



**NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF
LIBERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL
ADMINISTRATIONS FROM 2005 TO 2022**

M.A. THESIS

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Nicosia

May, 2023

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MASTERS THESIS

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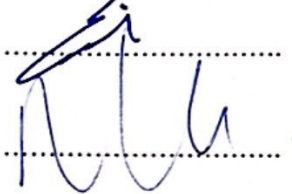
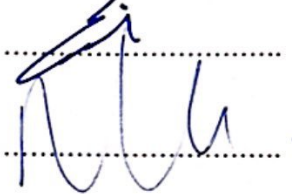
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We certify that we have read the thesis submitted by Dauda Sekou Bility “**Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia: An Assessment of Presidential Administrations from 2005 to 2022**” and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of International Relations.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that all information, documents, analysis and results in this thesis have been collected and presented according to the academic rules and ethical guidelines of Institute of Graduate Studies, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced information and data that are not original to this study.

Dauda Sekou Bility

...../...../2023

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Dauda Sekou Bility

Abstract

Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia: An Assessment of Presidential Administrations from 2005 to 2022

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The issue of gender inequality in the political system of Liberia has been practical like it is in many countries in sub-Sahara Africa. Liberia is a patriarchy society, since its independence in 1847, the country has been predominantly governed by men. There have been twenty-four elected presidents most of whom are men, as matter of fact, Liberia produced her first democratically elected female president, since its independence in 1847 at the result of 2005 post-war election. However, gender inequality remains pervasive in every spectrum of the public sphere of Liberia, as women continue to be underrepresented. Among many others sectors in the political system of Liberia, at the parliament, women constitute only 11 percent of 103 parliamentarian. The political parties in Liberia remain predominated by men.

Therefore, this thesis endeavors to assess the gains made against Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia, covering the administrations of both President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Ambassador George Manneh Weah who became president in 2018. For better assessment of this aim, the study identified the gains made by the both administrations from 2006 to 2022 through an evaluation in specific areas of empowerment, which have the potential to close the huge Gender Inequality gap in the Political System of Liberia: Education and Literacy programs, Presidential Appointment, Women Participation in Elections, Women Empowerment, and Policies enacted to enhance Gender Equality in the Political System of Liberia.

Keywords: Administration, Empowerment, Political System, Public Sphere, Reform Feminist, Gender Inequality

Öz

Liberya Siyasi Sisteminde Cinsiyet Eşitsizliği: Cumhurbaşkanlığı Yönetimlerine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme (2005 – 2022)

Dauda Sekou Bility

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Danışman: Prof. Dr. Nur KÖPRÜLÜ

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Liberya siyasi sisteminde cinsiyet eşitsizliği konusu, Sahra-altı Afrika'daki birçok ülkede olduğu gibi yaygın bir durumdur. Ataerkil bir toplum olan Liberya, 1847'deki bağımsızlığından bu yana ülke ağırlıklı olarak erkek yöneticiler tarafından yönetilmektedir. Ülkeyi bugüne dek, çoğunluğu erkek olan yirmi dört seçilmiş cumhurbaşkanı yönetmiştir. Liberya, 2005 savaşı sonrasında yapılan seçimler sonucunda demokratik olarak seçilmiş ilk kadın başkan tarafından yönetilmesi göz önüne alındığında da önem taşımaktadır. Bununla birlikte, kadınlar yeterince temsil edilmedikçe cinsiyet eşitsizliği Liberya'nın kamusal alanının her alanında yaygın olmaya devam etmektedir. Liberya parlamentosunda kadınlar, toplam 103 milletvekilinin yalnızca yüzde 11'ini oluşturmaktadır. Bu durum da Liberya'daki siyasi partilerde erkeklerin çoğunlukta olduğuna işaret etmektedir.

Bu tez çalışması, hem Başkan Ellen Johnson Sirleaf hem de 2018 yılında başkan olan Büyükelçi George Manneh Weah yönetimlerini kapsayan Liberya Siyasi Sisteminde Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitsizliğine karşı elde edilen kazanımları değerlendirmeye çalışmaktadır. Liberya Siyasi Sistemindeki bu önemli cinsiyet eşitsizliği açığını kapatma potansiyeline sahip olan belirli güçlendirme alanlarında bir değerlendirme yoluyla her iki yönetimin 2006'dan 2022'ye kadar elde ettiği kazanımları ortaya koymaktadır: Eğitim ve Okuryazarlık programları, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Ataması, Kadınların Seçimler, Kadınların Güçlendirilmesi ve Liberya Siyasi Sisteminde Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliğini Artırmak İçin Yürütülen Politikalar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yönetim, Güçlendirme, Politik Sistem, Kamusal Alan, Reform Feminist, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitsizliği

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List of Abbreviations

AAWCC: American Association of Women in Community College

ACDB: Agricultural Cooperative and Development Bank

ACFODE: Action for Development

AFELL: Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia

BPFA: Beijing Platform for Action

CDC: Coalition for Democratic Change

CEDAW: Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CWA: College Of West Africa

EPAG: Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women

ECOMOG: Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

GPFA: Gbowee Peace Foundation of Africa

GRC: Governance Reform Commission

HWIMC: Hope for Women International Medical Center

LACC: Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission

LBDI: Liberia Bank for Development and Investment

LET: Liberia Education Trust

LNBA: Liberia National Bar Association

NCHE: National Commission on Higher Education

NEC: National Election Commission

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NGP: National Gender Policy

NPP: National Patriotic Party

NTGL: National Transitional Government of Liberia

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SV: Sexual Violence

ULIMO.K: United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy. Kromah

UN: United Nations

UNDI: United Nations Development Index

UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia

UN-OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

VAC: Violence Against Children

VAW: Violence Against Women

VSF-S: Vétérinaires Sans Frontières-Suisse

VSLAs: Village Savings and Loan Associations

WCCCD: Wayne County Community College District

WEE: Women Economics Empowerment

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Much ink has been spilled on gender studies in the field International Relations. Having said that, there has not been many research conducted in the area of gender inequality in the case of Liberia. Within the context of gender equality, it is imperative to indicate that Liberia occupies a crucial place since the country has made significant improvement in combating gender inequality. The key motivation of this thesis is, therefore, to assess the level of gender inequality in the political system of Liberia – as a post-conflict society – from 2005 to 2022 that covers elective positions, and officials of government appointed by sitting presidents to the national government, which would be dealt with sufficiently. This thesis critically takes a look at two separates administrations: Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s two terms as president from 2006-2017, and the six years term of Ambassador George Manneh Weah presidency from 2018-2022. The two administrations’ achievements is evaluated in terms of their effort to closing the gap between the men and women in the political system of Liberia.

Background of the study

Liberia which took its independence in 1847, is one of the two countries with Ethiopia in Africa that have never ruled under colonial power. It has a strong historical connection to the United States of America (henceforth US), because of the freed slaves who came and settle for freedom. The Political System of Liberia consists three branches: the legislative; this branch serves as the direct representation of the people through their elected representatives, headed by the speaker of the House, the executive; this branch of the government is clothed with the responsibility to enforce laws for proper governance, and leads the foreign affairs of the country, which is headed by the president who is elected in a general election for a six years term as mentioned by chapter six, article fifty of the Liberian constitution. And the judiciary branch of the government consists courts of the country to interpret the laws of the land, this branch is headed by the Chief Justice who is appointed by the president (Constitution of Liberia, 1986). Liberia has a republican form of government, with a multiparty democracy patterned after that of the US. It has fifteen administrative sub-divisions (Counties), each of which is headed by a superintendent,

appointed by the president. The superintendents are the direct representatives of the president who are the chief administrators of the counties.

Liberia as a home of free slaves, it's with no doubt that, the intention of the founding fathers of this country was to accord freedom to its inhabitants no matter their gender, religious and political affiliation. Since its independence, Liberia like many African countries; the issues of gender inequality remain a serious national challenge. Owing to the political unrest, which resulted to fourteen years civil war from December 1989 to 2003, the National Transitional Government (NTG) was created that took the country to post-war election in 2005. In these fourteen years of terror, women and children were mostly the victims. Women were left at the mercy of the fighters. Since infact they couldn't make a decision, neither take arm to fight at battle fronts, in-order to stay alive and be assured of safety, they could only play a subordinate role by becoming slaves for the male fighters who were on the battle fields. These experiences of war which included rape and gender-based violence put the women in deeper inferior position to their male compatriots even after the war era. Moreover, in the traditional Liberian society, mostly in the rural communities, women and girls' education is not a priority especially when, the family is not financially potent to sponsor all of its children's education at the same time (National Gender Policy, 2010-2015, p. 25). Males are given informal priority to education when the family has limited financial support to sponsor all of its children through school. Henceforth, women do not have right to own ancestor's property; such as land as long there is a man in that family. Traditionally, there are institutions that are believed to be the foundation of the society; the Polo Society and the Sandy Society. In the Sandy Society, girls undergo initiation where they are taught only to be good house keepers, and where Female Genital Mutilation is practiced. The society sees women and girls as subject to men. Men should be the protector of them hence, they are not supposed to speak up their mind in public, ideologically making them inferior to men (Fuest, 2008, p. 206). With these fundamental orientations on which the Liberian society is build that see men as leader and women as dependence, make it difficult to fight gender inequalities, which led to underrepresentation of women in the political system of Liberia.

These gracious discriminations against the women and girls, have kept them in the disadvantage position for so long that, they are unable to adequately compute with their men compatriots in every aspect of societal development, which national

governance is of no exception. In light of this, prior to the 2005 elections which brought hope for women participation in the political system of Liberia, particular during the National Transitional Government (NTGL) under the leadership of Mr. Charles G. Bryant, little or nothing was done to close the gender inequality gap. Under his leadership, there was no political and/or social institutional reform to guarantee the basic human rights of women. As it was an interim government regime whose primary focus was to take the country to a democratic election. The NTGL of Liberia took the country to its post-war election in 2005.

In this twenty first century, it is imperative to indicate that, there are still challenges in fighting inequality against women and girls; laws, social norms and traditional practices remain defiant in the case of Liberia. Women are considered as responsibilities of the men in the Liberian society (OECD and non-OECD Countries, 2010, p. 236). Girls as young as 15 years of age, still being enter into earlier marriages, which also block these potential young girls from computing with their boy counterparts (UN Women, 2021). The disparities between women and men are vast as it's against women; employment, education, and lack of women participation in national decision making mostly in the rural communities are obstacles to seeing more women participating in the national government of Liberia. This is not limited to Liberia, but a typical practice in the African continent.

