

EXAMINING PARITY LAW NR. 04/2018: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN GUINEA-BISSAU

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the challenges surrounding women's political participation in Guinea-Bissau, focusing on the impact of affirmative policies, particularly Parity Law Nr. 04/2018. The study adopted qualitative methods of research. Qualitative data for this study is gathered through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to understand the sociocultural and institutional barriers that deter women from active political engagement. I also use triangulation to collect secondary data to assess the numerical changes in women's representation in political institutions prior post the implementation of Parity Law Nr. 04/2018. The study recommends a critical evaluation of the enforcement and reception of the parity law by examining its adoption within political parties, electoral processes, and governmental structures. The study found that women's representation in the political process of Guinea Bissau is troubling and in a state of decline. The study recommends Key stakeholders, including policymakers, civil society organizations, and female politicians, be consulted for the implementation of affirmative policies geared towards women's representation in politics and governance.

Keywords: Parity Law, Women's Political Engagement, Democracy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Guinea-Bissau is an African state that is "democratic and secular, with a semi-presidential regime of a parliamentary nature". It is located on the West Coast of Africa, with a territorial surface area of 36,125 square kilometers. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and shares its borders with two neighboring countries: Senegal to the North, and Guinea-Conakry to the East and South, both of which are Francophone countries. Guinea-Bissau has 3 provinces, 8 regions, and 38 sectors. The capital of the country, Bissau, is an autonomous sector with an estimated population of 1,530,673 inhabitants according to a survey conducted in 2015 by the National Institute of Statistics (INE). The provinces are divided into regions, and the regions are further divided into sectors. These sectors are then divided into sections, which are composed of villages (tabancas). Regions, sectors, and sections are administered by governors, administrators, administrative secretaries, and village chiefs. The country also has an island region - the Bijagós archipelago. This archipelago comprises a large number of islands and islets. During the research, it was found that the authors differ in this regard, with significantly different quantities of islands and islets mentioned by them (IÉ &Langa, 2019).

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The issue of women's political participation in Guinea-Bissau has been a subject of scholarly inquiry, particularly in the context of affirmative policies such as Parity Law Nr. 04/2018. This literature review aims to explore existing studies and perspectives from Guinean and African authors regarding the challenges and impact of affirmative policies on women's representation in politics within Guinea-Bissau and the broader African context. The discussion regarding the involvement of women in politics has its origins in the time of the national liberation movement and has remained a topic of both public and scholarly discussion in Guinea-Bissau. With the advent of democracy, this discourse has garnered interest not only from civil society groups but also from the primary political parties in Guinea-Bissau, such as the PAIGC. Guinea-Bissau boasts a storied past of women's engagement in the national liberation movement, tracing back to its battle for independence. Despite this profound historical role, women's representation in politics has seen ups and downs over the years, with periods of both significant involvement and decreased participation. The shift to democracy raised expectations for greater gender parity, but obstacles remain, impeding women's complete engagement in political affairs. A comprehensive grasp of the intricacies of women's political participation, historical backdrop, and present obstacles is imperative for progressing gender equality in Guinea-Bissau.

It's important to recognize the role of women not only during the armed struggle that began in the 1960s but also in traditional political organizations long before. Okinka Pampa serves as an example of how women held central positions in local political and social structures. This historical background partly justifies their involvement in the fight against colonialism in previous struggles. In the ancient Bijagó societies of Guinea-Bissau, the title of Okinka referred to lineage chiefs who were also priestesses. In this matrifocal society, women had a distinct role as custodians of places dedicated to ancestral spirits, and during times of crisis or dissent, they assumed leadership roles (NEAB, 2021). Before colonial rule took hold in Guinea-Bissau, several female rulers controlled islands in the archipelago. For example, Idiana Iboop governed Canabaque Island and led her people in armed resistance against Portuguese invaders. However, the most prominent figure was Okinka Pampa, ruler of Orango Grande Island. Also known as Pampa Kanyimpa or Ocanto, she succeeded her father, Bankanyapa, ruling the island from 1910 to 1930. She resided in the village of Etikoka, northwest of Orango Grande, and was supported by a council consisting of ten women and five men (NEAB, 2021). In addition to their political roles, women were active in various sectors of the economy and production structure of the country. Philip J. Havik's work sheds light on the significant contributions of women to the local economy and society, particularly concerning land ownership, agriculture, and trade. Havik argues that women's agency in these areas was not only widespread but also crucial for understanding the broader socio-economic landscape of the region. He explores the intricate relationship between local agency, colonial policies, and socio-economic change.

