GENDER AND DEMOCRACY

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Abstract
This paper addresses the 'gender' dimension of democracy and focuses on the democratic representation and participation of women in parliament. Furthermore, this paper examines the language of gender, how women are understood by society and the challenges that women encounter in democracy. This will be approached both qualitatively and quantitatively using liberal feminist theory as a theoretical framework and focus will be in the African context with a slight comparison with the rest of the world. The empirical findings about women's participation will be of interests to policy makers and practitioners interested in the gendered dimensions of democracy.

Keywords: democracy, gender, projections, gendered dimensions, politics

Background
The issue of gender and democracy is dating back from the 1960's and 1970's where the number of men surpasses the number of women in democracy. This problem became glaring in the 21st century where even countries like Britain, with a relatively advanced democracy, following the 2010 General Election, women still only constitute 22% of the membership of the House of Commons. However, within this broad spectrum there has long been a focus on the issue of women's political representation. The comparatively low levels of women's representation have been extensively documented; arguments have been developed – and contested – for why women's representation should be increased and there has been much discussion about the practical obstacles to increasing their representation and the best means of overcoming this. The issue later took centre stage in the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference Platform for Action and has been incorporated into the objectives of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Development Goals. International democracy promotion agencies such as the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) have placed considerable emphasis on women's political representation. In new or emerging democracies, indeed the issue of women's political representation has been taken up by the political leadership almost as a symbolic marker of the country's democratic credentials. In the following sections the author briefly zooms into the

South African presentation of women in parliament between 1994 when South Africa got its democracy and fifteen years afterwards.

This paper is concerned with the 'gender' dimension of democracy from the Africa and abroad. It then will explain the theoretical framework and later discuss imperative findings and conclude with the recommendations. The public have an understanding of 'gender' as in practice referring to women and indeed the main focus here will be on the democratic representation and participation of women, as opposed to men. However, there is more to the issue of gender issues in democracy dating back in the 60s and the language of gender, and its implications. The use of language, rather than just talking about women and men, or the sexes, originated with Marxist-feminists' ideology.

What is Marxist Feminism?

Marxist feminism is a sub-type of feminist ideology which focuses on the dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate women. Marxist feminism states that economic inequality, dependence, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relations between men and women are the root cause of women's oppression in the current social context (Engels idea). Our identities as men or women are to a significant extent, 'socially constructed' rather than innate. This further means that these identities are not fixed but culturally and historically variable. Going up a step further still, the implication is that the identities of different women within the same society vary one from another, for instance according to social class or race. The language of gender has the obvious virtue of undermining essentialist and potentially conservative arguments about women's nature that have been used to justify women's political exclusion. It is also much more realistic. However, this language does also open up the possibility that women are too differentiated as a category for meaningful political claims to be advanced in their common name. Taken to its post-structuralist extreme, this language threatens to deconstruct and problematize their role in democracy. Currently South Africa is at a debate of whether the country is ready for a female president or not after 20 years of its democracy. Although there was a slight growth from 1994-2009; there was a noticeable decline in 2014 of women in parliament as illustrated in *Figure 1* below:

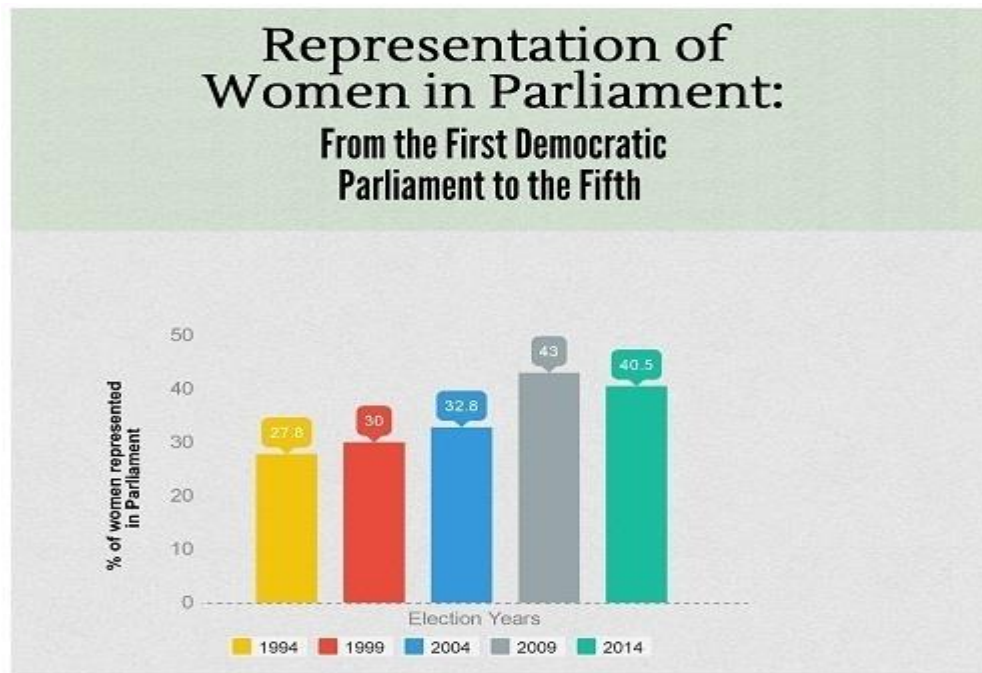**Representation of South African women in parliament**

Figure 1. *www.google.com*. **Government Gazette, May2014 issue.**

South African parliament structure

African National Congress (ANC) is the ruling party since the country got its democracy in 1992 and its first democratically elected government in 1994 with Democratic Party being the biggest opposition followed by many other small groups unlike other countries where there is either a ruling party or an opposition party. While 47% of the ANC's seats are filled by women, the DA has 28% and the EFF 32%. As the ANC recently garnered criticism for having seven male premiers and only one female premier and Premier of the Western Cape, who was called out for having a predominantly male provincial cabinet and she argued that it is important to understand the difference between descriptive and substantive representation. This caused a lot of noise from other MPs. According to them, South Africa focuses on descriptive representation and numbers, rather than focusing on what women MPs do when in power and whether their decisions advocate on behalf of women's rights. In India during the British colonisation, legislation was used to bring about significant modifications in the structure of society. Various reforms were initiated with respect to the status of women. The advent of British rule in India in the nineteenth century saw the rise of a new elite group influenced by Western liberalism. A variety of socio-religious reforms were undertaken by this group on issues related to women. By the end of the century a nationalistic movement had emerged. This continued for the next 50 years carrying a common interest of all the political leaders, i.e., achieving freedom from British rule. This struggle for freedom, broadly speaking, marked the beginning of a political awakening among women in India (Evrette, 1979).

