RESEARCH ARTICLE

DEMOCRACY AND GENDER IN AFRICA: A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

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ARTICLE INFO

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ABSTRACT

This philosophical reflection delves into the intricate relationship between democracy and gender in Africa, focusing on the complexities of power dynamics, rights, and opportunities. It explores the concept of gender, its social construction, and its relevance in African cultures, histories, and political contexts. The discourse emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, equality, and participation in shaping democratic processes and outcomes. It argues that gender equality is an essential component of a thriving democracy, ensuring fair representation and the realization of human rights for all citizens. The reflection also examines the struggles faced by women in Africa in their quest for gender equality and political participation. It examines the impact of patriarchal norms, socio-cultural practices, and institutional barriers that hinder women's advancement in democratic systems. The significance of feminist movements and collective action in challenging gender inequalities is also highlighted. The reflection critically analyses the role of African governments, civil society organizations, and international actors in promoting gender-responsive democratic practices. It examines the implementation of legal frameworks, policies, and affirmative action measures aimed at promoting gender equality, representation, and women's empowerment. Drawing on the concepts of philosophers Locke, Wiredu, and Hountondji, the reflection suggests potential pathways for advancing democracy and gender equality in Africa. It emphasizes the importance of education, awareness-raising, and cultural transformation in dismantling gender stereotypes and promoting gender-sensitive democratic values.

Citation: Elius Malale, Theophil Christopher, Emau Saturday, Samuel Mwashiuya and Xavery Mbunda. 2024. "Democracy and gender in africa: a philosophical reflection". *International Journal of Current Research*, 16, (05), 28392-28400.

INTRODUCTION

African culture has a greater influence on its practice of democracy, and gender issues have a different understanding and consideration in African culture than in western culture. In Africa, democracy is more like an invention than a native way of governing; colonialism and other western interactions brought about the existing forms of democracy. Some African philosophers argue that before colonialism, there was democracy in Africa, but of a different kind from the modern one. Customizing gender issues for democracy in Africa requires philosophical reflection. This philosophical reflection is based on the nature of gender (the ontology of gender), the philosophical foundations of democracy (from John Locke), and an understanding of African culture and its influence on democracy.

This study aims at suggesting a possible form of democracy that respects gender equality while at the same time not compromising African culture and understanding of social responsibilities.

Background: Democracy and gender equality are two fundamental aspects of societal development that have garnered significant attention worldwide. African societies have a complex history when it comes to democracy, with many countries experiencing periods of authoritarian rule and political instability. Similarly, gender relations in Africa have been shaped by a range of cultural, political, and economic factors, resulting in gender inequality and discrimination in many areas of life. This study aims to provide a philosophical reflection on the intricate relationship between democracy and gender in Africa, as well as

considering the ways in which these values and assumptions can be challenged and transformed through philosophical reflection and action. Africa's history is characterized by diverse cultural and social structures, each with its own unique perspectives on gender roles and power dynamics. Traditionally, many African societies were patriarchal, with women often marginalized and excluded from positions of influence and decision-making. However, the advent of democracy in Africa has brought about transformative changes, creating opportunities for increased gender equality and women's empowerment. One key philosophical concept that is relevant to the relationship between democracy and gender in Africa is the idea of equality. Democracy is often understood as a system of governance that is based on the principle of political equality, in which all citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives (Przeworski, 2010). It seeks to ensure that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal access to rights, resources, and opportunities. While democratic principles have been widely embraced across the African continent, the practical realization of gender equality within democratic frameworks remains a complex and multifaceted challenge.

However, the reality of democracy and gender relations in Africa often falls short of these ideals. Many African countries have a history of political exclusion and marginalization, with certain groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and etc. , being systematically excluded from political participation and decision-making processes. Similarly, gender inequality is pervasive in many areas of African societies, with women being disproportionately affected by poverty, violence, and discrimination. To address these issues, philosophers in Africa have been engaging in critical reflection on the underlying values and assumptions that shape democratic and gender relations in their societies. This involves questioning traditional notions of hierarchy, exclusion, and discrimination, and exploring alternative ways of thinking about democracy and gender that are more inclusive and equitable while also incorporating the values that are fundamental to African societies that should be merged into the democracy practiced. One approach to this involves using African philosophical concepts and frameworks to challenge Western assumptions about democracy and gender. African philosophy has a rich history of exploring the nature of personhood, community, and social relations, and many African philosophers have argued that these concepts have important implications for democratic and gender relations in African societies. For example, the concept of ubuntu, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and communities, has been used to argue for a more inclusive and participatory form of democracy that values the contributions of all members of society (Marovah & Mutanga, 2023). Similarly, the concept of mutuality, which emphasizes the importance of mutual recognition and respect in social relations, has been used to argue for a more egalitarian and respectful approach to gender relations in African societies (George & Dei, 1994). Another approach to addressing the relationship between democracy and gender in Africa involves engaging with the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups. This involves listening to the voices of women, ethnic minorities, and other marginalized groups, and incorporating their perspectives into democratic and gender policies and practices.