One key aspect highlighted in Havik's paper is the impact of colonialism on traditional gender roles and land ownership systems. As colonial powers extended their influence over Guinea-Bissau, they introduced new laws and regulations that often disrupted existing social and economic structures. Havik demonstrates how these changes affected women's access to land and resources, as well as their participation in trade and other economic activities. Despite facing challenges, women demonstrated resilience and adapted to these new circumstances, finding innovative ways to maintain economic independence and assert their rights within the colonial framework (Havik, 2016). The objectives of this study are to assess the tangible

outcomes and impact of Parity Law Nr. 04/2018 on women's political empowerment and representation.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

The Concept of Parity Law Nr. 04/2018

The Women's Political Platform (PPM) was established in 2008 to promote women's active involvement in the leadership of political parties, political institutions, and civil society organizations. However, due to ongoing political instability in the country, especially the coup d'état on April 12, 2012, Guinea-Bissau faced fragile socio-political and economic conditions. Consequently, the new authorities that emerged during the transition period did not prioritize the implementation of laws related to the political agenda, similarly, in 2012, the National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity (PNIEG) was introduced to provide a framework for guiding and coordinating gender-related issues in the country. It aimed to create opportunities for women's mobilization and their democratic participation in political power, aligning with the principles of social inclusion outlined in the Constitution of the Republic (Gomes & Monteiro, 2020).

Despite the efforts made through the aforementioned laws, the endeavors to enhance women's participation in decision-making bodies and political parties have not yielded the desired results. Therefore, it is crucial to explore alternative strategic plans for ensuring women's inclusion in positions of power in Guinea-Bissau. This need for an alternative approach is acknowledged by Amílcar Cabral, the leader of PAIGC, who emphasized the importance of social, political, and economic equality between men and women for achieving equitable and sustainable development. The Constitution of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, specifically in articles 4 and 25, declares that men and women should have equal rights before the law in all aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural life, as stated in the 1973 Constitution of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (Gomes & Monteiro, 2020). Regarding the Quota Law, the organization leading the process was the Women's Political Platform (PPM), in conjunction with other women's organizations such as the Network of Women Parliamentarians, Network of Women Mediators, Women's Council, Network of Women for Security and Peace in the ECOWAS Space, Network of Women Jurists, and RENLUV. They received guidance and support from the Ministry of Women, Family, and Social Cohesion, the Institute of Women and Children, and international partners, including UN Women and the Gender Unit of UNIOGBIS. On December 12, 2015, the PPM presented the Canchungo Declaration to the authorities of Guinea-Bissau, advocating for the promotion of gender equality in the country. The Canchungo Declaration emerged from a workshop organized by women's civil society organizations on gender equality and constitutional, legal, and women's human rights reforms on October 28 and 29, 2014, with the support of UNIOGBIS. With over 50 participants, mostly women from across the country, the workshop resulted in the adoption of the aforementioned declaration (FERNANDES, 2021). In June 2018, a meeting was held to discuss and harmonize the terms, with the IMC advocating for the notion of a "parity law" instead of a "quota law," as stipulated in the Canchungo Declaration. On July 10, 2018, the formal submission of the draft quota law was made to the office of the Minister of Health and Social Solidarity, and subsequently delivered to the office of the President of the ANP.

There is limited written information available regarding the progress of the process, both in the literature and the media, likely due to its recent adoption. However, according to an article by Guinean journalist Braima Darame from the international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, the proposal for the gender quota law was approved by the parliament, in principle, on August 2. For it to take effect in the legislative elections scheduled for November 18, 2018, it needed to be promulgated at least 60 days prior, but it had not been sent to the President of the Republic by then. After the initial approval of the Quota Law, the Specialized Commission on Women and Children in the Guinean Parliament introduced some amendments to transform the legislation into a more comprehensive Parity Law that was better suited to the country's reality. The law was adopted on December 4, 2018, but it was not applied to the legislative elections held in the same year (FERNANDES, 2021).