Participation in political activities at the national stage in many African countries if not all, requires strong financial support. Given the Millennium Development Goal of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, the issue is arguably relevant in emerging African democracies, where resources are scarce and women frequently face severe inequalities in critical dimensions such as health and education (World Bank, 2011). A number of recent studies on the patterns of political participation in Africa have found that women vote and participate politically less than men (Bratton, 1999). African politics is frequently described as 'Clientelist', in a sense that rulers rely on the distribution of material benefits as well as personal favors in return for political backing (Christensen and Utas, 2008), which has a significant impact on gender in that they are frequently directed towards men and are not equally available to women. Furthermore, some countries in Africa have been categorized as having limited civil freedoms by Freedom House (2013). This is expected to have an impact on people's political engagement. In this vein, Afrobarometer (2008-2009) empirical analysis covering political and economic

attitudes and behavior of over 27,000 respondents across 20 African countries, including Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Kenya, Ghana, and Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, suggests that there is a gender gap in electoral participation. As a result, it apparently necessitates additional resource inputs, motives, and links to political networks, supposedly to the detriment of women. In this vein, there is no doubt that women in Liberia are poorer than the men. Men have all of the financial opportunities as oppose to women. This makes it very harder for women to be actively involved in the Liberian politics, which is highlighted case for most of the developing democracies in Africa.

Liberia, as a country that experienced fourteen years civil war that ended in 2003, began its rebuilding shortly after 2005 general election. Knowing that women were at the disadvantage position during the civil war, and also played pivotal role to bring peace, subsequently contributing to the end of the war, which make the case of Liberia important to the African continent. These efforts of women make Liberia suitable to analyse the gender imbalance in the public sphere, to understand the level of contribution women continue to make as the country goes through its rebuilding processes. The case of Liberia is essentials because its rebuilding coincides with the time, the call for gender equality has evolved in that it cannot be unattended to by any country yearning for sustainable development.

However, Liberia has made significant improvement in combating gender inequality. In 2005, Liberians demonstrated their willingness to crack down on gender inequality by democratically electing the first female President of the country and in the history of Africa along with 13% of the legislative seats were held by women, and she was re-elected in the year 2011. Fast-forward, in the year 2017, Liberian elected Jewel Howard Taylor, another woman as a running mate to President George Manneh Weah, making her the first female vice president of the country (Okoosi and Obi, 2021). Since the 2005 election, which highlighted the political participation of Liberian women when madam Sirleaf became the country's first female democratically elected president. The perception of the Liberian society about women; being seen as dependents has also reduced in the urban communities (Cole, 2011, p. 1). Under her leadership, Liberian women were empowered through many government's agencies, and other sectors outside the government. As part of her step towards protecting women from domestic violence and rape, Madame

Sirleaf assured the public that her administration is committed to enforcing the rape law that was enacted by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA) during the NTGL regime (Kalwinski, 2007, p. 145). The said Law includes, according to the Rape Amendment Act (2005), Section 13.11 of the Criminal Procedure Law “the accused does not have the opportunity to leave pre-trial detention on bail before his/her day in court” (Rape Amendment Act, 2005). Through the security sector reform, a section was introduced in the Liberian National Police (LNP), a department exclusively to protect women and children from violence. She also promoted programs that empowered Liberian women to significantly participate in the recovery of the nation's economy, and supported the education of children, particularly girls. In addition, Madam Sirleaf appointed women to head a number of important government's Ministries and Agencies, comprising the Justice Ministry, Finance, Agriculture, Gender, Commerce, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the supreme court of the country, women serve as associate justices. As number of females serving at positions of high leadership, Importance was attached to their voices. Her administration also paid attention to women and girls educational programs in both formal and informal education. Women started to compete with men for jobs, and their presence were felt at the national decision making processes (Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile, 2021, p. 30). The administration of Madam Sirleaf supported numerous local and national organizations that support women's empowerment. In Liberia, women now have a place outside of the home where they may make greater contributions to both the community and the family through the civil society organizations (UN Women, 2021).

Ambassador George Manneh Weah, who became president in the year 2018, refers to himself as feminine in chief as he delivered a speech during an international Women conference held in Liberia in 2018, he assures the women of Liberia that he will do everything within his power that they are ably represented in his administration, and said he remains committed to women's empowerment and gender equality (Executive Mansion of Liberia, 2018). One can say, in view of the above statement by President Weah, at the time of conducting this research, there are several women who are serving as cabinet ministers at various ministries; Agriculture, Public Works and ministry of Gender, Health, Commerce, and many others as junior ministers in different ministries in his administration. At the

judiciary, the supreme court of Liberia; the final decision maker of justice in the country. This court comprises of five (5) justices, out of which are one (1) chief justice who leads the judiciary and four associate justices. There are two women on the Supreme Court bench. Under the leadership of President George Manned Weah, there is a female Chief Justice, Her Honor Sie-A-Nyene G. Yuoh who was nominated and subsequently commissioned by him, after her confirmation by the Liberian senate (Karmo, 2022). However, there are lot more to be done in closing the gap between men and women. Women are still being marginalized in national decision making. There are huge prevalent of genders imbalances in the governing system of Liberia, as women play the disadvantage role. There are still significant needs for quality economic empowerment, level plane field in political participations for women, and quality education, all of these combined would make it easier for women to close the inequality gap between they and their male counterparts in the political system of Liberia.

Statement of the problem

Liberia is a nation-state where women and girls account for about 49.7% of the total population of 5 million people (World Bank, 2021). It's without a doubt, inequality against women in the area of education, employment opportunities, and exclusion from decision making, and lack of professional skills would not only affect the wellbeing of them, but also have a societal effect on the country's long time human development (Klasen 2000; Bardhan, & Klasen, 1999). Lack of women participation in the development of the country can only slow down its progress and increases corruption in the public agencies.

Gender inequality in the area of employment for example, increases dependency in the country. Because, women and girls do not have the same opportunities to employments as compare to men. Research have shown that over the years, since 2005, there has being a steady lake of economic growth of women in Liberia. The employed female as oppose to male population has not gone above 47.9% (WDI, 2022). In 2021, the percentage of total labor force of women that were employed accounted for 47.4% making them underrepresented as compare to men. This lack of equal opportunity to employment, and the traditional foundation of the Liberian society that attributed specific role to females are among the problems this

research undertook. With these concerns properly addressed, lays the foundation of the aims and the objectives of this research.

Aims and objectives of the study

The political system of Liberia comprises of three branches of governance: The Legislature, Executive, and Judicial branch. The Executive branch is headed by the president who also heads the government, is elected to serve six years term with the chance for re-election. Since the 2005 general elections, which saw the election of the first female President Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf along with several women participations in that election for presidential and vice-presidential posts. And many others contested for the 94 legislative seats at the time, in a bicameral legislature system of the country. Off the 94 seats, the senate had 30 seats two (2) for each of the fifteen counties. Among the seven hundred fifty eight (758) candidates for the legislature, there were one hundred and six (106) women candidates (The New Dawn, 2016), these elections show the highest participation of women in any Liberian's election ever.

Yet the disparity between women and men in the governing system of Liberia is vast, as it is against the women. Now therefore, this research is an assessment of the gains made in narrowing the gender inequality gap in the political system of Liberia from 2006-2022. Critically analysing the achievements made during Madam Sirleaf leadership or regime, to know whether or not those achievements have been sustained, and to what extent they have improved under President George Manneh Weah.

Significance of the study

In line of the above mention about the aim of the research, it is clearer that women have not been equally represented as compare to their male compatriots in the political history of Liberia. Since the independence on July 26, 1847, the country has had 24 elected presidents majority of whom are male. As matter of fact, it was just in 2005 following the Country's general election, Liberia produced the first and only democratically elected female president of the country as of now.

It is with no doubt that, when almost fifty (50) percent a country's population are not empowered and lack the basic professional skills for employment, that country's human capital is under serious threat. Most of all, women in Liberia don't

have equal voice as compare to their men compatriots in the decision making for the nation-state. This research seeks to uncover the gender inequality gaps that are pervasive in the political system of Liberia, which would inform the decisions of policy makers and leaders in their effort to sustainably close the gaps. Henceforth, it contributes in curving the research gap, since infarct, there have not been much research conducted in the area of gender inequality in the case of Liberia, meanwhile contributing to the quest of international relations' field as relates to Africa.

Research Questions

Looking at the gender inequality in the political system of Liberia, as women are underrepresented, the questions this research endeavor to find answers are:

1. What were the gains made under Madam Sirleaf's presidency in the fight against gender inequality in the political system of Liberia?
2. Are those gains being sustained under Ambassador Weah's Presidency?

Research Design and Methodology

The research methodology used in this master thesis is exclusively benefited from the qualitative research approach. In addition, gender inequality gap is analysed by studying the existing and growing literature revolved around the topic in both theoretical and comprehensive manners. This research method makes it easier to achieve the aims and objectives of this study.

Based on the financial constraints, it became difficult to travel Liberia and get primary data to conduct this study. However, secondary data collection was drawn from the key institutions' data such as United Nations Development Index (UNDI) as well as gender equality index. Additionally, the reports and data provided by Democracy Index and Freedom House were also helpful in assessing the gender imbalances in the prevailing governing system of Liberia. Thus, secondary data was used in this research and data collected in this study include information or knowledge gathered from relevant books, journals, articles, and from other sites on the internet that were very essential to this study.

Limitations of the study

As a researching student, it was sometimes difficult to access all of the relevant information. Having said that, the limited literatures and/ or other research materials that were received from the internet, and as well from the Near East University Library were of greater help to this research. Meanwhile, the aims and the objectives of this study were in no way affected by this limitation, they were fully met.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

In this chapter, a closer look to the related scholarly literature will be addressed about the research topic. The basic conceptual tool which will be analysed in this chapter is the gender inequality in political system of Liberia. The theoretical perspectives on the gender in/equality and the existing literature will be examined.

Gender Inequality

In the field of international relations, the quest for gender balance has taken the centre stage when one is talking about sustainable development in a country. Thus, there has not been many research conducted in the area of gender inequality in the case of Liberia. However, there are several international relations' theories that can be used to research this thesis topic on Gender Inequality. Meanwhile, it would be an academic suicide if one attempts to dive in discussing gender imbalances without looking at these theoretical perspectives that provide us the clearer picture in understanding gender related issues and the society.

In this regard, the book by Judith Lorber's *Gender Inequality* (1997) is very essential. The book summarized both the concept of gender inequality, and the theoretical perspectives that lay the foundation for effective understanding of the topic. The Gender Reform Feminisms, which covers the Liberal, Marxist, Socialist, and Post-Colonial theories that dominated the activism for Gender Balance in the 1970s best accounts for the topic under research. This theory sees the structure of the gender social order as the host for gender inequality. Its objective is not to advocate for female dominance, rather it is to achieve a gender balance; a level plane field where population of the both genders are equally positioned throughout the society, which entails having equal power, prestige, and right to equal economic resources.