Key conceptual issues and problem areas of gender and democracy

There is more to the issue of gender and democracy than what meets the eye and it is accordingly necessary to say something about the language of gender, and its implications. Just as nationalist narratives of the colonial and post-colonial period were premised on the centrality of notions of manhood and masculinity, contemporary narratives of the transition to democracy in Africa continue to give the impression that gender is irrelevant to politics. In part, such a distorted picture results from the narrow conceptualisation of political activity one that excludes certain categories of people as well as some of the most potentially democratic transformations of society (Phillips, 1991). The two reflections on Nigeria and Zimbabwe in this issue, together with many other writings by women under the rubric of 'gender and democratisation' reveal the major difference between the immediate post-independent Africa and today. Unlike the past, highly vocal women's organisations have been able to disturb the silences and expose the centrality of women and gender in the construction of political identities. However as is clearly indicated by some African countries like Joyce Banda who was a Malawian President from 7 April 2012 to 31 May 2014; which was a short two-year journey surrounded with a number of political issues of traditional discourses and practices. History tells us that in Zimbabwe and Nigeria, women are being forced into the back seat of the democratisation process by a plethora of developments including new citizenship, electoral and religious laws. But the important message emerging from these two reflections is that women are actively contesting these social locations and that the relationship between gender, democracy and citizenship is indeed highly complex in multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities. It is also why the need for strategic coalition-building so elegantly expressed in the Nigerian piece in this issue, becomes an urgent challenge. Throughout the 1990s, we have lived through and been informed about a generalised sense of violence surrounding elections that were neither free nor fair. Few of these election observations have given a gendered account of these thwarted processes. Nigeria with an estimated population of 140 million people, it is common knowledge that Nigeria is the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa. But poverty remains a widespread issue in Nigeria; nine out of ten Nigerians live on less than US$2 a day just as the population keeps growing at an astronomical rate of 3.2% per year, Nigerian women make up a good proportion of the huge population of the country and they have equally remained the most impoverished segment of the society all thanks to antiquated and appalling laws, customs and norms contributing in no small measure to keeping them on the breadline. On reading the Zimbabwe account, we clearly understand the disproportionate incalculable costs that women have to pay dearly when elections take place in a context of 'an orchestrated campaign of terror and political violence.' In Zambia, politically active women paid high personal and social costs such as a high separation and divorce rate, financial constraints, isolation, and lack of logistical support as a result of their political engagement (Ferguson & Katundu, 1994:18). This reveals beyond reasonable doubt that there are challenges facing women participation in democracy of which this paper reveals some of them in the South African context.

Challenges facing South Africa

South Africa is faced with many challenges. To achieve a society free of racism and sexism the country must undergo a paradigm shift with regard to how resources are allocated and how people relate to each other. The challenges facing South Africa have been translated into national priorities. All of these priorities have compelling gender dimensions which need to be addressed if the country is to advance towards Gender equality. The key challenges are:

i. Gender relations: South Africa is in a process of transition. One of the key objectives in this process is the transformation of gender relations. The challenge is to shape the broad transformation project in a way which acknowledges the centrality and compatibility of the transformation of gender relations. This requires a fundamental review of what has come to be accepted as 'business as usual.'

ii. Poverty is a major problem for women in South Africa. The systematic and socially-engineered location of women in rural areas, and the underdevelopment of infrastructure in these areas, has been directly responsible for the poor conditions under which the majority of South Africa's rural communities live. Apartheid laws, coupled with repressive customs and traditions, disempowered women in ways that will take generations to reverse. While the democratic government has established enabling legislation, it must move towards delivery to alleviate and, eventually, eradicate poverty.

iii. Globalisation is an emerging world challenge. It is a system of redistribution of opportunities and benefits which may enhance the economy or lead to rising inequality and aggravated poverty. The challenge for South Africa is to ensure that women benefit equally with others in society.

iv. HIV/AIDS is a very serious problem in South Africa. It affects women disproportionately to men. The power imbalances between women and men in interpersonal relations contribute to this growing pandemic.

v. Violence against women remains a serious problem in South African society. The high incidence of rape cases, as well as other forms of physical and psychological abuse of women and girls, are evidence of this. It will continue to be a major challenge especially as it is compounded by its interrelation with poverty and HIV/AIDS.

vi. · Access to basic needs such as education, housing, welfare, fuel and water has also been influenced by unequal gender, race and class relations. The inequality of power between women and men has inevitably led to the unequal sharing of resources such as information, time and income as well.

vii.   Access to employment: Differential access to employment opportunities exists. Whilst theoretically women currently have access to a broader scope of position in the labour market, these new opportunities are accessible to a narrow pool of women who have had access to skills development, education and training. In large measure, women's employment remains either within the traditional female occupations or within the domestic and farming sectors all too often as casual workers.

viii.   Economic empowerment of women: Women constitute the poorest group in South Africa and are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed. The challenge is to ensure that South Africa's macro-economic strategy promotes economic growth and sufficiently addresses the differential impact of macroeconomic policy on various groups of people depending on class, race, age, gender, location and disability.

ix.   Access to science and technology: As described in the Beijing Report2, science and technology, as fundamental components of development, are transforming patterns of production, contributing to the creation of jobs and new ways of working, and promoting the establishment of a knowledge-based society. Given the large number of women in the workforce, South Africa must devise mechanisms for engaging women with science and technology in order to enhance their productivity and thus increase the quality of national production.