This approach is grounded in the idea that marginalized groups have a unique perspective on democratic and gender relations, and that their experiences and perspectives can help to challenge and transform dominant assumptions and values. For example, feminist movements in Africa have been instrumental in challenging patriarchal structures and promoting gender equality, often through grassroots organizing and advocacy. There are a number of notable challenges that African democracies face achieving gender equality. Deep-rooted cultural norms and traditional practices often perpetuate gender-based discrimination and hinder women's full participation in political and public life. Patriarchal power structures, stereotypes, and biases continue to limit women's access to education, employment, and leadership roles. Moreover, political institutions and processes are often characterized by gender imbalances, with women significantly underrepresented in decision-making positions. In addition to cultural and structural obstacles, socio-economic factors further exacerbate gender inequalities in Africa. Poverty, limited access to resources, and inadequate healthcare disproportionately affect women, perpetuating their marginalization and reinforcing gender-based disparities. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between democracy, culture, economics, sex, gender and gender dynamics.

Despite the challenges, Africa has witnessed notable progress in advancing gender equality within democratic systems. Various countries have implemented legal and policy reforms aimed at promoting women's empowerment and participation. For instance, Rwanda has achieved remarkable success in achieving gender parity in political representation, with women holding more than half of the parliamentary seats. Other countries, such as South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Senegal, have also made significant strides in increasing women's political participation. Furthermore, civil society organizations, women's rights activists, and international initiatives have played a crucial role in advocating for gender equality and mobilizing support for women's empowerment. The African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals have outlined specific targets and strategies to promote gender equality, recognizing its importance as a driver of sustainable development and social cohesion. While progress has been made, there is still considerable work to be done to achieve full gender equality in African democracies. Strengthening legal frameworks and ensuring their effective implementation is crucial. This includes enacting laws that protect women's rights, prevent gender-based violence, and promote equal opportunities in education, employment, and political participation. Moreover, efforts must focus on transforming cultural norms and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequalities. Education and awareness campaigns can challenge stereotypes, promote gender-sensitive values, and foster an inclusive understanding of democracy that recognizes the equal worth and agency of all individuals. Inclusive governance structures should be established, providing opportunities for women's meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making. Overall, the relationship between democracy and gender in Africa is complex requires ongoing philosophical reflection and action. By engaging with the underlying values and assumptions that shape democratic and gender relations in African societies, and by listening to the perspectives and experiences of

marginalized groups, philosophers in Africa can help to promote a more inclusive, equitable, participatory, egalitarian and respectful approach to gender relations in African societies.

The Philosophical Development of the Term Gender

Sex/Gender Distinction: The terms 'sex' and 'gender' mean different things to different feminist theorists and neither are easy or straightforward to characterize. Sketching out some feminist history of the terms provides a helpful starting point.

Biological Determinism: Most people believe sex and gender are coextensive, with men and women being members of the human race. Feminists have historically opposed the sex/gender divide, arguing that sex refers to biological characteristics, while gender refers to social characteristics. Geddes & Thompson, 2019) proposed metabolic conditions as the root cause of social, psychological, and behavioral qualities. Women are anabolic, while men are katabolic, causing them to be docile, conservative, and uninterested in politics. This theory supports social and political structures and explains behavioral variations between men and women. Geddes & Thompson (2019) argue that psychological differences and biological determinism are social, not biological, and are absorbed through culture, challenging biological determinism.

Gender Terminology: The term "gender" was employed by feminists to distinguish between social and psychological differences and biological ones by psychologists like Stoller (Mikkola, 2006). Since gender disparities are the oppressive results of social interventions that establish expectations for how men and women should act, they held that they were socially constructed and amendable. Ultimately, women's subjection could be ended, in Stoller's opinion, by enacting political and social change that would change gender. In a genderless society, no one's sexual anatomy should have any influence on who they are, what they do, or who they have relationships with. This is the vision of feminism. Despite the fact that all people have a set sex, different cultures have different expectations for sex-based bodies, leading to the creation of feminine and masculine persons. It is also possible for sex and gender to be distinguished from one another when they are separated. Feminist critiques argue that gender differences stem from social conventions and cultural practices, with Nicholson highlighting the importance of understanding how these practices construct gender and its meaning (Nicholson, 1994).