A reformed gendered social order would thus eradicate gender inequality. This feminist theory has made visible the pervasiveness of practices of imbalance both formal and informal, in the area of works and in the distribution of economic resources and family responsibilities. These discriminatory ideas between women and men met with unfading resistance in the 1970s. The societal belief at the time about women and men, placed men in more superior position, and denigrate women. Men were presumed to be smarter, stronger, and generally more capable than women

except for taking care of children and other household tasks. It was believed that the strength and responsibilities of women is mothering, they were seen as mothers before, during, and after they were anything else. According to Judith Lorber (2001) these “responsibility of women” were not accounted for in any national economic statistics.

The Gender Reform Feminism believes that gender inequality is the result of structural, not the personal attributes of individuals' choices, or unequal interpersonal relationships (Lorber, 2001, p. 10). The structural causes for these inequalities are women's relegation to low-paid work and a devaluation of the work women do, overwhelming responsibilities for child care and housework, and unequal access to education, health care, and political power. These discriminations are transmitted into national and international social structure. In an effort for political action to reform the imbalance gender social structure, according to Gender Reform Feminisms, an overall strategy is gender balance, which aims at attaining parity in numbers of women and men throughout society, in their domestic responsibilities, and in their access to work and business opportunities, positions of authority, political power, education, health care, and mandate to increase the number of women in government. The quest of this theory is to attach value to women as much as men, and be free to lives as permitted by their human potential. Every individual should be able to work, parent, produce culture and science, govern, and otherwise engage in social life as they choose without his/her gender being the barrier. The gender reform feminisms want to eradicate the gendered social order of practices that discriminate against women. This type of feminism accepts the existing gender structure (two classes of people) and work toward erasing the inequalities between the two classes, women and men, by policies to advance women in the workplace and positions of power, in education and other important areas in the society, and by minimizing the differences between them. Their goal is to reform the social order so that the two classes of people are equal (Acker, 1987, p.423).

Gender Inequality comes in various forms, ranging from how society is organized, economic structure, and as well as the culture of any particular group within that given society (Lorber, 2001). It is a fact that women and girls often stand at the disadvantageous position as relates to men and boys in similar position, even thou, we speak about gender inequality. When it comes to salary for work, women, most of the times receive lesser pay as compare to men for the same level of work,

and there are always an obstacle to their chances for promotion more especially to top positions. Between men and women, the gender imbalance is practical in the amount of house works and to take care of the children, as the wife does most of the works as compare to her husband, even if they spend the same length of time at paid work outside the home. According to Judith Lorber (2001), in her book “Gender inequality” she argues that, works most often done by women such as teaching children at the beginner level, and nursing, are paid lesser than those work always done by men, such as construction and mining. Gender inequality can also take the form of girls getting lesser education than boys of the same social class (Lorber, 2001, p. 4). In this regard, Liberia is not an exception, in most rural communities girls education is not a priority more especially when the family is not financially portent to sponsor both its girls and boys children in school at the same time. In this case, priority is given to the boys’ education, they believed that only the boys should be educated because he would stay and take care of the family, they see him as potential bearer of the greater share of taking the family’s responsibility when he attained the age of majority. Therefore only he deserved to be empowered. Unlike the boys, girls would grow and be married to another family where she becomes a full member of that new family. For them girls greatest achievement is to be married when it is the appropriate time.

Lorber, however, argued that gender inequality can sometimes disadvantage males as well. Men are the one who mostly serve in the arm forces and face direct combat. Men are left to do all of the dangerous works, such as providing security, fire-fighting, and in many countries, mostly are the men who are in the police and the military (Lorber, 2001). Although in this 21st century, women are enlisting in the police and fire departments, and fought in wars in some countries, the society assumption about the gender arrangement is that women belong home and their responsibilities are: bearing and taking care of children, while men are responsible to do the work of protecting and providing economic support to the family (Reiter, 2012, p.12). This is true in Liberia, during the 14 years long civil war in the country, men were the heads of the various warring factions. It was only the men who were expected to be at the firing lines confronting enemy groups, the soldiers of the various factions were men and as well as sometimes boys because the Liberian society sees them as the protectors of the families or the group of the society they are member of. From the society’s view point, women were not encouraged to

participate in war, because that was not seen as their responsibility. They stay back to give care to the elderly and children on refugee camps, while men were at the battlefield.

Even thus the Liberian society consists of multiple ethnic groups with each of the ethnic group subscribing to its own custom and traditional practices (Guannu, 1999), what remains common among them is gender based practices; especially the expectation that women supposed to be the care provider for the home, raise the children and caring for the elderly, be the main actors in farming, harvest and take the produce from the farm to the market to sell, and surrender the proceeds to their husbands or the fathers for the support of their sons pursuing formal education, or in some instances, to pay the dowries for those sons who are about to take their wives (Gibbs, 1965, p. 208). Based on these societal expectations and practices in Liberia, many women do not have the opportunity or the resources to hold top positions of power in the national polity, and rural community groups, or to even empower themselves economically.

Moreover, another contextual issue between women's and men's political participation, which is practical in Liberia as relates to the nature of politics in general and the liberal democracy in particular, historically is, the liberal democracy has served men better than women. This gender imbalance can be traced far back from the ancient Greece, from that time to the pre-modern, now the modern times of the 21st century; political systems have been built on the public- private dichotomy and excluded women from decision making of the state. Women have been marginalized and kept outside the public domain of politics. This is validated by the fact, most of those considered as philosophers and political scholars such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Lock, Hobbes and Hegel described women as only being fit for domestic roles in the private sphere and maintained that there was no place for women in politics because of their suitability in caring roles as mothers and wives. In line with this, according to the United Nations women report on Liberia, the proportion of times spent by men and women on domestic chores and unpaid care works is set at 6.7% for women, while time spent by men is 2.6% (UN Women, 2021). This public-private divide remains the foundation of the various forms of world democracies (Phillips 1998; Rai, 2000).

It is based on the above mentioned, which is among other reasons, the normative political theory sees private arena as non-political which is dominated by women, did not make any step to explore the political nature of private life. Women were not recognized as national decision maker by both the ancient Greece and modern democracy. Therefore, women were sidelined and their concerns in the theory of the democracy (Sonwalkar, 2003). They could not vote in election, it was not until in the 19th century, the liberal political philosophy promoted the idea of “free and rational” individual which was used by suffragists to demand their right to vote. However, as for Rai, the conceptual basis of liberal theory is inherently gendered in ways, which perpetuates patterns of patriarchy and ignores gender subordination in both polity and society (2000, p. 2). In addition, the feminist scholars also challenged the notion of abstract individual in liberal theory and believed that it is not categorically gender neutral. They contended that, the liberal democratic theory has favored in its foundation the ideology of men being seen as political actors (Pateman, 1996), while it placed women in the private sphere where they have been confined. This is the reason why, even though, women have the right to vote in elections they are not able to impact public policy and cannot bring their private sphere in the preview of the public.

In addition, even democracies in the Western world left them dislocated on many fronts as relates to their men counterpart. Henceforth, women who took the bold steps to enter politics, in which modern democracy is being dominated by patriarchal ideal, would have no option but to largely play the political roles in the context of male, they lack the political power and the number to radically change the sexual politics. In this regard, Liberia is no exception to women underrepresentation in the bicameral legislature system practice in the country that consist the House of Representatives and the House of Senate locally known as (the house of the elders). The House of Representatives consists of seventy three (73) seats as of the year 2011, while the House of Senate has thirty (30) seats, which consists two seats of each of the fifteen political sub-divisions (counties). The Liberian national legislature has the total seats of one hundred and three (103) seats. Out of the one hundred and three (103) seats, according to the United Nations women report on Liberia, women only occupied 11% of the total 103 seats at national legislature (UN Women, 2021). With this underrepresentation of women in the national legislature, they are left with no option but to do the traditional politicking, which favors the majority gender. Men

continue to dominate the law making of the country, because of the huge gender gap at institutions of policies making.

However, since the presidency of the first female president of Liberia, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, there have been significant amount of progress made against gender imbalances in the political system of Liberia as compare to decays earlier. During her administration, women rights and gender equality were promoted. Notwithstanding, there are more to be done to narrow the gap between men and women especially in politics. There are lesser women in politics or holding top governmental position as compare to their men compatriots. In view of this, the formal president of Liberia; Madam Sirleaf when asked whether she thinks “African governments are devoting enough resources to the mainstreaming of women’s issues in development” In response: Sirleaf said:

No, I think we can do more. There has been a significant increase in the resources for gender equality, but it still has not reached the level where we can say that we have achieved the goals that we have set for ourselves. So, every country has to work more on that (African Development Bank News, 2013, p.1).

Factors Affecting Gender Balance

There are several existing literatures that have shown many factors negatively impacting women political participation in some Africa countries if not all. Among those factors are: political violence, political parties’ preferences, employment gap, illiteracy gap, empowerment, traditional and cultural norms, and the stereotyping of women; that they have specific role to play in societies, and fear of intimidation. In many countries in Africa, fear of intimidation and tortures are always associated with political activities. It is vividly clearer that men are also being affected by this, but it placed larger obstacles to women involvement in politics in their local constituencies as well as in the national politics, which hinders their political participate without fear. This common practice of politics is prevalent in Liberia. In this vein, Ben Manbande (2017) postulates that:

Electoral violence, usually committed along tribal and partisan lines, has been commonplace in sub-Saharan Africa, and Liberia has been singled out as a nation where political actors feel entitled to endless impunity while their actions have led to the deaths of many people and the destruction of properties’ (Jallah, Larsala, et al. 2021, p. 7).

In this context, electoral violence creates greater risk for the female gender as oppose to the male gender in the political system of Liberia. It is imperative that, the female gender is at the disadvantage position to stand against the unduly challenges of electoral violence in Liberia.

Political Parties Gender Preferences

Several countries in Africa; especially in West African, the most convenient institution through which people get elected to public offices are political parties. The institutional values and policies of these organizations, which they subscript to undermine women's political participation, and their representations in electoral processes. The political parties nominate candidates for national election and local constituencies' elections, these candidates provide significant amount of the total financial obligation of the parties, get the attentions of voters, and come with policies to take on governance (Iknowpolitics, 2019). In this view, political parties in Liberia are of no exception. Owing to the fact that, the economic power of Liberian women is disproportionate to that of their male compatriots, and the perception of the society about the role women are expected play; sees women as not being fit for national leadership, make it difficult for political parties to nominate women for elective offices as all parties would need formidable candidate. This practice narrows the opportunity of women's political participation through parties' nomination. During the most recent presidential and representative elections in 2017, many women candidates were threatened and intimidated. Some were physically forced off the stage at their campaign event, and their billboards were even destroyed. It was reported that a female Presidential candidate, Ms. MacDella Cooper was even threatened by some leaders of the political party on whose ticket she contested for President (NDI, 2016). The political parties do their selections for nominating candidates base on the demand of the electorates or perception of the society.

