). A conversation on the political empowerment of women in the Gambia. United Nations the Gambia. Retrieved from <https://gambia.un.org/en/194076-conversation-political-empowerment-women-gambia>
- Madunagu, B. E. (2008). The Nigerian feminist movement: lessons from women in Nigeria, *WIN. Review of African Political Economy*, 35(118), 666–673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056240802574136>
- Mahoney, F. K. O. (1963). Government and opinion in the Gambia, 1816-1901. *Journal: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*. DOI: 10.25501/SOAS.00032195
- Manneh, A. (2022, November 2). Speaker, Touma Njai call for greater women representation in parliament. *The Standard Newspaper | Gambia*. Retrieved from <https://standard.gm/speaker-touma-njai-call-for-greater-women-representation-in-parliament-0/>

- Mendy, & Sarr. (2017). The Ambiguity of Gender: IFI Amadiume and the writing of gender history in Igboland. *Journal of West African History*, 3(2), 109. <https://doi.org/10.14321/jwestafrihist.3.2.0109>
- Mikell, G. (2009). A woman you can trust: Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf and political leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 10(1), 17–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43134186>
- Molyneux, M. (1985). Mobilization without emancipation? women's interests, the state, and revolution in Nicaragua. *Feminist Studies*, 11(2), 227. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177922>
- Munroe, T. (2002). *An introduction to politics: Lectures for first-year students* (3rd ed). Canoe Press (IL), 1-4.
- Nabaneh, S, Abebe. A, & Sowe. G. (2022). *The Gambia in transition: Towards a new constitutional order*. Pretoria University Law Press. https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=kXeSEAAQBAJ&lpg=PR5&ots=_3IPW8bonK&dq=The%20Gambia%20in%20transition%3A%20Towards%20a%20new%20constitutional%20order&lr&pg=PR5#v=onepage&q=The%20Gambia%20in%20transition:%20Towards%20a%20new%20constitutional%20order&f=false
- Nabaneh, S. (2014). Women's political participation and representation in the Gambia: One step forward or two back? *ResearchGate*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331260768>
- Nabaneh, S. (2022, January 27). Why The Gambia should fast-track gender quotas for women. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/why-the-gambia-should-fast-track-gender-quotas-for-women-175661>
- No Peace Without Justice. (2016, September 10). Gambia: NPWJ welcomes Isatou Touray's candidature to the 2016 presidential election. Retrieved from <https://www.npwj.org/press-release/gambia-npwj-welcomes-isatou-tourays->

candidature-to-the-2016-presidential-election/



- Nyang, S. S. (1977). Ten years of Gambia's independence: A political analysis. *Présence Africain*, (4), 28-45. <https://doi.org/10.3917/presa.104.0028>
- Nyang, S. S. (1984). Islam and politics in West Africa. *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 13, 20–25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1166345>
- Park, M. J. (2016). Heart of Banjul: The history of Banjul, the Gambia, 1816-1965. (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/heart-banjul-history-gambia-1816-1965/docview/1760984131/se-2>
- Pathania, S. K. (2017). Sustainable development goal: Gender equality for women's empowerment and human rights. *International Journal of Research*, 5(4), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.569981>
- Paxton, P, Kunovich, S, Hughs, M. M. (2007). Gender politics. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 33, 263-270, C-1b, 271-284. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131651>
- Putnam, R. D. (1994). Social Capital and Public Affairs. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 47(8), 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3824796>
- Reuters. (2018, June 30). Gambia's Barrow reshuffles cabinet. *Voice of America*. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/gambia-s-barrow-reshuffles-cabinet/4461209>
- Rhode, D. L. (2016). *Women and leadership*. Oxford University Press.
- SahelFilms. (2020, June 27). Straight Talk Gambia | Hon. Touma Njie, NAM Banjul South. [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvlGcy93svQ>
- Saho, B. SK. (2012). Islam, gender, and colonialism: Social and religious transformations in the Muslim court of the Gambia, 1905 – 1970 (PHD Dissertation). *Electronic Theses & Dissertations*. <https://doi.org/doi:10.25335/dqdk-ec80>
- Sallah, T. M. (1995). *Wolof:(Senegal)*. The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc, 28.