The need for gender parity laws to ensure women's participation is not to give women an advantage but to correct structural imbalances and inequalities to achieve gender equality. Even with the approval of Law 4/2018, the applicability of these laws remains a challenge in the political spheres of Guinea-Bissau. Despite progress in the last legislative elections for public positions, the representation of women at different levels in the country is still incompatible with its population (Gomes & Monteiro, 2020).

2.2 The Concept of Political Participation

The African Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want" ensures principles of gender equality, respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law for all citizens. One of the principles of inclusion and equality proposed in the agenda was to integrate women into all social, economic, and political spheres. Therefore, the majority of countries on the African continent including Guinea-Bissau have signed the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights - on the rights of women, in which the Heads of State of each country have committed to fighting social, political and economic inequalities based on gender through a solemn declaration of the African Union in 2004, guaranteeing a decade of emancipation for the African Woman (GOMES & MONTEIRO, 2020). In Guinea-Bissau Historically, men have dominated political engagement and the holding of official positions of state authority in the contemporary world of nation-states. Despite their active participation in the Armed Liberation Struggle, nation-building, and major contributions to the development of the country, women in Guinea-Bissau have little representation and involvement in partisan politics and decision-making processes. It's important to keep in mind how new the conceptual and analytical framework is for Guinean women's representation and involvement in politics. The involvement of women in the Armed Liberation Struggle has been the subject of a considerable number of studies carried out by scholars in Guinea (IMPANTA, 2020).

To prepare women to resist colonialism and defend the dignity of women, including within the PAIGC itself, the Union of Women of Guinea and Cape Verde (UDEMU) was established in Conakry in 1961. Its primary task during this historical phase was to mobilize women for better integration into the struggle process. From then until the realization of the 1st National Women's Congress in 1982, many significant episodes formed part of the fight for women's emancipation within socio-political structures. These included the creation of the National Women's Commission of Guinea (1979) and the restructuring and redefinition of UDEMU, which was established to mobilize and organize women in the struggle for emancipation and

to cultivate a political mindset. These advancements were also reflected in the inclusion of gender equality in the Republic's Constitution and the growing representation of women in parliament (Biague, 2019). The low participation of women in decision-making spheres, particularly in politics, is a widely debated issue in recent years on the international stage. This challenge constitutes a priority for a large number of countries, as evidenced by the commitment of the 193 member states of the United Nations in adopting the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The (formal) right of women to participate in political life is recognized by the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau. However, it was only at the end of 2018 that the respective legislation was enacted to ensure a more equal representation of women in politics. The "Parity Law" ("Quota Law") defines parity as 36% representation of women in the National People's Assembly (ANP) as deputies of the Nation and in local elections (which have never been practiced in Guinea-Bissau). Throughout the time before the enactment of the Parity Law, women were underrepresented in decision-making positions, as evident from the small number of female deputies in parliament and the few women holding high positions in political parties (PNUD e Ministério da Justiça e Direitos Humanos Guiné-Bissau, 2020).

For the legislative elections in 2014, 15 political parties participated, with only one party being led by a woman. As for the 2014 presidential elections, there were 15 candidates, and no female candidacy was registered after the rejection by the Supreme Court of Justice of the only pre-candidate (Antonieta Rosa Gomes). In the 2014 legislative elections, while the PAIGC managed to elect 57 deputies, including 13 women, out of the 41 deputies elected by the PRS, only one was a woman. Therefore, out of a total of 102 deputies, only 14 seats in parliament (= 13.7%) were occupied by women. This was the highest representation achieved during the period of democratic governance, which was generally characterized by very low women's participation, showing little quantitative variation. In 2015, men held 69% of government positions and were overrepresented in key ministries related to women, such as Agriculture, Education, and Natural Resources, where women held only 14%, 26%, and 10% of positions, respectively (PNUD e Ministério da Justiça e Direitos Humanos Guiné-Bissau, 2020). In the 2014 legislative elections, women won 14 mandates, representing 13.7% of participation in the National People's Assembly (ANP). In 2019, they also obtained 14 seats. The landscape of female representation did not change, despite the new Parity Law, which can be explained by two factors: firstly, there was not enough time, and secondly, the political will of male candidates and parties was lacking to increase the number of female candidates. Even in the presidential elections on November 24, 2019, there were no female candidates. However, it was noteworthy that the 2019 legislative elections witnessed a record number of female voters and candidates, although many of them were positioned in secondary positions or as substitutes, or they were candidates from small parties that did not win any parliamentary seats (PNUD e Ministério da Justiça e Direitos Humanos Guiné-Bissau, 2020).