As of 2018 in Liberia, there were twenty-five (25) political parties out which there was only two (2) parties headed by a female. Many women don't show interest in politics, which also place the political elites with lesser options for women in nominating for electoral processes. Based on these challenges, women are underrepresented in electoral processes by political parties. For the fact that every political party would want to win more seats, they have to put out candidates that are

influential and have the political knowledge to make this happens, and candidates that can be easily accepted by the society as their leaders. With these values and political policies of parties, women stand at more disadvantage position to be nominated as candidates for elections as compare to the men. Women had only 24.3% of the total seats in parliament and 20.7% of cabinet posts worldwide (Iknowpolitics, 2019). Women's political involvement and representation have risen in recent years; however progress has been steady. Women's unequal participation in the decision-making process is a barrier to achieving gender parity in society and meeting the goals of Sustainable Development by the year 2030.

Employment Gap between Men and Women

Article entitled: *A Multistage Model of Gender, Employment, and Political Participation* by Kay Lehman Schlozman, Nancy Burns, and Sidney Verba (2001), in which they argued that family variables have a significant impact on the employment of both women and men, however, it affects women greatly than men. For instant marriage and family with pre-school children is more likely to affect the fulltime work or employment of the woman in marriage then the husband. In other words, the means by which people enter the workforce and subsequently becoming fulltime employee is quite different for women and men; as voluntarism is one of the surer ways to get started. This results to more men been employed as fulltime employee as oppose to women in formal employment.

Beyond the educational qualification, men are yet still more advantageous to have jobs, be employed fulltime than the women. To validate this argument, let take a look at the effect of family constrains on employees. In most family where the mothers and the fathers are present, when faced with family's obligations, the men meet the needs by working or being employed, on the other hand with same condition, women meet theirs by staying home and giving an unpaid care service (Schlozman, et al., 1999). Meanwhile, these family's obligations can work in pushing men into fulltime employment, while in most of the times only put women into part-time jobs or employments, which is a clearer indication that women in the workforce are less likely than men to be working full-time has implications for the kinds of jobs they get. The result of this is that, on the average, women who make it to the workforce are mostly in the lower level jobs.

In Liberia, the demographical research statistics have shown that, the gender employment gap between males and females in the civil service, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) is huge. It shows that there are wider gap in the employment rate between males and females, which also includes both formal and informal workers. In this light, according to the report of Gender Ministry of the Republic of Liberia (January, 2009):

Women are disproportionately clustered in the least productive sectors with 90% employed in the informal sector or in agriculture, compared to 75% of working men. Men are more than three times likely to be employed by the civil service, NGOs, international organizations or public corporations. The manufacturing sector hires men at a rate of 2 men for every 1 woman. In mining and panning, more than 9 men are hired to every 1 woman. In forestry, the ratio of men to women is 4 to 1 and in the services sector, it is 3 to 2, men to women respectively. Only in agriculture and fisheries are men and women employed on an equal basis (MoGD, 2009, p. 23).

The likelihood of women to be employed in the civil service agencies of Liberia, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and other public corporations is three times lesser to that of their men counterparts (CWIQ, 2007). Accordingly, generally in the economy of Liberia, there are more men who are working and being paid on wages than women by over three to one. This indicates that the total working class of men stands at 25.5% while the total working class of women stands far below to that of men at 8.0%. Just little below half of the total working class of Liberians are engaged in unpaid family work, in many instances providing care services for household, working on farms or agricultural activities, and in informal economic sectors. Women constitute 56% of labourer who are engaged as unpaid family workers while men constitute 34% of labourer in this sector. This shows that there is a huge employment gap in Liberia between women and men, until these challenges are address, women and girls wound continue to be politically underrepresented and their political participation would continue to be faced with huge barrier.

Education / literacy

Many works in the literature have been written validating that in a typical African State, inaccessibility, lack of relevant services and poor education are commonly attributed to vast majority of rural constituencies. As such, the inhabitants in these rural communities are face with lesser or no opportunities literally for

empowerment, this also lead to the rise illiteracy and much smaller opportunities for self-development that may lead to taking key roles in political activities. Even thus, these variables have a negative effect on both women and men political capacity, it creates more barriers for women than men. For the men, they can easily grow up becoming more resilience and to an extent, can struggle their ways through to becoming influencers as they can easily be accepted by their communities.

For Liberia, according to the Gender, Children Social Protection Ministry (2009), the literacy rates for women in rural communities is staggeringly low at 26% compared to 61% for women in the urban communities, while men in the rural communities is at 60% compare to men in the urban communities which is at 86% literacy rate. There are also huge gender gaps in secondary school attendance, especially for high school in booth rural and urban communities. In the rural communities, the net attendance per ratio for girls is placed as low as 6% and for boys in the rural communities is 13%, while in the urban communities the gender gap in high school attendance is narrower than the rural areas, however, there are still more boys attending than girls. Per ratio in urban communities, girls are at 29% to 32% of the boys in attendance (Demographic survey, 2007).

On this account, generally in Liberia, report from the gender ministry (2009), the literate population of the country is set at 64.7 percent, with which 78.1 percent are inhabitants of urban communities, while the rural communities account for 21.9 percent. Meanwhile the literacy rate by gender placed men far above women. Off the total population of men, there are 77.0 percent of men who are literate as compare to literate women that is at 54 percent out of the total population of women, these also serve as barriers that greatly affect women political participations.

Role of Traditional and Cultural Norms

Both tradition and culture play significant roles in deciding the political participation of women in many African countries, in which Liberia is of no exception. According to George (2019) women's ability to be involved in politics both in their rural constituencies and the national polity, and to becoming an influencer in the national polity, to be voted for elective offices are all influenced by customs and tradition which have effect on social structure. The basis of these challenges that women face in these cultures, is based on the patriarchal system of

the families that is transmitted to the society. In this system, the power to make decision and the control of the family are solely in the preview of the men. In other world, men are the final decision makers in the family. This kind of traditional beliefs and cultural approaches, more especially in relation to the roles of women and their status in the society remain uncompromised, particularly in the rural constituencies (Sadie, 2005).

Gender still remain the determinant factor of the division of labor and the roles play by traditional member in the society. It placed women and limits them to domestic role. It is social norms that make it even more difficult for women to leave their traditionally care giving roles, for more public roles away from their homes (Kangas et al., 2015). Meanwhile, the identity of the female gender is still mostly conceived as being domestic and care giving in nature, which continues to act as an obstacle to women's formal political participations.

Democracy and Gender Balance

This is a system of governance, like any other governing system, can only function with the presence of leaders to oversee the affairs of the state and with command given to others to follow. The difference between democracy and other systems of governance are the procedures and conditions by which means a democratic leader come to power and also accountable to the citizens, and how the system operates. Civil liberty and freedom of individual are at the center stage of democracy. In this context, Phillip Schmitter and Terry Karl (1991) in their scholarly writing on democracy defined the modern political democracy as a “system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives” (Schmitter and Karl, 1991, p. 4).

In democratic systems, the citizens and their participation in the political processes are the most important element. All other governing systems have leaders and the public sphere, but what distinguishes democracy from the others is having citizens and respects theirs involvements in the political processes. It allows all native born adults who meet the age and others requirement to be a candidate for all elective public offices no matter what gender one belongs. Regularly having free and fair elections is seen as one of the important tenens of democracy. It increases citizen

participation in decision making of the state. In this regard, equality is seen as the bedrock of democracy. Modern democracy doesn't see gender as a barrier nor as an advantage of political participation. To validate this, the seven "procedural minimal" conditions mentioned by Robert Dahl (1998) in his masterpiece *On Democracy* are generally accepted in this field in which among them are the following two conditions that specifically talked about equality:

1. Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials.
2. Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government.

Democracy as a governing system, is not fully possible in the absent of these two conditions that called for equal participations of all, not given a particular group or gender preferences when it comes to political participation.

However, according to 2008 national census, Liberia has a populations about five millions people, 49.7% of what are women (World Bank, 2021), representing almost 50% of the total population. It is with no doubt that, equal participations of both male and female gender in the governing system of Liberia would not only bring development, but also effectively contributes to the human capacities development. The continual marginalization of women in the national polity contributes immensely to the underdevelopment of the country's children and maternal mortality health services, and as well as fight against corruption in the governing system of the country. As women constitutes almost 50% of the total population of the country, their lake of political participation means a significant number of the populations impart has not been felt in terms of policy making and representation which contravene the principles of democracy.

To consolidate democracy that called for equal participation, the involvement of women in contesting or being elected for national, and others elective positions must be encouraged. Women political participation leads to the easier way to gender equality, because it has a direct impact on the kinds of policies that would promote gender balance. It is with no doubt that, the gender of a policy maker would have an influential role in making a policy, especially in the legislature. Henceforth, according to Sandra Pepera (2018) she argues; when there are significant number of women elected to positions in government, there are therefore equivalent increase in making policies that always reflect the interest of ethnic minorities, and other

minority groups, the living conditions of families, and issues of gender equality. In this effect, Kofi Annan, former United Nation Secretary General said: “*there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women*” (Hellstrom, 2017), which he believed the only mechanism to increase stability economically, and cutting down maternal mortality. He asserted, there is no other alternative strategy than women empowerment. In order to fulfil the international developmental goals and to establish sustainable democracies around the world, women must be encouraged and given the opportunities that would enable them to become effective national political and communities’ leaders.

In many African countries however, there have been shift in the paradigm of women political participation. From the year 2000 through 2018, the numbers of female legislators have significantly increase. Sadly, the impact of this increment in political participation has not been felt in fighting gender inequality in Africa (Konte and Kwaduo, 2019). There have been several outstanding female leaders and politicians in the history of Liberia who contributed immensely to the development of the country, and also played major roles in putting an end to the country’s long civil war. In this light, Konte and Kwadwo (2019) assert that women's political participation is more straightforward than impracticable, which is arguably true. Women in Africa are on the verge of breaking down the barriers that have been erected to prevent their participation in politics and access to political positions, but they lack the influence or control required to influence critical government decisions about budgets, policies, and legislation. In this regard, according to Hon Howard Pawley (2007) “Women's ability to make an impact in male dominated institutions will be limited until they are represented in large numbers to have a collective voice, in order to reach a critical mass” (Pawley, 2007). This is a factual remark indicating that, while women have been given the opportunity to engage in senior government positions, they have had minimal influence on policy decisions due to the political landscape being controlled by men. Women can only have a bigger impact and influence on significant decisions if their numbers expand beyond what they are now, more especially at elective post, particularly at the legislature.