- Sanneh, B. (2017). Culture, religion, & democracy in the Gambia: Perspectives from before and after the 2016 Gambian presidential election. *Juniata Voices*, 124–136. <https://www.juniata.edu/offices/juniata-voices/past-version/media/volume-17/vol17-Sanneh>
- Sarr, A. (2014). Land, power, and dependency along the Gambia River, late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. *African Studies Review*, 57(3), 101–121. <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2014.94>
- Sheldon, K. (2016). *Historical dictionary of women in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Taylor, Y. (2021, July 14). 16 parliamentary seats reserved for Gambian women in validated bill. Gainako. Retrieved from <https://gainako.com/16-parliamentary-seats-reserved-for-gambian-women-in-validated-bill/>
- Teorell, J., & Torcal, M. (2007). *Political participation: Mapping the terrain*. Routledge, 358–381. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203965757-24>
- Thakur, A. S. (1969). *A history of education in the Gambia from 1901 to the present day: a study of the western contribution to education in the Gambia during the present century* (Thesis masters). Retrieved from Durham e-Theses. <https://etheses.dur.ac.uk/9569/>
- Thomas, G., & Adams, M. (2010). Breaking the final glass ceiling: The influence of gender in the elections of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Michelle Bachelet. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 31(2), 105–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15544771003697270>
- Thompson, F. (2023). *State of fear: Arbitrary arrests, torture, and killings*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/17/state-fear/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-killings>
- Thompson, M. (2006). Women, gender, and conflict: Making the connections. *Development in Practice*, 16(3/4), 342–353. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030064>

Times, A. (2023, March 18). Touma Njai reveals plans to re-introduce her private constitutional amendment bill. The Alkamba Times. Retrieved from <https://alkambatimes.com/touma-njai-reveals-plans-to-re-introduce-her-private-constitutional-amendment-bill/>

Touray, E. (2014, October 12). History of Kombo (Video). YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwH5EFJHuTQ>

Touray, F. (2021, October 4). Breaking News: Touma Njie declares herself leader of PPP. Kerr Fatou Online Media House. Retrieved from <https://www.kerrfatou.com/breaking-news-touma-njie-declares-herself-leader-of-ppp/>

Turner, B. (2012). The Gambia: Country gender profile October 2011 Quality Assurance and Results Department Gender and Social Development Monitoring Division. Semantic Scholar. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-59541-9_221

UN Women, (2015). Beijing declaration and platform for action, Beijing +5 political declaration and outcome. UN Women Headquarters. Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>

UN Women, (2023, March 7). Women in power in 2023: New data shows progress but wide regional gaps. UN Women – Headquarters. Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/03/women-in-power-in-2023-new-data-shows-progress-but-wide-regional-gaps>

Walby, S. (1989). Theorising patriarchy. *Sociology*, 23(2), 213-234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038589023002004>

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243287001002002>

Wilson, A. M. (2015). Country Profile: FGM in The Gambia, 2015. 28 Too Many. Retrieved

from <https://www.fgmcri.org/resource/country-profile-fgm-in-the-gambia-2015/>



- Wiseman, J. A. (1985). Parties and elections in Africa, *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 23:1, 3-29. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14662048508447463>
- Wiseman, J. A. (1996). Military rule in the Gambia: An interim assessment. *Third World Quarterly*, 17(5), 917–940. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599615182>
- Y. (2015, August 19). Queen Ndate Yalla Mbodj: Senegalese queen leading the resistance against French colonization. African heritage. Retrieved from <https://afrolegends.com/2015/06/08/queen-ndate-yalla-mbodj-senegalese-queen-leading-the-resistance-against-french-colonization/>