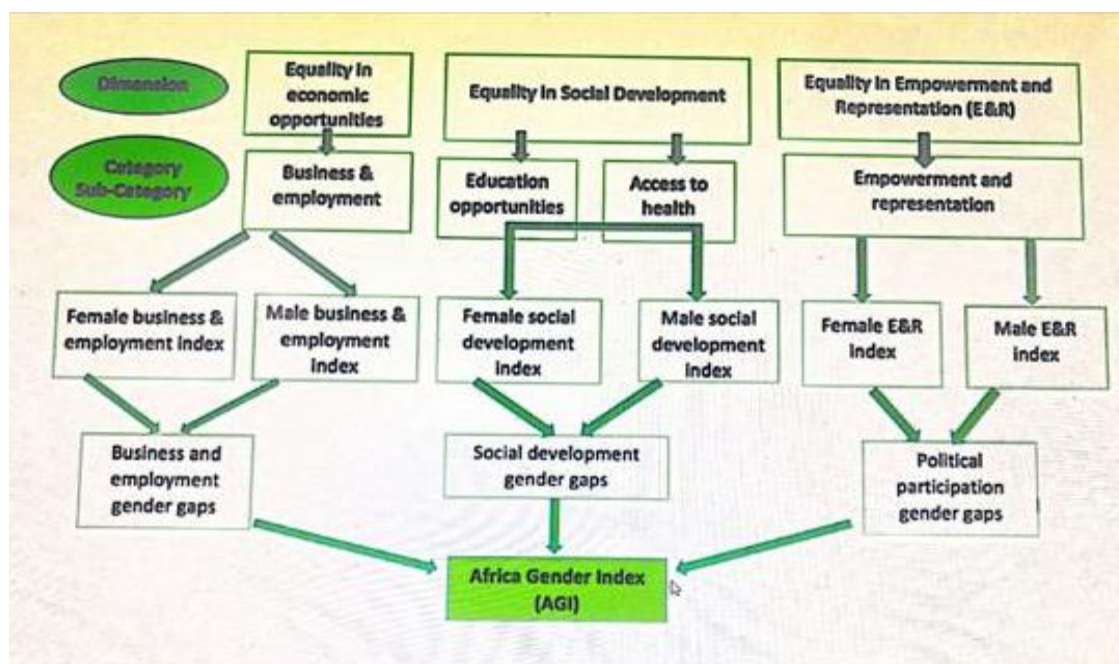
2.3 Theoretical Literature Review: A Brief Overview of Gender Debate

Hooks (1982) argues that mainstream feminism often fails to consider the unique struggles faced by Black women due to their intersectional identities, and she calls for a more inclusive feminist movement that recognizes and addresses these intersecting oppressions. Hooks critiques mainstream media and popular culture for perpetuating harmful stereotypes about Black women, which contribute to their marginalization and erasure. She calls for more diverse and nuanced representations of Black women that reflect the complexity of their experiences