Gender as Socially Constructed: John et al. (2017) argues that socialization is the process by which individuals adopt female characteristics and behaviors, shaping their gender identity. Maynard (2012) highlights the importance of social learning in constructing gendered societies. Both men and women are socialized by various stimuli, making it challenging to combat gender socialization. Parents often treat their children differently, promoting gender-specific toys and behaviors. Today, girls are discouraged from participating in sports and are more likely to be given toys with masculine themes, such as trucks and guns (Maynard, 2012). Chodorow (1995) study highlights the development of gendered personalities in young children due to common parenting styles. Women often take responsibility for caring

for young children, resulting in distinct psychic development. This, in turn, encourages children to establish clear ego boundaries and separate from their mothers. Freudian psychoanalytic thought suggests that both male and female parents should share equal responsibility for raising their children, preventing widespread gender stereotyped behaviors in infants (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). Chodorow (1995) suggests that ensuring a daughter's ego boundaries are dissolved through gender socialization, fostering individualized self-awareness and preventing unduly detached egos.

Genders are created through the eroticization of sexual dominance and submission, with men occupying the sexually dominating position and women the sexually submissive one. This hierarchical structure is linked to sexualized power dynamics, making the idea of gender equality absurd. Hierarchical genders, defined by sexuality, disappear if power is removed. Gender difference in some individuals is a result of hierarchical sexuality in patriarchal civilizations, rather than a specific behavioral type. Men are socially conditioned to find submission sexy, while women view subservient sexuality as erotic (MacKinnon, 1989).

The Problem with Sex/Gender Distinction

Is Gender Uniform?: The aforementioned positions all have gender realism as their underlying metaphysical perspective. In other words, it is considered that women as a group possess some distinctive quality, commonality, or situation that characterizes their gender and distinguishes them from, say, men. In this respect (or respects), it is believed that all women are different from all males. These positions underlying metaphysical perspective on gender realism is consistently criticized for two reasons: first, it ignores the racial, cultural, and class differences among women (the particularity argument); and second, it proposes a normative ideal of womanhood (the normativity argument) (MacKinnon, 1989). Spelman's view on femininity is flawed, as race, class, ethnicity, and country do not affect gender constituted. However, women's experience of femininity is defined by defining features, experiences, shared circumstances, or criterion. This leaves open the possibility that women share a characteristic that defines their gender (Maynard, 2012). The normativity argument argues that unitary gender concepts overlook cultural, social, and political intersections that shape women's formation. Feminist theory suggests that genders are socially constructed with essential traits, with men possessing masculine traits and heterosexual desires, while women possess feminine traits and heterosexual desires. Engaging in these behaviors solidifies gender, challenging biologically deterministic definitions (Edwards, 2015).

Is Sex Classification Solely a Matter of Biology?: Haslanger (1995) argues that feminists often view sex ascriptions as a biological issue without social or cultural components. However, some feminists argue that sex categorizations are not just biological matter, as social forces create specific objects, such as sex- or gender-specific bodies or individuals. Social practices impact secondary sex characteristics. Haslanger (1995) argues that social factors, such as XY chromosomes, sperm-producing testicles, and male genitalia, influence our conception of sex. Females

have large egg-producing ovaries, female genitalia, high hormones, and secondary sex features, while males have XY chromosomes and significant body hair. Intersex individuals with XY chromosomes demonstrate sex differ from a scientific standpoint, highlighting the need for socially influenced judgments to determine sex (Jaggar, 1983).

Is Sex/Gender Distinction Useful?: Butler (2004) and other feminists argue that the distinction between sexes and genders is useless, reflecting androcentric oppositions between mind/body, culture/nature, and reason/emotion. This dualistic thinking undermines feminist goals and devalues women as human subjects and agents. The opposition between the mind and the body also maps to other distinctions, such as reason and emotion, culture and nature, and rationality and irrationality. Job interviews often focus on gender-neutral individuals, with men often not asked about family planning. Women, however, are more likely to be asked about reproduction, highlighting the conflict between men and women. The adage "Gender is between the ears; sex is between the legs" highlights the control individuals have over their bodies (Mikkola, 2006).

Gender and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: In previous sections, the metaphysics of gender has been established, this section is interested with how global organs looks at gender, and so, rights concerning gender will be addressed. Human rights look at human beings as equals, and with that regard human rights aim at promoting humanity. Gender distinctions does not imply to inequality among human beings or else diversities in human beings does not imply to inequalities. It is a fact that there are multiple differences in human beings based on gender, color, nationality and many others, all of those does not compromise with the nature of a human being. All human beings find unity in their essence (nature) which gives them equality before human rights. By nature of human beings, naturally human rights are entitled to us without gender distinction or distinction of any other kind. It is shown by Donnelly (2013) that, "the foundation of human rights can be traced to the twin ideas that human beings are born equal in dignity and rights, and that all human beings have to be treated with equal concern and respect".