Since World War II, there has been a global push for gender-sensitive laws, budgeting, and women's empowerment through education, economic empowerment, political governance, and affirmative action (UNFPA, 1995). The Beijing Platform of

Action (BPFA) spoke to many significant issues of concern recognized by the conference as fundamental impediments to women's progress. It was a bold assertion of women's unequal status around the world, presenting not only advice for government, NGOs, and civil society members, but also a powerful affirmation of women's unequal status worldwide. This heeded some positive results around the world.

Nevertheless, gender mainstreaming, along with discriminations against women, have subdued women's advancement in leadership ranks of many African countries, including Liberia. The cultures of many African countries if not all, placed men at superior position more especially when it comes to providing leadership. This cultural barrier against women, has left the few women who have taken the bold steps to political participation, with no option but to replicate the masculine traits in order to fit in the male-dominated hierarchical structures and systems. Many scholars have exerted, one of the major obstacles to women who aspiring for elective political offices, and the unlikelihood to be elect in African politics is the cultural beliefs, which determine the notion of the society about the role women play (Yoon, 2011). According to scholars, another reason why female do not mostly contest for elective public offices is structural constrains. By-laws and traditional beliefs have often attached politics to male dominance, and the public sphere has always been considered as a place for males, with the presumption of women to be fit only in the private domain (Genovese, 2013). This assumption about women belonging to the private domain, has made them typically engrossed with domestic chores and other care giving responsibilities at home that they cannot think of a career in politics or anywhere in the public sphere.

Conversely, according to Nancy Lockwood (2004) research which is titled "The Glass Ceiling: domestic and international perspective" highlighted the expanding leadership duties and capability of women in leadership. According to Lockwood, progress has been made in recent years in addressing the issue of women's advancement in the workplace and the corporate setting. Numerous studies on female leadership attributes agree that flexible leadership styles promote elements such as individualism and a reflective leadership model. In 2015, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) established a more comprehensive goal of 50% female participation in political decision-making at all levels, which was

based on the assertion that women's roles in leadership will have a positive impact on the effective running of businesses and organizational structures, as well as the fair and optimal distribution of human resources. (Sadie, 2005). In a few African countries, such as Rwanda, Uganda, Namibia, and South Africa, such mechanisms have been employed to ensure that women are represented in government institutions. Despite African traditional gendered ideas of women in political leadership in most African nations, women continue to aspire to leadership posts in all fields of administration, both public and private. Women's participation in many African nations' independence fights and democratic processes has resulted in substantial political progress. For example, in Rwanda, women in government collaborated with civil society to develop an Inheritance Law that allowed women to inherit family property. (Burnett, 2008). The ability to influence policy is a crucial measure of a women's political leadership development since it demonstrates that their involvement benefits those they serve. Similarly, female MPs in South Africa were instrumental in the passage of a 1998 Domestic Violence Bill, and female MPs in Namibia were instrumental in the repeal of apartheid-era legislation discriminating against women, as well as the creation of policies promoting the economic development of women and girls (Coffe, 2013). In Uganda, Action for Development (ACFODE), a women's organization, successfully collaborated with other women's organizations to demand the establishment of a Women's Ministry and to ensure women's representation in local government at all levels, where statistics show that women outperform men (Goetz, 2019).

In Niger, women activists advocated for legislation that would allow political parties to promote females' candidacy (Kang, 2013). This act has aided national advancement by allowing women to hold positions of leadership. Despite the fact that women are developing skills in articulating policy to positively influence the fate of women in their communities, and with outstanding achievements by women in numerous African Countries, their equal political representation of is yet to be attained. In Liberia for example, an appreciation number of female registered voters contributed immensely to the victory of madam Sirleaf in 2005 general election making her Africa's first democratically elected President. Many other African nations, are making an effort to advance the political and social climate for those women, who are already in government (Bauer and Barnett, 2013).

Democracy remains the most accommodating system of government that encourages civil liberty and freedom of speech. The values of freedom of expression or self-expression reflect the changes away from the unconditional social norms that discriminate against a group of people towards growing numbers of tolerance, trust, and participatory orientation (Inglehart et al, 2003). In this regard, the Freedom House Report (2022), placed Liberia in the category of partly free country with the score 60 of 100, accounting for 27 of 40 for political Rights, and 33 of 60 for civil liberties, which equates the democracy of Liberia to “deficient democracy” by democracy index (2022). These reports signify that, there are lot more to be done in the fight against Gender Inequality, as women are already underrepresented in the political system of Liberia. Gender equality is linked to the increasing tolerance of other groups that makes women’s political participation easier. Any society that allows self-expression, would experience increase in activism that would eventually lead to increase in political participation of all genders, which is only possible in democracy.

In Liberia, while there is no law that prevent women to fully participate in democratic processes; such as voting and aspiring for elective political positions, they remain under-represented in all areas of the public sphere. Historically, the political participation of women in Liberia has always been dominated by men. However, there were women who took bold steps in different directions in an effort to break the glass ceiling even before Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s presidency, which the following chapter elaborates on sufficiently. Henceforth, the election of Madam Sirleaf as President in 2005 unearthed the potential of Liberian women and afford them more opportunities to participate in the political system of the country.

CHAPTER III

Women Political Participation in Liberia: A Historical Perspective

This chapter first drew the overview of the historicity of the rights of females to vote in political elections in our global world, which led to the gained made in Liberia for women's suffrage in 1946. It also retrospect on the achievements of some prominent women in Liberia, who attempted breaking the glass ceiling even before the historic election of Madam Sirleaf; the first democratically elected female president on the continent of African. These women in history faced many challenges, but stood firm to making sure the voices of women were heard either through civil service or political participation (Guannnu, 2016). This and many other variables have contributed to the pavement of women participation in decision making, and changed how society perceived them, which are the results of the progress made in the fight against gender imbalances in the political System of Liberia in modern times.

Madame Sirleaf as president of Liberia, promised that her administration would ensure increasing female influences in both the public and civil societies. Madam Sirleaf who served for 12years, following her election in 2005 until 2018 January at which time she democratically turned power to an opposition political party leader; Ambassador George M. Weah, who also believed in women's empowerments referring to himself as "Feminist-In-Chief" speaking at a women international conference held in Monrovia, in January 2018 (The Executive Mansion, 2018). During her administration, as promised, there were several women appointed to many governmental agencies and ministries as directors, junior ministers, and senior ministers (Minister Proper). In line with the theme of this research; accessing the gains made by Madame Sirleaf's administration in closing the gender inequality gap in the political system of Liberia, and the sustainment of those gains by the administration of George Manneh Weah who became president in 2018, it is laudable to take an insight from those women who held important political positions during the times under review.

Women's Suffrage in Liberia

The rights for female to participate in political elections can be traced as far back as in 1893 in New Zealand, through a legislation and later followed by Australia in 1902. The early wave for extensions of women rights to vote from 1900 to 1930 was mostly concentrated in European Nation States. After this these times attaining political franchise for women, there was another wave after 1930 through which the amount of countries granted women's rights to vote rose rapidly that was eventually extended to almost all the countries in the world till the 1980s. The only countries by that time that didn't give women's rights to vote were those, in which men also had not have the rights to vote – countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar (Daley and Nolan, 1994).

The struggle for women's Rights to vote was an international campaign by suffragists through the means of including universal principles; the proponents for female suffrage and those that opposed it were in concurrence to the accomplishments and failures of franchise activities went beyond the territorial boundaries of one's nation-states (Daley and Nolan, 1994). In addition, the intends of the campaigners were international in that, they aimed at establishing worldwide platform for discussion, which included various women's organizations internationally, faith based, and social organizations (Dubois, 1994). In the past, gender was the factor of determinant for one's citizenship (Walby, 1994). The male gender became the holder of all societal rights, including political and civil rights since they represented the concept of categorization of citizenship (Orloff, 993). However, over times, a dialogue on collective rights for everyone, which expressly included women grew intimately tied to independence of states, national development, and political citizenship through institution like the United Nations (UN), and many others resolutions (Nadelmann, 1990).

Most of the theorists of International Relations recommend taking into account how rules, practices, and beliefs from other countries can affect the rights of women in nations with different internal systems. In this light, Halliday (1994) said: "*The constitutions of women's position in society and economy and of women's position in the home owes much to changes that are international and transnational*" (p. 421). This viewpoint sees nation-states as culturally entrenched institutions that are exposed global standards and political citizenship principles, which have an impact on their behavior and constitution (Robertson 1992; Thomas et al. 1987).

Political scripts adopted by nation-states frequently resemble one another, and this suggests that they are a component of a transnational organizing field. As a result, the newer, more diverse models of political citizenship were not kept a secret but rather were disseminated as models for advancement worldwide. Regarding women's ability to participate in elections, this universalizing premise was particularly clear. In this regard, the attainment of the rights of women to vote in Liberia was hugely at the result of transnational development of international significance.

Liberia is a deeply patriarchal country, which became independence in 1847 with the quest to provide settlement for the former slave from America. Like many other European countries and in the earlier 19th century, the rights of women to vote and being voted for were big challenge to women, until in 1946 there was constitutional amendment in Liberia that granted women the right to vote in political elections. However, this women's suffrage was limited to tax paying citizens as also was the case for the men making it partial (Carter, 2019). But as time progresses when the structure by the Americo-Liberian fade away, and after the civil war women political election became more inclusive.

Women in Liberian History

As the concern of Gender Inequality in the political system of Liberia increasingly arises in this modern era, it is important to retrospect on the achievements of women's political participation in times past. This aspect of the study seeks to examine the political participation of women in history. The contributions of these women in different areas of government in the political history of Liberia worth mentioning. These women attempted breaking the "glass ceiling" even before the historic election of Madam Sirleaf; who was elected 2005, making her the first democratically elected female president on the continent of African. Their contributions among others factors have paved the way for the increase of women political participation in modern Liberia.

Chief Suah Koko

Suah Koko's precise birthday is unclear; however it is thought that she was born in or around 1850. Most likely, she was born in the village of Ngalensu, which was a part of the former Korneya-Komu District. The unique Kpelle name "Koko"

that she had is one that is customarily given to the fifth female child. She was given the name "Suah" after attending a Sande society initiation school, which she shared with her mother and is also a title for someone who has made a notable contribution to the Sande society. Her supporters showed affection for her by calling her by the added title "Nye," which in the Kpelle language means "mother" (Nevin, 2017).

During 1920s generally speaking, women in the US were expected to forgo employment in favor of supporting their spouse and raising children. Women were discouraged from seeking employment, becoming financial independent, and when possible, holding positions of authority. Liberian society had similar expectations for women, but Chief Suah Koko proved an exception. Chief Suah Koko was lauded not only as a powerful figure in Liberian society but as a woman chief-Tess she was hailed as unique within patriarchal Liberian society. Madam Suah Koko, a native Liberian who ruled during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (Nevin, 2017). By allying with the Liberian government, she ended up becoming a paramount chief in 1929, the first woman to hold that title in the Central Province (Nimba, Bong, and Lofa counties). Being nearly blind, her ruled was assisted by her grandson (Daily Observer, 2014). At her home in Suakoko town, she presided over the polity in north-central Liberia, which included territory that is now part of Bong County (Tokpa, 2007; McCullers, 2017).