and identities (Hooks 1982). Hooks (2008) explores the complexities of black masculinity in American Society. She examines how black masculinity is shaped by the intersection of race, gender, and other social identities. She argues that black men face unique challenges and stereotypes that are influenced by both racism and sexism. She introduces the concept of Violence and Hypermasculinity which she associates violence with black masculinity in American society. She critiques the hypermasculine ideals that glorify aggression and dominance, arguing that they contribute to the marginalization and dehumanization of black men. Butler (1999) introduces the concept of gender performativity, suggesting that gender is not something one inherently is, but rather something one does through repeated performances of gendered behaviors. These performances are not just individual acts but are shaped and constrained by societal norms and expectations. She critiques the concept of essentialism, which suggests that gender is determined by biology or fixed characteristics. She argues that such views reinforce oppressive gender norms and exclude non-normative identities and expressions. By highlighting the performative nature of gender, Butler aims to subvert existing gender norms and open up possibilities for alternative gender identities and expressions. She advocates for embracing the fluidity and variability of gender rather than adhering to fixed categories. Denzin (2008) explores the complex intersections of race, gender, family dynamics, and memory within the context of the American West, particularly focusing on the iconic Yellowstone National Park. He examines how the American West, often romanticized as a symbol of freedom and opportunity, is a site of complex social dynamics influenced by postmodernism. He challenges traditional narratives of the West and explores how they intersect with issues of race, gender, and family.

Dodoo and Frost (2008) explore how gender shapes individuals' roles, expectations, and decision-making processes related to fertility and reproduction. They emphasize that fertility behaviors are not only influenced by biological factors but are also deeply embedded in social, cultural, and economic contexts that are often gendered. They highlight the gendered inequalities that exist in access to and utilization of reproductive health services in Africa. They argue that women often face greater barriers in accessing reproductive health care due to factors such as economic dependency, lack of autonomy, and cultural norms surrounding women's health. Tripp & Casimiro et al. (2009) provide a historical overview of women's movements in Africa, tracing their development from pre-colonial times to the present day. It highlights the diverse strategies and tactics employed by African women to challenge patriarchal norms and advocate for gender equality. They emphasize the intersectional nature of African women's activism, acknowledging that women's experiences are shaped by multiple axes of identity such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. They argue that an intersectional approach is essential for understanding the complexities of women's struggles and advancing more inclusive feminist agendas. To expedite progress toward gender parity, African governments should consider affirmative action to boost female representation in leadership roles. Countries falling short of the 30% female quota should intensify efforts to meet it. Moreover, measures should be taken to alleviate the burden of unpaid care work by providing accessible water, modern energy, and technologies. Redistributing unpaid care work more equitably between genders and households, alongside public interventions to create decent jobs and empower women in their workplaces, is crucial.

Figure 1: Schematic presentation of the gender index calculation process



Source: AfDB, UNECA (2020).

3.0 MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study adopted qualitative methods of research. Qualitative data for this study was gathered through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to understand the sociocultural and institutional barriers that deter women from active political engagement. I also use triangulation to collect secondary data to assess the numerical changes in women's representation in political institutions. The study used thematic content analysis as a data analysis method for this study location of the participant's choosing. All interviews were transcribed using a thematic analysis approach.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Opportunities and Constraints for Women's Political Engagement in Guinea-Bissau

For this discussion, three moments of particular importance are considered: the liberation struggle, during which much of the discourse on women's emancipation was produced; the initial phase of independence (1975-83), during which gender discourse gained particular relevance within the framework of the 1982 UDEMU Congress and the International Conference on women's contributions to national liberation struggles and their role in the reconstruction process in African countries undergoing "second decolonization"; and the phase of economic liberalization and subsequently political liberalization (1985-1994). (Gomes, 2015). Since Guinea-Bissau was an essentially rural country, where the colonial power had used tensions between people and social conflicts between criollos and other social categories for its interests, the position of women in society was closely linked to the social context to which they belonged. and the relationships established with the institutions of colonial power although women's position was fundamentally subaltern. (Figueiredo; Gomes, 2016).