Basically, women rights are to be understood as human rights, as the Legal Assistance Center, (2005) asserts; The idea that women's rights are human rights is at once both simple and complex. Its power lies in the fact that it is simultaneously ordinary and revolutionary. On the one hand, it makes common sense to declare that as human beings, women and girls have human rights. On the other hand, it is a radical reclamation of our humanity and right to equality which has transformative potential. The full incorporation of women's and girls' lives into human rights concepts and practice exposes the failure of countries worldwide to accord females the human dignity and respect they deserve simply as human beings. In article 1 of the Universal Declarations of Human Rights sets forward the rationale for all human rights and addresses on equality of all human beings, it says "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. "Whereas article 2 shows the obligation of the society and political system with respect to human rights. Since all human being

are born equal and they are equal before human rights, this implies to equal treatment regardless the distinctions between human beings. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights states that; Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, nonself-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. It is irrational to treat women unequal to men since it is a failure to understand that that they are all human beings and entitled to the same rights. This irrational conception has resulted to number of social problems like discrimination of women, torture, denial of freedom to women and denial of the right to possessions. In some matters like politics, it is evident that men are dominating and very few women have chance to political power. There are good number of reasons why this has been happening, drawing an example from Africa, cultural beliefs are the greatest hinder to political equality since it is believed in most societies that women cannot rule. In Africa this problem is critical, cultural values and backgrounds are hinderance to gender equality. It is not merely a problem with political authorities but also a problem with the society. Sometimes women are not accepted by the society just by the virtue of being women regardless their abilities. A society needs a paradigm shift with regard to the perception of women.

Does Gender Limit Participation in Some Matters?: Following the illustrated analysis from above, based on the understanding of gender and human rights as well as the metaphysics of gender, it is clear that humanity is one regardless of the distinctions between human beings. The duplicity human beings exhibit does not confer the multiplicity of humanity. Therefore, gender distinctions cannot limit participation in political matters. Both men and women share humanity, and this makes them equal in political matters. If this is the case, the question will be: why is there inequality in politics?. Hypothetically, there are a number of factors limiting women's participation in political matters, such as historical and cultural factors, whereby many societies have a long history of patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles, which have limited women's participation in politics. Women's exclusion from political power has often been justified by stereotypes and beliefs that men are better suited for leadership roles. Also, structural barriers exist where there are discriminatory laws and practices, limited access to education and resources, a lack of financial support for female candidates, and unequal opportunities for political networking and advancement. Stereotypes and biases, mostly in Africa, affect women's participation in politics. Women may face prejudices and biases that question their competence, leadership abilities, and capacity to make decisions. These stereotypes can affect voters' perceptions and create challenges for women seeking political office.

Democracy and Governance: Governance refers to the way in which a group or organization is managed, directed, and controlled (Müller, 2016). It encompasses the processes, practices, and structures through which decisions are made, authority is exercised, and accountability is ensured. In the

context of government, governance involves the mechanisms and institutions that shape and guide the actions of the state. It includes the processes by which laws and policies are formulated, implemented, and enforced, as well as the mechanisms for holding government officials accountable for their actions. Good governance is often characterized by transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, and effectiveness. Democracy is one of the forms of governance, it is the form of governance to be good than other forms of governance. Democracy is a form of government in which power is vested in the people, either directly or through elected representatives. It is characterized by the principles of political equality, popular sovereignty, and majority rule, while also protecting individual rights and freedoms. Roemer & Roemer (2009) defines democracy as a political competition and, in particular, open competition among rival political parties. Democracy allows citizens to participate in decision-making processes, exercise their rights, and hold their government accountable.

The combination of democracy and governance gives democratic governance. A democratic governance refers to a system of government that is based on the principles of democracy, where power is vested in the people and exercised through free and fair elections, citizen participation, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms. It encompasses the processes, institutions, and practices that ensure accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. Key features of a democratic state are popular sovereignty, rule of law, respect for human rights, separation of power, civil society engagement, accountability, and transparency (Benhabib, 2008).