Theoretical framework

As there are many theories related to gender, the researcher uses liberal feminist theory as theoretical frame work. This theory is of the view that all people (male and female) are born equal therefore equal opportunities should be given to them and that the women marginalization and subordination arose because of non-recognitions and implementation of this theory (Sha, 2007). The liberal feminist warns that nobody should benefit from this existing gender differences because both male and female are important in the development of the society. So they should be treated equally and added that no society can prosper if half of its resources are neglected, (women). This theory is trying to bridge the wide gap between male and female, it emphasizes that women should be given equal opportunities to participate in day to day activities as their male counterparts in order to have sustained equal development in the third world nations, the theory also tries to eradicate sexism and stereotypical view of women and men from children's books and mass media, in all human endeavours. This would have been the way to bridge the gap between men and women in the Nigeria labour congress in particular and the world in general. (Microsoft Encarta 2007).

Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the study was to investigate the status of women's participation in leadership and decision making positions of public institutions and the factors that affect their participation in Bedele Town Administration.

The specific objectives of the study include:

- To examine the current status of women in leadership of public institution of Bedele town Administration.
- To identify the major barriers those are affecting the access of women in to management positions.

Research Design and Methodology

The type of study used for the purpose of this paper is descriptive study. It has been used because it is a fact finding study with adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings. It describes what the reality is. It describes what actually exists within a situation, such as current practices, situations, etc of different aspects of the research. Since this paper is concerned with assessing about factors that are affecting women participation in leadership and decision making in democracy, the researcher has assumed that the descriptive type of research was the most appropriate method to be used.

Data Sources

To attain the aim of this study, both primary and secondary data has been used. Primary Data Sources: The Primary data are gathered from sample respondents (whom are primary Sources) which were chosen through sampling from the total study population. Secondary Data Sources: The main sources used for secondary data are United Nations reports, different books in the area of sociology, management & leadership, participation of women in public administration, articles from scholars etc, internet web sites and other documented sources were used as references.

Sampling Techniques

To select sample respondents from total study population, both probability and nonprobability sampling methods were employed. The probability sampling method was selected because it avoids biasness and helps to generalize data gained from sample respondents avoiding an error which could arise from sampling. Therefore, in case this simple random sampling (specifically lottery method to identify the first respondent out of the first 4th s) and systematic sampling method has been used. Moreover, purposive sampling has also been used as a technique so as to include Women Activists and Municipal candidates of the Town as respondents. It is decided to use this method in order to include those management bodies and gain relevant data concerning all available data about the status factors affecting the participation of women in leadership and decision making in public institutions.

Method of Data Collection

The method of data collection which has been employed to this study was survey method, and the data collection tool that has been used to gather data from sample respondents was questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire had contained both closed and open ended formats. The questionnaire was selected because; it helps to gather data with minimum cost faster than any other tool. Moreover, all the respondents were literate and they can read and answer the questionnaire more freely to express their ideas on the issue. In addition to this, interview is selected because this helps to get some facts related to the issue under study from top official of the municipalities which are the constituents of the Provincial legislature who are there to implement the government policies.

Method of Data Analysis

As it is stated under the sub topic of 'type of research', this research is of descriptive type. Accordingly, for realization and successful accomplishment of the study, data collected from different primary and secondary sources were recorded, edited, organized, analysed, interpreted and presented in relation to research questions. This was done both quantitatively and qualitatively by using descriptive statistical tools such as tables, figures, percentages, graphs and charts for data collected through questionnaires, whereas description of findings is used for data collected through interviews and observations.