In this case, it was a double colonization of women, either through colonial structures of oppression or through oppressive patriarchal structures, which, in Amílcar Cabral's view, meant a profound need to rethink social structures, relations of gender and ethnic relations in Guinea-Bissau, based on colonial, economic and political deconstruction, capable of breaking with existing theoretical and epistemological models (Cabral, 1976; Cláudio Furtado, 2014). Cabral recognized and promoted the active involvement of women in the national liberation movement. He emphasized the crucial role women played in various aspects of the struggle, including combat, logistics, education, and community organizing. Cabral advocated for gender equality and highlighted the need for social transformation that addressed women's rights and empowerment. He believed that achieving true liberation required dismantling gender-based inequalities and empowering women to participate fully in shaping society. While not explicitly labeled as feminist, Cabral's writings may reflect feminist perspectives by acknowledging and addressing women's unique experiences and advocating for their rights within the broader struggle for national liberation and social justice. Cabral, 1976; Cláudio Furtado, 2014). Since the time of the national liberation struggle, the Republic of Guinea-Bissau has recognized the importance of women's active involvement across political, social, and economic spheres. The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) has notably championed women's rights in political and civil realms and sought to enhance their quality of life. During the liberation struggle, women stood alongside men in resisting colonial occupation to secure independence for Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. As Cabral emphasized, "Our revolution cannot succeed without the full participation of women" (CABRAL, 1999, p. 02). In PAIGC Action Program, established equality between men and women by stating that "men and women enjoy the same rights in the family, at work, and in public activities." Considering the political and social context of the time, these words translated into a true revolution and innovation regarding the status of women in the public sphere (Gomes, 2012).

In the context of armed struggle, the liberation movement appealed to women's rights and their respect. But this result would only be possible with women's awareness that their emancipation and freedom depended, first and foremost, on themselves and their willingness to fight against all aspects that hindered their development and were contrary to their dignity, contributing largely to their subordination to men (early marriage, forced marriage, adolescent pregnancy, female genital mutilation, rights over children, right to inheritance and land ownership) (Gomes, 2012, p. 04).

However, after independence, many women were pushed out of decision-making positions and returned to a position of "subordination," being seen as weakened beings in society, so few women achieved true emancipation. In other words, they were inserted and involved in political decisions of lesser prestige, in the job markets, and in the economic circuits considered "formal," where they play a fundamental role in family tradition, as they are responsible for the family and household management, children's education, and mostly engaged in "informal" economic activities (GOMES, 2016, p. 32).

The work "On the Path of the Struggle for Peace and Equality: The Contribution of Guinean Women" by Patrícia Godinho Gomes (2012) offers a valuable contribution by highlighting the often-underestimated role of women in Guinea-Bissau in their struggles for peace and equality. By bringing to light specific stories and contributions of Guinean women, the author promotes

greater visibility and recognition of their activism and social engagement. This is essential to challenge gender stereotypes and to promote women's empowerment in Guinean society. Furthermore, the analysis of the challenges faced by these women over time, such as cultural and political barriers, offers a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in the pursuit of gender equality. The historical and political contextualization present in the work situates the activism of Guinean women in a broader context of struggles for independence, armed conflicts, and post-colonial developments. By connecting these local experiences with global issues of human rights and gender equality, the author highlights the importance of considering diverse and inclusive perspectives in the debate on social justice and women's empowerment. (Gomes, 2012).

4.2 Examining Parity Law Nr. 04/2018 in Guinea-Bissau

In December 2018, Guinea-Bissau approved the Parity Law for the participation of women in politics and decision-making spheres, where the following articles describe the legal conditions that women can ensure for their rights and exercise their full citizenship in a democratic and rule-of-law state, as stated in the country.

Article 1.º

This Law, Nr. 04/2018, applies to the lists presented by political parties in legislative and municipal elections and aims to observe greater equality of opportunity in the sphere of decision-making, promoting parity between men and women.

• *Decision-making sphere in the 2.º Article*

The decision-making sphere is considered, for the preceding article, to include the positions of deputies to the National People's Assembly and local authorities.

• *The candidate lists submitted in the 3.º Article*

The candidate lists submitted for the National People's Assembly and the local authorities referred to in the preceding article are composed in a manner that promotes equality between men and women.

• *Parity in the 4.º Article*

1. To apply this law, parity is understood as the minimum representation of 36% of women on the candidate list for elective positions.
2. To comply with the provisions of the preceding paragraph, the plurinominal lists submitted by parties cannot consist solely of candidates of the same gender to respect the parity mentioned above.
3. The ordering of each gender in the composition of the lists of alternate candidates must be identical to the ordering done in the composition of the lists of effective candidates.