The Practice of Democracy in Africa: Democracy has made significant strides in Africa since the wave of decolonization in the 20th century. The continent has witnessed numerous transitions from authoritarian regimes to democratic governance, with African nations adopting constitutions and holding regular elections. However, despite these advancements, challenges persist in ensuring inclusive and gender-equal democracies. The history of democracy in Africa can be traced back to the post-colonial era when many African nations gained independence from European powers as many authors (Thomson, 2022;Young, 2004) will assert which is taken differently by some African philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu and Paulin Hountondji who claim that the term is not foreign to Africa, the difference is on the practice of democracy. Kwasi Wiredu was a renowned Ghanaian philosopher and academician who made significant contributions to the discourse on African philosophy and democracy. He was a strong advocate for democracy in Africa and believed that it was necessary for the continent's development and progress. Wiredu argued that democracy was not a foreign concept to Africa, but rather it had existed in various forms in traditional African societies(Wiredu, 1995). He noted that in many African societies, decisions were made through consensus-building processes that involved everyone in the community, including women and children. These processes were democratic in nature and reflected the values of the community. Wiredu believed that these traditional forms of democracy could be adapted and incorporated into modern African political systems (Matolino, 2012). Paulin J. Hountondji is a prominent philosopher from Benin who has written extensively on the challenges and opportunities facing African societies. In his work, he has often addressed issues related to democracy and governance in Africa, offering a critical perspective on the dominant discourses and practices in this realm. One of Hountondji's key arguments is that democracy cannot be imposed from outside, but must emerge from within African societies themselves (Hountondji, 1996). He argues that the Western model of liberal democracy, which emphasizes individual rights and free markets, may not be appropriate for Africa, given the continent's unique historical, cultural, and economic context. Instead, Hountondji suggests that African societies need to develop their own models of democracy that take into account their specific social and political conditions. The two African philosophers present very brilliant ideas on the concept of democracy and gender in Africa. Moreover, it's not very practical that their ideas would be applied to the whole of Africa, Africa that is faced with multi-cultures, languages and races. The development of their ideas is from particular cultures as for example Wiredu uses an example of the Ashanti culture suggesting the so called 'cultural democracy' (Wiredu, 1995) while Hountondjiapproaches democracy in Africa with his concept of 'dialogical democracy' (Hountondji, 1996). Claiming that democracy is natural to Africans is not a problem, a problem would arise as to the applicability of cultural democracy and dialogical democracy to the whole of the African continent. But also, what would be the effectiveness of those concepts within the very cultural contexts of the philosophers in this contemporary era? It is important to note that the lack of one African culture and one African language unfolds a problem of how can we talk of anything and claim it to be African as even the expression of such would be in a foreign language? (Imbo, 1998).

One notable milestone was the establishment of the Republic of Ghana in 1957. Led by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonial rule (Grilli, 2020). The successful transition to independence set a precedent for other African nations to strive for democratic governance. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, many African countries witnessed significant political transformations. The fall of apartheid in South Africa and the end of military dictatorships in countries like Nigeria and Uganda marked important turning points. These transitions were characterized by the adoption of new constitutions, multiparty elections, and the establishment of democratic institutions. After independence most of the states in Africa adopted democratic governments and systems of governance from their colonial masters. Ndulu (1960) asserts that "to disengage from an opponent they could not vanquish, democratic institutions were introduced and elections may have been instituted by colonial regimes. " This is to show how the colonial masters had to help initiating democratic systems in Africa. So, western democratic bases were new in Africa and western democracy is not understood *per se* in Africa as a result Africa is faced with number of challenges associated with democracy including gender issues. Despite the progress made in democratization, gender-related challenges persist in African democracies. Women face significant barriers to political participation and representation, limiting their influence and contribution to democratic processes. Cultural and traditional norms is one among the challenges. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes continue to marginalize women's participation in politics. Cultural

expectations often restrict women to domestic roles, relegating them to the margins of decision-making processes. According to Makama (2013) patriarchal norms and cultural attitudes are a bigger challenge to democracy in Africa. Traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms continue to shape societies in Africa, affecting women's rights and opportunities. These attitudes undermine gender equality efforts and hinder women's participation in democratic processes. Thus, understanding that democracy is more than voting in Africa will help looking into detail these challenges of democracy. Such kind of challenges in Africa needs to be addressed so as to promote democratic states that care for gender equality in democratic participation. Limited access to education and lack of financial resources. Gender disparities in education hinder women's political empowerment. Unequal access to education denies women the necessary skills and knowledge to engage effectively in political activities and hold leadership positions. Women often face financial constraints when participating in politics. Limited access to funding and resources for campaigns and political activities disproportionately affects women, further exacerbating gender inequalities in democratic processes. Another observed challenge is violence and intimidation. Women frequently encounter violence, intimidation, and harassment when engaging in politics. These acts are aimed at silencing women's voices, deterring them from participating actively, and perpetuating male dominance in political spheres. Gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and female genital mutilation, remain prevalent in many African countries. These forms of violence undermine women's rights and limit their ability to fully participate in democratic processes. However. women continue to be underrepresented in key decision-making positions, such as parliament and executive roles. This lack of representation perpetuates gender bias and limits the diversity of perspectives in democratic processes. This is further observed in legal and policy gaps, despite progress in some countries, legal frameworks and policies often fail to adequately protect women's rights and promote gender equality. Discriminatory laws and customary practices persist, hindering women's empowerment and their ability to engage in democratic processes effectively (Makama, 2013).