In the earlier 20th century, during this time, Liberia was divided into two parts; coastal and hinterland Liberia. The Americo-Liberian (henceforth, Congoes), who first came to West Africa in the 1820s through the American Colonization Society, they occupied a stretch of 40 miles areas from the seaside of the atlantics from Grand Cape Mount in the South-West to Cape Palmas in the South-East. The "hinterland" occupied the interior beyond these 40 miles stretch areas of the "Congoes". While the Congoes ruled coastal Liberia, various indigenous Chiefs ruled the hinterland. For her part as an indigenous chief, Madam Suah Koko's chieftom was named "Kiayeah", meaning an "area of the united people" in Kpelle, which was formerly called "Kornyeh-Komu", meaning "the hills area" (Nevin, 2017). At the height of her reign, Madam Suah Koko controlled, along with her loyal entourage of warriors, a medium-sized territory stretching from Baila Town (northwest of Sinyea) to Kakata (southwest) to the Lofa River (the present border with Lofa County to the west), including the villages of Kpatawee, Gayeh, and

Tumata, but did not exercise jurisdiction over Gbarnga itself. In modern times, the Suakoko Chiefdom (one of 12 Kpelle chiefdoms) includes the Suakoko, Garyea, Kpatawee, Kporyorkwele, Tongbeyah, Yandewon, and Zeansue clans (Dunn and Holsoe, 2016, p.193). Chief Suah Koko did not rule as an autocratic tyrant; instead, her territory was ruled under the advice of a council of elders that represented the original seven towns that make up the present-day town of Suakoko.

Chief Suah Koko's generous hospitality towards travellers, visitors, and "strangers" became legendary during her lifetime, and her benevolent gestures to other chiefs resulted in them giving her wards or servants to work for her either permanently or during the rice farming and harvest seasons. In many instances, she inherited these individuals and their offspring and adopted them as dependents (Guannu, 2016). Chief Bono Tokpa recalled that "my father told me that she was a human being's caretaker. She loved the men that were around her and she was more powerful than them. She made contact with all the warlords and brought them near her, which also built up her capacity and made her successful (Dorweh, 2007). Through contact with all those warlords, the men and women came closer to her and started working for her. All the government officials from Monrovia stopped at her place and she accommodated them. "This behaviour caused her to become popular all over" Said Chief Tokpa.

One could easily substitute the word "man" for "woman" in the proceeding quote in the case of Madam Suah koko, for she utilized the same strategy as described by Yoder John Gay, who conducted oral history research in Kpelle-land during the early 1970s even goes so far as to claim that "Madam Suakoko 'married' many wives so that her family relationships could be solidified" (Nevin, 2017). This practice most likely occurred and does not suggest lesbian relations between Madam Suah koko and her wives. Instead, she was performing the same role a polygamous male chief would have undertaken. After marrying them they became her "property" and men who engaged in sexual relations with them would have to pay her a fine, or agree to start working towards the payment of a bride price (Guannu, 2016). In this manner, she did not effectively challenge or alter women's roles, but simply assumed a role of a male chief for herself. Suah Koko's tenure in power was characterized by her economic self-sufficiency, legendary hospitality, diplomacy, and alliances with the central authorities, and key dates in her career can be outlined to create a

temporal overview. Due to the lack of surviving records, this study was unable to be exact as to when she rose to the position of chief. This lack of proper account can be traced to the long civil war that began 1989, which led to the destruction of most of the archival records in Liberia.

As the only female ruler in a region of dominant male rules, her territory was always being attacked by other rulers in the region. These male rulers believed, a female should not be a ruler in that region. On the account of John Kerkulah, an elder in Suakoko town “during the rule a president Daniel Howard in 1912, others indigenous neighbouring rulers of Chief Suah Koko, like Wolomei, Brewedo were always at war with her. They were finding means to have her killed. At one point she travelled to Ducor (Monrovia) by foot along with her army to meet Daniel Howard president of Liberia at the time and let him know about the tribal war in her region. She pleaded for soldiers to calm the war, and also offered her territory to be part of Liberia for sake safety. The Liberian government sent soldiers to her, headed by General Harper. These soldiers remain until the war ended. According to Liberian historian Dr. Joseph Saye Guannu (2016), Chief Suah Koko freely handed her area to the government of Liberia in exchange for peace following numerous battles. Her territory served as a key gateway to other hinterland areas, and an army barracks was built there at Sergeant Kollie Ta, 2 miles (3.2 km) north of the current Suakoko town. This facility was useful for the later conquest of the higher reaches of Bong County, Lofa County, and Nimba County (Liberian Journey et al, 2017).

There are two important lessons for contemporary leaders that we can draw from the leadership style of Madame Suah Koko. First, she led by example. During the crisis when she led her people out of the life-threatening Ngalensu war zone to the relative safety and negotiated ceasefire and truce, Suah koko must have earned a deep sense of gratitude and loyalty from her entourage and dependents. There is an endearing expression in the Kpelle language that means “you are under my wing” (*ika ngwôn mu*). The analogy is that of a mother hen sheltering her chicks under her wings. Suah Koko’s dependents must have come to the conclusion that she had their interests at heart and that she would do anything within her power to protect them similar to the way a mother hen would protect her offspring. There is also a lesson in the oral histories concerning nepotism and misrule. When lesser chiefs in her jurisdiction became incompetent or cruel, she acted quickly to remove them from

positions of power. Even if the person was biologically related to her, as in the case of her own grandson, Mulbah Yongo, who she forced to step down after the citizenry complained about his autocratic, abusive behaviour and possible mental illness. Today in Liberia there is a town, a clan and an entire chiefdom named in Suah Koko's honor. They reflect the status of Suah Koko as a powerful chief, diplomatic negotiator and healer in Liberia.

Angie Elizabeth Brooks (1928-2007)

She was a lawyer and diplomat from Liberia who was born on August 24, 1928, in Liberia where she was raised. She was renowned for being the first African woman to preside over the UN General Assembly. In addition, she succeeded Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit of India as the second woman to lead the United Nations after she did so in 1953 (Uglove et al. 1999 p.91). Angie Brooks' parents were unable to provide for all nine of their children, so she grew up as a foster child in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. She learned to be a typist by herself when she was just 11 years old and started typing legal documents for cash. She later worked as a stenotypist for the Justice Ministry and the Treasury Department while planning to pursue a legal career after high school.

Like in many African countries in the 1940s, Women in Liberia were limited to taking care of the children and other domestic. For them, legal profession was not a field to think about. However, Angie Brooks had other dreams after married at a young age that would lead her to United States of America at Shaw University and take her throughout the world. She was enthusiastic about earning a Law degree, but at the time in 1940s, there wasn't a school in Liberia that could offer degree in Law. Through the pastor of her church who talked to a friend at Shaw University for scholarship on her behalf and the financial support by President William V.S Tubman who admired her courage, she was able to travel to the United States and enrolled at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina (Crane, 1973). Brooks arrived in Raleigh with little money in a country where racism was real for black people. This came as a surprise to Brooks because she was raised in Liberia, a nation that was created by former slaves from America and also is largely controlled by black people. In her first bus ride, she was compelled to sit in the back. This event left her feeling quite uneasy, and throughout the rest of her stay in Raleigh, she vowed never to ever take public transportation.

Brooks put a lot of efforts into getting her degree while she was a student, not only working hard in the classroom, but also to pay her fess. Not to stay with hunger, she did unusual jobs; cleaning, scrubbing, cooking, and doing washing. She admired her assiduousness and related to her experience of during these jobs to support her education. In an interview by Ebony (1970), she said “I’m not ashamed to admit it”. Brooks graduated from Shaw University with a social science degree in 1949. She moved to Wisconsin to study Law and Political Science. After graduating, she eventually pursued a doctorate degree in International law at London University. She was licensed by the Liberian Bar Association (BA) as the nation’s first female attorney in 1953, and would later start a respectable career as a diplomat (UNGA, 2017).

After her training by the US Foreign Service as a diplomat, when the seat of Liberia’s delegation to the UN became vacant in 1954, Brooks was requested to step in. From 1956 until 1966, Brooks served in numbers of important positions at UN, comprising: the assistant chairperson for the 4th committee of the General Assembly (Crane, 1973), on the information committee for territories governed by colonies as Chairperson, Chaired the UN Commission for Ruanda-Urundi, a commission in charge of guiding the partition process of Burundi and Rwanda independent sovereign states, supervised the works of the United Nations in truce territory of the Pacific Islands, in addition, the Vice Chair for the Trusteeship Council, which was established in 1966 to oversee territories transformation from a colony to sovereign nation states. Thereafter, Madame Brooks was elected by the United Nations General Assembly representatives as President of the General Assembly, a position which is voted for annually on a regional basis. Making her the first African woman to do in 1970. Brooks oversaw the General Assembly’s meetings in her capacity as president. She was aware of the incoherence that existed when it come to the pledges of the UN to change and the necessary measures needed. Her priority was reshaping United Nations to a body that will be able fine solution to the challenges face by the World through reducing blathering discussion to emphasizing substantial deliberation that meaningfully addressed genuine issues. She was particularly worried about the wellbeing of recently independent countries that had been governed by colonial powers or UN mandates in the past. Brooks advised small nations to find a point of agreement that will bring them together strong and in unity,

which would make them relevant to the super powers of the World when she was asked by an interviewer.

As a woman who believed in gender equality, Brooks was concerned about the wellbeing of women and their political rights, thus suggested that, in order to stop conflict and promote the interest of women, they need to have a bigger say in the political processes of their countries. Stressing their role *“If the men would give an opportunity to the women to be heard and would consider wisely some of the things that they are saying, perhaps the world would be in a better condition”* (UNA, 2022), and also being aware of the imperfections of the United Nations, Brooks believed it is still the best option for global peace and cooperation, stressing: *“ we have to nurse it and cherish it and cultivate it, or else we shall one day perish and not even the moon or the knowledge of space will save us.”* Brooks, among her fellow members at the United Nations they see her as “tough, resilient, patient, and unfailingly good-humored” (Crane, 1973).