Empirical Findings of Women in Democracy Globally

Over the last few decades, women have made significant strides in the European countries as Prime ministers, maternal health and labour force participation – and in politics as well and as Monarchs. In the past 20 years, women have doubled their global numbers in parliaments, from 11 to 22 percent. Seventeen percent of ministers globally are women; and in 2015 there were 18 women as heads of state or government. Women's participation in politics is socially transformative. Research shows that women in politics raise issues that others overlook, pass bills that others oppose, invest in projects others dismiss and seek to end abuses that others ignore. Where women are able to participate in peace processes, the chances of reaching an agreement at all improved, and there is 35 percent more likelihood to last at least 15 years. Yet women face many barriers to their political participation. At current rates of progress, political parity will not be reached until 2080, making equality in politics the highest hurdle women face. NDI puts these barriers into three categories. At the individual level, women who are equally as qualified as men talk themselves out of running for office. At the institutional level, political bodies – like political parties and legislatures – remain unwelcoming to female colleagues. At the socio-cultural level, the media – for example – focuses overwhelmingly on what a woman wears, her marital status, as opposed to her policy positions.

One of the most fascinating developments in African politics has been the increase in women's political participation since the mid-1990s. Women are becoming more engaged in a variety of

institutions from local government, to legislatures, and even the executive. Today, Africa is a leader in women's parliamentary representation globally. African countries have some of the world's highest rates of representation: Rwanda claimed the world's highest ratio of women in parliament in 2003 and today Rwandan women hold 64% of the country's legislative seats. In Senegal, Seychelles and South Africa, around 40% of parliamentary seats are held by women, while in Mozambique, Angola, Tanzania and Uganda over 35% of seats are occupied by women. By contrast, women in the US women hold 18% of the seats in the House and 20% in the Senate.

The parliamentary patterns are evident in other areas as well. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became the first elected woman president in Africa in 2005, and more recently Joyce Banda took over as president in Malawi. There have been nine female prime ministers in Africa since 1993, including Luisa Diongo in Mozambique, who served for six years. Since 1975 there have been 12 female vice presidents like Wandira Speciosa Kazibwe in Uganda. Presently there are female vice presidents in Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Gambia and Djibouti and there have been others in South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Burundi. There are female speakers of the house in one fifth of African parliaments, which is higher than the world average of 14%. Women are taking over key ministerial positions in defense, finance and foreign affairs, which is a break from the past when women primarily held ministerial positions in the so-called 'softer' ministries of education, community development, sports and youth. Todate, South Africa has a female defence minister, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, while Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala serves as Nigeria's finance minister. Women are similarly visible in regional bodies, holding 50% of the African Union parliamentary seats. Gertrude Mongella served as the first president of the Pan African Parliament and in July 2012, South Africa's Nkosazana Dhlamini-Zuma took over the leadership of the African Union Commission. Even at the local level, women make up almost 60 percent of local government positions in Lesotho and Seychelles, 43 percent of the members of local councils or municipal assemblies in Namibia, and over one-third of local government seats in Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda. More women than men vote in countries like Botswana, Cape Verde, Lesotho, South Africa and Senegal, although overall rates for men seem to be about 5% more in countries surveyed by Afro-barometer. These patterns are evident in the judiciary as well with the advancement of women judges at all levels. African women judges are even making it into the international arena with Fatou Bensouda from Gambia holding the post of chief prosecutor in the International Criminal Court. Curiously, all but one of the current five African judges on the ICC are women. (Joyce Aluoch et.al, 2012)