Wiredu recognized that Africa's current political systems were largely inherited from colonial powers and did not necessarily reflect the values and needs of African societies (Wiredu, 1997). He argued that Africans needed to develop their own unique forms of democracy that were grounded in their cultural and social realities. This would involve a process of decolonization, where Africans would take control of their political systems and shape them according to their own needs and values. To the contemporary period this can only be done through integration of the western democratic values with the African values that are found in the multi-cultures of Africa which yet would not result to an African democracy rather African democracies. To this point let us borrow some ideas from the western philosopher John Locke, to enlighten us more on the concept of democracy.

Philosophical Foundations of Democracy in Locke: John Locke, a prominent 17th century political thinker and philosopher, was deeply influenced by the Hebrew Bible and Thomas Hobbes' philosophy of government. He believed in the natural law and human rights, which led him to write works such as the *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, *The*

Essays on the Law of Nature, and the *Essay Concerning Toleration*.

Locke's social contract theory suggests that people lived in the state of nature without government or law to regulate them, protecting their natural rights through their own strength and skill. In this state, no one had the right to govern, and no one would have the right to govern anyone else (Locke, 1887). To overcome these hardships, people entered into two agreements: *Pactum Unionis* and *Pactum Subjectionis*. The first pact sought protection of lives and property, creating a society where people respected each other and lived in peace. The second pact united people and pledged to obey an authority, guaranteeing protection of life, property, and liberty (Locke, 1887). To develop the government, Locke proposed creating a government that grants it the power to make and enforce laws. This social contract involved individuals agreeing to give up their rights in exchange for security provided by the government. This agreement ensured that everyone's rights to life, liberty, and property were protected, providing security for everyone (Locke, 1887). Locke believed that consent is the key to legitimizing a government; failure to act for the common good invites dissolution. Securing social order requires the direct consent of those who are to be governed. However, achieving common consent for specific laws can be challenging. In practice, Locke believed that the majority's will must be accepted as determinative over the conduct of each citizen who consents to be governed. Participation is more important than the decision taken, as it allows for the majority's final say in who wins. In the *Second Treatises*, Locke argues that the government's power is limited to the public good, focusing on the protection of lives and property. He outlines three main objectives of forming a civil government: establishing a common law, electing a judge, and establishing executive power to carry out right judgments (Locke, 1952). The legislative branch of government is responsible for determining how society's forces are utilized, while the executive is responsible for administering and executing the law. The legislative must always check the executive's power, establishing laws and principles to guide their actions. The government can be dissolved if the trust placed upon it is questioned, indicating that it should be people-oriented and based on trust placed on it. There are two types of dissolution: dissolution from within and dissolution as overturning from without. Dissolution can occur when a prince sets up his own arbitrary will, hinders legislative assembly or acting freely, alters the electorate or election methods without consent, or is subordinated to foreign power (Locke, 1952). Finally, a government can be dissolved when the supreme executive power neglects and abandons its charge, preventing the enforcement of existing laws. Dissolution from within and overturning from without can lead to various consequences, such as a government being dissolved due to arbitrary power, subjugated by foreign power, or a government being dissolved when executive power is neglected.

Locke, Wiredu, and Hountondji on Democracy and Gender in Africa: John Locke is an influential Enlightenment thinker who emphasized the importance of individual rights and consent as the foundation of political legitimacy. Although Locke's theories are not specifically focused on Africa, his ideas on human rights and representative government have influenced democratic thought worldwide. Locke's concepts of natural rights,

including life, liberty, and property, provide a framework for understanding the inherent worth and equality of all individuals (Locke, 1887). Kwasi Wiredu and Paulin Hountondji, prominent African philosophers, have made significant contributions to the discourse on democracy and gender in Africa. While each philosopher approaches the topic from a unique perspective, their ideas converge on the need for inclusive democracy that addresses gender inequality and promotes social justice.