Madame Brooks’ service at the United Nations (UN) came to an end when she was nominated by President William R. Tolbert to at the Supreme Court of Liberia to be an Associate Justices on 04 May, 1977, a position she served until coup d’état in 1980 (Dunn, 2007). Again on the national scene, she became the first woman to serve in this capacity. Prior to her service at the Liberian Supreme Court, Madame Brooks worked in various capacities as well. After her studies, in 1953 when she returned home she became member of the Bar Association (BA) of Liberia, paving the way of her law practice in Liberia. Her quest to inspire women to think in the direction of becoming legal professionals, Brooks worked at the ministry of Justice, and contributed to founding of the only Law school in Liberia and taught as part-time lecturer of Law from 1953-1958. And as Assistant Secretary of State from 1958-1972, after her appointment by President William V.S Tubman who contributed to her studies while in America. In 1958, at the result of the official travels of the president along with the secretary of the state who she deputized, madam Brooks oversaw the running of the government for 10days. She also became the Vice president for “International Federation of Women lawyers” from 1964-1967 (Crane, 1973).

Ruth Sando Fahnbulleh Perry (1939-2017)

A Liberian politician who from August 1996 to July 1997 served as head of state in an interim government in Liberia following a peace agreement. Becoming Africa's first woman head of state in modern history. However, in recent times, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the first democratically elected president in a sovereign African State (Skard, 2014). Ruth Sando Fahnbulleh, a daughter of Marjon and Alhaji Semila Fahnbulleh was born in Grand Cape-mount County, Liberia, on July 16 1939. When she was younger, Perry attended classes at the Sande society, a traditional school, where she learnt about custom of her Vai family and culture. Her parents who wanted their daughter to get both a traditional and modern education, also enrolled her in a Roman Catholic school that was run by missionary sisters in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. She later enrolled at the University of Liberia, where she was trained at the Teachers College as a teacher, and subsequently worked as an elementary teacher in Grand Cape Mount County (Brennan, 1997). She grew up as member of a majority (the indigenous Liberian), and see the country being rule by a small minority; the Americo-Liberian (descendants of free slave from America who had been brought to Africa between the 1820s to the 1850s). The indigenous Liberians were ignored by the Americo-Liberian oligarchy. She was a Muslim of the Vai ethnic group, one of the country's numerous indigenous ethnic groups.

As many women would wish, she got married to Senator and successful circuit court judge McDonald Perry; has four sons and three daughters. When the last of her kids started school in 1971, she began work at the Chase Manhattan Bank's Monrovia offices and rose to higher rank during the following years. She entered politics after her husband's death, the party encourage her to replace her late husband in an election. A brutal revolution that overthrew Americo-Liberian leadership in 1980 installed a young military officer named Samuel K. Doe as the new leader. Liberia's stable society soon started to fall apart, and civil conflict was looming. Doe "won" the presidency of Liberia in 1985 via a generally regarded fraudulent election. Perry won a Senate seat as member of the United Party in the same election. The majority of United Party officeholders and other opposition figures boycotted the Senate in protest of the rigged election, claiming that the Doe administration was unconstitutional. Perry refrained from participating in the demonstration, stating that "one cannot address problems by being away," making her the lone opposition

representative in the senate (Brennan, 1997). At the same time, she also received a lot of attention for publicly opposing President Doe's efforts to legalize polygamy.

In 1989, when a full-fledged civil war began in Liberia, Madam Perry left Monrovia and went back to home in Grand Cape Mount County. She assisted in providing shelter some of the refugee there. Over the course of the following seven years, there were numbers of governments in Monrovia that come and go, but none of them had considerable power. The country was plagued by what seemed like never ending war. While in her home, she also became active in nonviolent groups including the Association of Social Services, Women Initiative in Liberia, and Women in action for Goodwill, which contributed to stop the escalation of the Liberian Civil war (Jensen, 2008). Up until 1996, when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); sub-regional organization, met in Abuja the capital of Nigeria, to bring together the leaders of the four main warring factions for peace talks, when the suffering of the Liberian people seemed to get worse with each year that passes by. At that time, Liberia had lost 150,000 people to the civil war and about 2.6 million or more people were homeless. An agreement was met for peace, where Charles Taylor, Professor Alhaji G. V. Kromah, who was the leader of a warring faction "United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy" (ULIMO.K), George Boley to serve in the interim government with Madam Ruth Sando Fanhbulleh Perry being the head of state (Mateo, 2011). On that same day, the ECOWAS country representative in Liberia, announced that Madam Perry will succeed Wilton Sankawulo as the head of the Council of States (French, 1996). She accepted and responded to the announcement "I didn't campaign for the job, but the good Lord has made his choice and I will continue to pray for direction". This was set to be the highest pace in the history political participation of women in Liberia and Africa at large, breaking that glass ceiling and becoming the first female head of state in the modern era, thus was not elected. During her inauguration on September that year, she vowed "this commitment to God and the Liberians. We are not deluded, and will make an effort to have no other loyalty to any faction or group" (French, 1996, p. A6). The warlords were cautioned that she would "handle them like a mother and, if required, that implies discipline" and would not be afraid to use her executive authority.

Having neither an armed force nor a treasury at her disposal, Perry actually had very little power. Despite these severe constrains, she performed her symbolic,

moral function admirably. She encouraged Liberian to participate in national elections, which took place on July 1997, by exhibiting dignity and composure in the demoralizing atmosphere of a ruined country. Perry then turned the power and the affair of the state to Charles Taylor following his victory in the presidential election. Madam Ruth Sando Fanhbulleh Perry, would remember by Liberians with gratitude for her positive contribution she made to the restoration of the bright future of their Country.

Frances Johnson Morris (Chief Justice 1996-1997)

Frances Johnson-Allison, a Liberian Lawyer, was originally known as Frances Johnson-Morris. She attended the University of Liberia where she obtained her bachelor's degree in English. Frances Allison, once known as Frances Jonson Morris went on further to earned her law degree from the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law in Monrovia. In 1989, she became a resident circuit judge that marked the beginning of her illustrious judicial career. During the years 1996 and 1997, she served as Chief Justice of Liberia, making her the first woman to serve in said capacity. Before her appointment as the Chairperson of National Election Commission in 2005, from 2004 to 2005 she served as the national director of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission in Liberia. Frances Johnson-Allison was appointed as Justice Minister in 2006 a position she served (UN News, 2005). In 2007, she was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce as Minister. Upon leaving this position, Frances Johnson-Allison was appointed by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to serve as the head of Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission a position her served until 2013. She had a lengthy career in public service and the judicial sector before transitioning into private practice and becoming an attorney representing clients in courtroom disputes.

Prominent Women (2005-2022)

The representatives and presidential elections held in Liberia in the years 2005, marked the new dawn in the Liberian politics. This election resulted to electing the first female democratically elected president not only in Liberia, but also on the continent of Africa. Her presidency reassured the women of Liberia a place on the national decision-making tables. In this regard, this section of the study takes a look at some women, who had the opportunities to serve during the administration of Madam Sirleaf through presidential appointments. Henceforth, look at those women that serve in the administration of Ambassador Weah, who became president of Liberia in 2018, after the second round's mammoth victory on December 26, 2017 winning 61.54% of the votes. The contributions of these women to the administrations under review, through diverse government positions make them important to this research. It is imperative that their achievements at the public sphere worth mentioning when assessing the gender inequality in the political system of Liberia.

Christiana Tah (Justice Minister 2007- 2014)

Christiana Tah, is an American trained Liberian lawyer who was born and raised in Liberian. She graduated from Kent State University, and Yale law school with a BA degree and a Law degree respectively. During the long civil war in Liberia from 1989-2003, she moved to the America where she continued the practice of law, as well taught sociology and Criminal Justice at university level. Ms Tah has published many articles about rule of law and as well on human rights. She also authored a book titled "listen to the songs the children sing" (Tah, 2020).

In 2007, Ms Tah was appointed by Madame Sirleaf as attorney general of the republic of Liberia, a position she served from 2007- 2014 after her resignation, alleging that she was no longer having control over security apparatus that fall under the authority of ministry of Justice, which she headed as minister (Onishi, 2014). In being effective to inspire the next generation of women, in her memoir, a bestselling book "Listen to the songs the Children Sing" she narrated her personal story and it reads:

Historically, Liberia has tended to encourage women to excel professionally. Since the nineteen seventies, women have held high positions in the Liberian judicial system, including the position of Chief Justice and other branches of government. However,

after the Liberian civil war broke out in 1990, which lasted for fourteen years, most families (including mine) were displaced and had to start life all over in a foreign country. This situation required balancing my career and family and, consequently, at various times, I had to give priority to one over the other. Somehow, it appears that the woman is always the one expected to sacrifice career for family. But, when I was appointed as Attorney General of Liberia in 2009, my husband volunteered to take full charge of family matters so I could return to Liberia to serve my country. The position was challenging, but I gave it my utmost, and after five years of service, I stepped aside and moved on. Although Liberian women participate in all three branches of the Liberian government, they continue to be underrepresented in each branch. Any underrepresented group will be, without a doubt, underserved. To counter this, women must work together to increase their numbers in key sectors, especially the legislature. That way, they can influence the enactment of laws that will positively impact women's lives. Most importantly, public awareness and implementation are critical steps to take if women are to benefit from laws enacted to improve their lives (Tah, 2020, p. 201).

Antoinette Monsio Sayeh (Finance Minister 2006-2008)

She is a Liberian economist who was born on 12 July 1958 in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. At Swarthmore University, she earned Master of Arts degree in International Economic Relations, and thereafter earned her Ph.D from Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the same field. She served as minister of finance in Liberia from year 2006 to 2008 during madam Sirleaf regime. She became the second woman to serve in that position, next to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; the president under whose administration she served. Madame Sayeh became a member of the Advisory council on women's economic empowerment of the World Bank Group in 2007, which both "Leipziger and Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul" served as chairpersons (World Bank, 2008).

After her service in Liberia as a Minister of finance, on 14 July, 2008 she began a new role in the international system. At the International Monetary Fund (IMF), she served as the Head for African affairs until August 31, 2016. (IMF, 2016).

At the center for global development, she also served as a prominent visiting fellow. She then served as country director for World Bank in Benin, Niger, and Togo in addition to working on Pakistan's "public finance management and civil service reform" (BBC, 2006).

Olubanke king Akerele (Foreign Minister 2007-2010)

She is a Liberian Politician and diplomat, born on 11 May, 1964. Ms. Akerele is a granddaughter of Charles D.B. King who served as the 17th president of the republic of Liberia. She attended the University of Ibadan in Nigeria before earning

her B.A. in economics from Brandeis University in Massachusetts, USA. She also attended the Northeastern University, and Columbia University in the United States, where she earned her first and second M.A. degree in manpower economics, and economics of education respectively. Following the 2005 election in Liberia, Madam Sirleaf appointed Ms. Akerele as Minister of Commerce and Industry. Again, she served as foreign Minister after President Sirleaf reshuffled her cabinet. A position she served from 2007 until on 3 July, 2010 when the president dismissed her entire cabinet, including Akerele at which time she announced her resignation (The Executive Mansion, 2007).