Female World Heads of States

Currently, 13 women are the highest representatives of their countries. It represents 7, 3% of the total number of 178 Heads of State in the world. Traditionally, more than the half of them (7) come from European countries. Three notable female politicians are not included on the list of current leaders. Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma (Myanmar), a Nobel Peace Prize winner celebrated for her human rights advocacy and political activism, led her National League for Democracy party to a landslide victory in 2015. But because her late husband and children are foreign citizens, she is constitutionally barred from becoming Burma's president; she instead holds the

newly created position of state counsellor. Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen is not included on the list because of historical ambiguity about Taiwan's territorial sovereignty and South Korean President Park Geunhye is currently going through impeachment proceedings and has been stripped off her presidential powers and duties. This is a trend with women in democracy that we have noticed over the years, however figures of nations that had a female leader between 1966 and 2017 are illustrated in the graph below and the results are promising. When Indira Gandhi became the first and, to date, only female Prime Minister of India in 1966, just one modern-day country – Mongolia – had previously seen a woman in power. By 1991, the number of countries that had some experience under female leadership had reached 20. Today, 70 countries have had some sort of female leadership (elected, appointed, interim or other), including six of the 10 most populous countries in the world. Bangladesh has had the longest reigning female leaders in the past 50 years. Current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her rival Khaleda Zia have collectively – but separately – ruled over Bangladesh for 23 years since 1992. India, which has the world's second-largest population, follows with a total of 21 years under female leadership. Ireland also has had 21 years of female leadership, while the Philippines and Sri Lanka have had 16 and 13 years, respectively. Nordic countries – with the exception of Sweden, which has never had a female head of government – also stand out for their length of female leadership. As of 2017, Iceland has had a female president or prime minister in 20 of the past 50 years, the fourth-most in the world. Norway and Finland rank close behind, with 13 and 12 years, respectively. United States and its neighbours have had little or no time under female leadership. The U.S. and Mexico have never had a woman as chief executive, and Canada's first and only female Prime Minister served for just four months, (Jackson, 2009). Figure 2 below illustrates that at least 70 nations have had female head of states.

Figure 2: *Source: PEW Research centre analysis, 30 August 2017.*

Recommendations

- Since poverty is a factor to women participation in the democracy, economic empowerment could be a better way of enhancing women participation in labour unions. The poverty alleviation programmes will be implemented in the third world nations.

- Reverse discrimination from experience has been seen as the best way to enhance women participation and representation in the democracy. This is a strategy where labour unions and the government would reserve mandatory posts for women, at least 35-40% candidate slots should be reserved for women in government appointments.

- Nigerian labour union should formulate programmes that will encourage women to participate in labour unionism, to take up posts and to ensure that labour unions nominate women for elective offices.

- Education is the bedrock of any nation building and if women who constitute more than half of our population lack it, it would have serious effect on nation building. Basically, women need to know how to read and write and should know their constitutional rights and duties. A good educational qualification will enable them take up issues and improve their chances of being put forward for leadership positions.

- Women in media can help in enlightenment by making women realize their importance in unionism. This is through show casing the contribution of women in the labour unions. This will eventually imbue other women to join and participate actively in nation building.

- Lastly, South Africa should consider its multi-party constituency policy into a two party constituency as votes are lost into the minority parties that take seats in parliament. This could cab the issue of coalition when there are disputes with the ruling party.

Conclusion

This phase of women's mobilization—from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s—coincided with the unprecedented rise of an international network of women's movements. The Decade provided opportunities for women to meet and provided role models of women's leadership, innovative strategies for "penetrating the state," a laundry list of women's demands, and a sense of being part of a worldwide wave of women's movements as well as democratic reform. The major exception to this trend, marked by women's politicization in the North as well as the South, was in Eastern and Central Europe where the agendas of democratization and women's assertion of their rights did not coincide and reinforce one another. Women's rights and women's political participation were negatively associated with communist authoritarianism, not with new

democratic prospects. Women felt that they had been politically exploited rather than marginalized; and men acted independently in the political arena and argue that politics was a male game, and that the communist effort to incorporate women had been misguided and unnatural. Some countries pose threats to their female counterparts when campaigning.

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