Kwasi Wiredu contributed to the African philosophical tradition by addressing issues of democracy and political systems in Africa naming it 'cultural democracy', claiming that democracy could not be imposed on African societies from the outside, but rather it needed to be rooted in African cultures and traditions (Wiredu, 1995). This meant that democracy needed to be flexible and adaptable to the diverse cultural and social contexts of Africa. Wiredu advocated for a form of democracy that incorporates traditional African values and institutions. He argued that democracy should not be seen as a foreign import, but rather as a system that can be adapted to African cultural contexts. Wiredu believed that African societies should draw on their own cultural resources to shape democratic processes that accommodate gender equality and social justice. Paulin Hountondji focused on the decolonization of African philosophy and the importance of indigenous knowledge systems (Hountondji, 1996). Hountondji critiqued the imposition of Western philosophical frameworks on African societies and called for a reclamation of African cultural heritage. In the context of democracy and gender, Hountondji's work underscores the need to challenge colonial legacies that perpetuate gender inequality (Hountondji, 1996). Hountondji's approach to democracy in Africa is his concept of 'dialogical democracy' a model of democracy that emphasized dialogue and consensus-building among different groups within society, rather than the imposition of majority rule or the dominance of a single political party (Hountondji, 1996). Dialogical democracy recognizes the importance of diverse perspectives and interests in shaping public policy, and seeks to create a space for constructive debate and compromise. Hountondji's emphasis on dialogue and consensus-building reflects his broader commitment to African philosophy. He argued that African societies have a rich intellectual heritage that has been overlooked or marginalized by Western thinkers. In his view, African philosophy can provide a valuable source of insight and inspiration for addressing the pressing social and political challenges facing the continent (Hountondji, 1996). By drawing on African traditions of communalism, humanism, and respect for nature, Hountondji suggested that African societies can develop their own distinctive models of democracy and governance, which are grounded in local knowledge and values. Thus, African societies should engage in critical self-reflection to identify and dismantle oppressive structures that hinder gender equality and democratic participation.

When considering the problem of democracy and gender in Africa, the ideas of Locke, Wiredu, and Hountondji provide valuable insights. Locke's emphasis on individual rights helps to highlight the importance of protecting women's rights and ensuring their full participation in the democratic process. Wiredu's call for an Africanized form of democracy encourages the recognition of gender equality as a fundamental value within African cultural contexts.

Hountondji's critique of colonial influences underscores the need to challenge patriarchal norms and power structures that inhibit gender equity. Moreover, to resolve the problem of democracy and gender in Africa, a multifaceted approach is necessary. It requires legal and institutional reforms to protect women's rights, promote their political participation, and ensure equal access to education and economic opportunities. It also necessitates challenging cultural norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality and limit women's agency. Engaging in critical self-reflection and decolonizing African philosophical frameworks can contribute to the development of inclusive democratic systems that prioritize gender equality and social justice.

Addressing Gender Issues in African Politics (The Democratic Africa, Women, Representation and the State): Gender issues have long been a concern in African politics, with women being historically marginalized in the political arena. However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of women's representation in politics, and efforts have been made to address the imbalance. One of the key initiatives that have been taken in this regard is the establishment of democratic governance systems in Africa. Democratic governance systems are essential in ensuring that the voices of all citizens, including women, are heard and represented in decision-making processes. This is important because women have unique perspectives and experiences that can contribute to the development of policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all citizens.

Promotion of women's representation in the state is an important initiative that has been taken by many countries (consider Tanzania as an example) to address gender issues in African politics. Women's representation in the state is essential in ensuring that women's issues are given the attention they deserve in the policy-making process. It also sends a powerful message to young women that they too can aspire to leadership positions, and that their gender should not be a barrier to their success. To achieve greater women's representation in the state, African countries have implemented various affirmative action measures, such as policies (Okedele, 2021). Quota systems involve reserving a certain percentage of seats in parliament or other decision-making bodies for women. Gender mainstreaming policies, on the other hand, involve integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of policy-making and implementation. While these initiatives have had some success in increasing women's representation in African politics, there is still much work to be done. Women continue to face significant barriers when it comes to participating in politics. These include cultural and societal norms that discourage women from entering politics, as well as structural barriers such as lack of access to education and resources as it has been observed in section 3. 3. 2. To To overcome these barriers, there needs to be a concerted effort to change societal attitudes towards women's participation in politics. This can be achieved through education and awareness-raising campaigns that highlight the importance of women's political participation and the benefits it can bring to society as a whole. In addition to changing societal attitudes, there also needs to be greater investment in women's education and empowerment. This includes ensuring that girls have access to quality education and that women have access to resources such as finance and technology that can enable them to participate