Parity Law Nr. 04/2018 in Guinea-Bissau aims to promote gender equality and ensure equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, particularly in political and public life. The law likely outlines measures to increase the representation of women in various

governmental bodies, such as parliament, local councils, and other decision-making institutions. It includes provisions such as quotas or affirmative action policies to ensure a minimum level of female representation in these bodies. Additionally, it addresses issues related to gender-based discrimination and harassment, as well as mechanisms for reporting and addressing such incidents. One key aspect that has the impact of traditional gender roles on women's political engagement. In many societies, including those in Guinea-Bissau, women are often expected to fulfill domestic and caregiving responsibilities, which can limit their opportunities to participate in public affairs. This division of labor reinforces stereotypes that prioritize men as political actors while marginalizing women in decision-making processes. He also examines prevailing attitudes towards women in leadership roles. Cultural perceptions of leadership may be gendered, with societal expectations favoring male authority figures. Women aspiring to political positions may face resistance or skepticism based on stereotypes about their competence or suitability for leadership roles, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion from political spaces.

Moreover, there is the influence of patriarchal structures within political institutions. Institutionalized sexism and male-dominated power structures can create systemic barriers that hinder women's advancement in politics. Lack of support networks, discriminatory practices, and limited access to resources further exacerbate the challenges faced by women seeking political participation. So, by providing insights into these socio-cultural factors, we can get a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of gender inequality in politics. This draws us to the importance of addressing deeply rooted cultural beliefs and norms to promote inclusive political environments that empower women to actively participate in governance and decision-making processes. Political parties often serve as gatekeepers to political power, and their internal dynamics, including nomination processes and party ideologies, can significantly impact women's ability to secure candidacies and leadership positions. Fati's analysis shed light on how entrenched party structures and norms contribute to the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles within Guinea-Bissau's political parties. Different electoral systems, such as proportional representation or first-past-the-post, can have varying effects on women's electoral success and representation. Additionally, State institutions, including legislative bodies, executive branches, and local governance structures, often reflect and perpetuate gender biases. This is what we can identify as structural barriers within these institutions, such as discriminatory laws, inadequate support mechanisms, and limited funding for women candidates, which obstruct women's political advancement.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve the goal of eliminating gender inequality in Guinea-Bissau, decision-makers and policymakers must adopt a comprehensive approach that combines policies, programs, and concrete actions. I recommend some strategies policy and actions:

- *Effective Implementation of Parity Law*

Ensure the effective implementation of parity law, including the establishment of monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance. This may involve the designation of quotas for women on electoral lists, as well as measures to ensure women have equal access to resources and opportunities within political parties.

- *Awareness and Engagement of Political Parties*

Work closely with political parties to promote the inclusion of women in leadership positions and decision-making. This may include financial incentives for parties that promote women's participation, as well as awareness campaigns to educate party leaders about the importance of gender equality.

- *Education and Awareness*

Invest in educational programs and awareness campaigns to promote gender equality from an early age in schools and communities. This may include school curricula addressing gender issues, as well as public awareness campaigns to change attitudes and behaviors towards women in politics and other spheres.

- *Empowerment and Capacity Building*

Implement empowerment and capacity-building programs for women, including leadership training, negotiation skills, political literacy, and access to financial and technological resources. This can help women overcome the structural and cultural barriers that prevent them from fully participating in politics and other areas of public life.

- *Promotion of Women's Participation in Decision-Making*

Create opportunities and spaces for women to actively participate in decision-making at all levels, including government bodies, civil society organizations, and private companies. This may involve the implementation of quota policies in leadership positions and the promotion of an organizational culture that values diversity and inclusion.

- *Combatting Discrimination and Gender-Based Violence*

Implement effective measures to combat discrimination and gender-based violence, including rigorous enforcement of existing laws and strengthening of protection and support systems for victims. This may include the establishment of safe shelters for women at risk, as well as education and awareness programs to prevent gender-based violence.

- *International Cooperation*

Seek support and international cooperation to strengthen efforts to promote gender equality in Guinea-Bissau. This may include partnerships with international organizations, development agencies, and other countries with experience and resources to share.

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