fully in the political process (Ankomah et al. , 2005). Moreover, there needs to be a commitment from political leaders to prioritize women's issues and to ensure that women's voices are heard in decision-making processes. This involves not only increasing women's representation in the state but also ensuring that women are given meaningful roles in the policymaking process. It has to be understood that addressing gender issues in African politics is essential in ensuring that the voices of all citizens are heard and represented in decision-making processes. While there have been some positive initiatives taken to increase women's representation in politics, there is still much work to be done. To achieve greater women's representation, there needs to be a concerted effort to change societal attitudes towards women's participation in politics, greater investment in women's education and empowerment, and a commitment from political leaders to prioritize women's issues. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and responsive political system that reflects the diversity of our societies and ensures that all citizens have a voice in shaping their future.

The Role of African Women in Gender and Democracy:
Throughout history, African women have played a pivotal role in the struggle for gender equality and democracy on the continent. They have fought against oppressive regimes, challenged cultural attitudes and norms, and advocated for equal rights and opportunities for women. African women have been at the forefront of the struggle for democracy and human rights on the continent. They have played a key role in mobilizing communities, organizing protests and campaigns, and advocating for political change. One of the most notable examples of this was during South Africa's apartheid regime when women played a significant role in the anti-apartheid movement. Women like Winnie Mandela and Albertina Sisulu were instrumental in organizing protests and rallies, and advocating for the release of political prisoners that were unfairly arrested (Afoaku, 2023; Lenser, 2019). In addition to their role in the struggle for democracy, African women have also been at the forefront of the fight for gender equality. They have challenged cultural attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination, and have advocated for equal rights and opportunities for women. African women have been particularly active in advocating for women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

For example, the Women's Fund for Development in Africa is one organization that works to empower women economically by providing them with skills training and financial support (Home - The African Women's Development Fund). Despite the progress made by African women in promoting gender and democracy, there are still significant challenges that they face. One of the biggest challenges is the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and norms that continue to limit women's participation in politics and public life. Women are still underrepresented in political leadership positions, and many face discrimination and harassment when they do enter politics. This is particularly true in countries with traditional or conservative cultures that place a low value on women's participation in public life. Another challenge facing African women is the prevalence of gender-based violence. Women in Africa are at a high risk of experiencing violence, including sexual assault, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation.

This violence not only harms women physically and psychologically but also limits their ability to participate fully in society. It is also a significant barrier to women's political participation, as many women are afraid to speak out or enter public life due to the risk of violence. Finally, African women face significant economic challenges that limit their ability to participate fully in society and politics. Women in Africa are more likely to live in illiteracy and poverty than men, and they often lack access to resources and opportunities that would enable them to improve their economic situation. This limits their ability to participate in political life, as they may lack the resources to fund political campaigns or engage in political activism.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of democracy and gender in Africa from a philosophical standpoint reveals the intricate and multifaceted dynamics existing in the region. Throughout history, African nations have made significant progress in their democratic endeavors, striving to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all citizens regardless of gender. However, substantial challenges persist, stemming from deeply ingrained cultural norms, socio-economic disparities, and political structures that perpetuate gender inequality. The study has underscored the importance of inclusivity and empowerment. It has emphasized the need for African societies to recognize the inherent value and potential of women as active participants in the democratic process, decision-making, and policy formulation. Gender equality is not merely a matter of justice and human rights; it is also critical for achieving sustainable development, social cohesion, and political stability. Efforts to promote gender equality in Africa require comprehensive approaches that encompass legal reforms, institutional transformations, and attitudinal changes. It is crucial to address discriminatory laws and practices, such as unequal inheritance rights, limited access to education and healthcare, and violence against women.

Moreover, there is a need to enhance women's political representation and participation, ensuring their voices are heard and their perspectives are integrated into policy-making processes. Thus, philosophically, the examination of democracy and gender in Africa directs attention to the interconnectedness of various dimensions of human life, including political, social, cultural, and economic aspects. It highlights the importance of engaging in critical dialogue, challenging existing power structures, and fostering a culture of respect, diversity, and inclusion. It calls for a collective effort from governments, civil society, and international organizations to create an enabling environment that supports gender equality, promotes women's empowerment, and strengthens democratic institutions. While progress has been made in some African countries, there is still a long way to go. Sustained commitment and collaboration are necessary to address the underlying causes of gender inequality and to overcome the barriers that hinder women's full participation in democratic processes. By embracing a philosophical reflection on democracy and gender, African nations can chart a path towards a more just, equitable, and inclusive society, where every individual, regardless of gender, can fully exercise their rights, contribute to decision-making, and shape the future of their nations.

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