Glorious Musu Scott (Chief Justice 1997-2003)

Madam Scott is a Liberian Lawyer, who was born and raised in Liberia. She attended the University of Liberia where she earned her first degree in economics, and subsequently a Law degree. Madame Scott is a founding member of the female lawyers association in Liberia, and the Liberia National Bar Association recognize lawyer. She taught as an adjunct professor at Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law in Liberia. During 2005 general elections, Madam Scott was elected to represent Maryland County as a Junior Senator on the ticket of Alliance for Peace and Democracy Party (Harris, 2011). She served only one term, in 2011, Madam Scott was not reelection to her Senate seat. In 2013, she was appointed by president Sirleaf, and became the head of the Constitutional Review Committee that existed until 2015. During her time at the constitutional Review Committee, Scott advocated for women's participation, and the education of girls (Yates, 2015). Prior to all of these positions she served, in 1997 at the end of the first spell of the civil unrest, after Charles Taylor became president, on the five men Supreme Court bench she served as Chief Justice of Liberia (Human Rights Watch, 1998).

Jamesetta Wolokollie (Associate Justice 2007-)

She is a Liberian Lawyer, who was born in Maryland County, Liberia. Ms. Wolokollie started her university education at University of Liberia, where she graduated with a B.A. in English and Sociology from the College of Liberal and Fine Arts in 1981. She afterwards moved to the United States of America and attended Florida School of Theatre, where she received an M.A. in English and Teaching &

Production of Drama in 1985. She obtained her L.L.B. in law from the University of Liberia's Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law once more in 1988.

Professionally, Ms. Wolokollie have served in numerous capacities: she served as English instructor at the University of Liberia in the English department. In addition, from 1988 to 2005, she worked as in-house counsel for the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI), and at the law firms of Cooper and Togbah, Maxwell and Maxwell, Barnes and Johnson as Legal Counsel. She served the Liberian National Bar Association as Deputy Secretary and later as Secretary (LNBA). She also held the position of 1st Vice President of the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL). She started working for the Liberian government in 2004, serving as a nationwide consultant for the Governance Reform Commission (GRC) in Liberia, from 2004 to 2005, then as minister of youth and sports from April 2005 to June 2007. She became an Associate Justice of Liberia in July 2007 after her appointment by President Sirleaf a position she continues to serve at the time of this research.

Sie-A-Nyene Gyapay Yuoh (Chief Justice 2022-)

She is a Liberian Lawyer, born in Montserrado County, republic of Liberia. Attended St. Teresa's Convent, and graduated in 1974, subsequently began her university education at Cuttington University (CU) in Liberia, and obtained her Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Political Science in 1978. Still in the quest of seeking higher and quality education, in 1979 Ms. Yuoh enrolled at Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law in Liberia. She successfully completed her studies there, earning her degree of Law in 1981, thereafter, she was admitted as an attorney to the Liberian National Bar Association.

Professionally, Ms. Sie-A-Nyene Gyapay Yuoh began her public service in 1983 as an Assistant Minister for Legal Affairs at the ministry of Justice, a position she served in until 1985. And as a coordinator for African Affairs at the ministry of Foreign Affairs the year 1988-1990. She served as Legal Counsel, Corporate Secretary, and on the Board of Governor from the year 2000-2003 (CBL, 2003). She also worked as Acting Director and Commissioner at the Liberia Law Reform Commission July 2011-April 2013.

After President Sirleaf second term election in 2011, two years later, Ms. Yuoh was appointed and subsequently commissioned by president Sirleaf to the Supreme Court making her the second women as Associate Justices (Brooks, 2017). Prior to her appointed at the Supreme Court, she served as the President of the Maryland County Bar Association in 2013 and Chair of the Liberia National Bar Association's (LNBA) Judiciary Committee from 2012 to 2013. Madam Sirleaf left office in 2018 when she democratically turned power to Ambassador George Manneh Weah, Justice Yuoh continues her service at the Supreme Court.

As the retirement of Francis Korkpor, the chief Justice was scheduled for September 2022 (New Republic of Liberia, 2022), President Weah on August 23, 2022, nominated Justice Yuoh as the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia (Karmo, 2022). Justice Yuoh was confirmed by the honorable house of the Senate, and commissioned by President Weah 2022.

Jewel Howard Taylor (Vice President 2018-)

Jewel Cianeh Howard Taylor is a Liberian politician who was born on 17 January 1963. She is the 30th vice president of Liberia a position she currently serves. Taylor has earned a master's degree in banking in addition to two bachelor's degrees, one in banking and the other in economics. On the 21st of December 2011, she received her law degree at Louise Arthur Grimes School of Law, University of Liberia.

She wed Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia, in 1997, and remained the first lady of Liberia until August 11, 2003, when her husband's administration was abruptly terminated, forcing him to leave the nation (Aljazeera, 2020). Taylor held a series of official posts in the government of Liberia while her husband was in office. Among these positions were Vice Governor of the National Bank of Liberia, which served as the country's first central bank, President of the Agricultural Cooperative and Development Bank (ACDB), and Mortgage Financing Underwriter of the First Union National Bank. Her focus also included cultural, educational, and health-related issues.

Madam Jewel Howard Taylor ran for the senate seat in Bong County during the general and presidential elections in 2005. She was successful in her campaign, and she was elected to the Senate on the ticket of National Patriotic Party (NPP),

which is also her husband's party. After serving her first term in the Senate for six years, she was successful in her bid for reelection in 2011. During her time in the Senate, she was a member of a number of committees, including the Senate committee on Health and Social Welfare, and as chair on the Committee of Gender, Women, and Children. In February 2012, Taylor made an effort, in keeping with her position as a legislator, to propose legislation into the Liberian parliament that would have rendered Same-Sex intimacy as a crime of the first degree, which the maximum penalty would have been death. But, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf declined signing any law of this kind, the legislation did not pass the legislature (Africa Review, 2018).

During the elections that took place in 2017, George Manneh Weah selected Jewel to serve as his running mate on the ticket of the newly formed Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), of which her party, the NPP, is one of the component political parties. This election would serve as the mechanism of democratically changing power in Liberia for many decades, making it one of the most significant elections in the country's history. After her party won the election that took place on December 26, 2017, she made history by becoming the first woman to serve as Vice President of Liberia.

Williametta Saydee Tarr (Gender Minister 2018-)

Following the victory of Mr. Weah in the presidential runoff election that was held on December 26, 2017, Mrs Williametta Saydee Tarr became the first woman appointed by President Weah to a cabinet ministerial position. She became the minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection of Liberia, which took effect on January, 2018 (News 24, 2018). Mrs Saydee-Tarr worked at Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa (GPFA) as the first Executive Directress of the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa (GPFA) before she was appointed to the position of Minister. In this role, she was responsible for fundraising and coordinating worldwide scholarships for women and girls, ensuring capacity building and development, forging and nurturing strategic partnerships with donors, managing civil societies and government collaboration efforts to achieve the humanitarian goals of the Foundation. During the Ebola outbreak, she was successful in raising funds and putting the Foundation's granular level approach into action, both of which were intended to keep local populations safe.

Educationally, she attended the University of Minnesota in Duluth, Minnesota, for her Master's degree in Advocacy and Political Leadership, and also earned B.A degree of communications studies from Saint Thomas University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Finally, she went to the Minneapolis Community Technical College in America for her Associate of Science degree in Business Management. She is an accomplished professional in the area of social policy, communications, as well as in business and non-profit organization management, and she has more than fifteen years of senior executive experience. Mrs Saydee-Tarr is a competent and quite well professional who is deeply committed to ensuring the protection of the rights and well-being of the most marginalized and defenceless people of society. She is a fervent supporter of the rights of children, adolescents, and women in general.

Dr. Wilhelmina S. Jallah (Minister of Health 2018-)

She is a Liberian physician and politician who was appointed by President George Manneh Weah to the position of Health Minister of Liberia in February of 2018, which led to her becoming Health Minister of Liberia in 2018. As of the year 2018, she is a medical practitioner who possesses 25 years of professional experience in clinical services and public health management at both the national and international levels. Dr. Jallah is the Chairwoman of the Incident Management System (IMS) for the country and is in charge of the implementation of the national COVID-19 readiness and response strategy for the country.

Dr. Jallah founded the Hope for Women International Medical Center (HWIMC) Liberia Inc. in 2012 and served as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Medical Director until he was appointed Minister of Health in 2018. Approximately in the course of her tenure, Dr. Jallah and the rest of the team gave medical care to over 50,000 patients. These patients included pregnant women, children, and adults of both sexes. During the unprecedented outbreak of Ebola in 2014, the Hope for Women International Medical Center was one of the few privately operated medical clinics that remained open and continued to provide services to the general public despite the challenges presented by the outbreak. Over the course of the previous decade, Dr. Jallah also volunteered her time at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Liberia. This facility is one of the referral hospitals in the country, and during her time there, she held the roles of acting head of the obstetrics and

gynaecology department as well as educator. In addition to that, she worked as the director of the gynaecological cancer program at said hospital (womenlifthealth.org).

Jeanine M. Cooper (Minister of Agriculture 2020-)

Madame Jeanine M. Cooper was the union between the late Honorable Julius E. Cooper, Sr., who worked as an agronomist, and the late Mrs. Milly Buchanan, who was an architect, translator, and artist. Madame Jeanine M. Cooper was born into this world. Both of her parents spent many years working for the government. She was born in the year 1960 in Bomi Hills, which is located in Bomi County. After completing her high school studies at the College of West Africa in Monrovia, Liberia, Madame Cooper continued her education in another country.

She has Bachelor of Arts degree in both Business Administration and French from the state University of Michigan, which she earned in 1982. In addition, she earned a Master of Science degree from University of London in Managing Rural Change in 2003. Mrs. Cooper's dissertation, entitled "Capitalizing on Livelihoods in Liberia's Rubber Sector to Anchor Post-Conflict Reconstruction," was very well received, and she was awarded a distinction for it. She has also published a number of blogs and short stories, in addition to having finished a number of certificate programs in business and entrepreneurship. Ms. Cooper is completely fluent in both English and French, and she also has a good working understanding of Dutch. After returning to Liberia in the 1980s, Minister Cooper immediately began working in the agriculture sector. She began as a registered rubber buyer with Firestone, and she subsequently managed and operated her family farms, including King Farm in Lower Careysburg, Buchanan Farm in Cinta, and Ora-Gene Farm in Vahnnyeamah, all of which are located in Margibi County. As soon as the civil war in Liberia broke out, she joined the very first team of Doctors without Borders and stayed there until 1996. This was from 1990 to 1996. She established the Children's Assistance Program in Liberia, a local non-governmental organization that has been working with young people since 1991 and is a leading partner in child development. Between the years 1996 and 2003, she worked for Vétérinaires Sans Frontières-Suisse (VSF-S), where she handled livelihood and livestock initiatives for pastoralists in the north-eastern part of Kenya and the southern part of Somalia. In both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, Madame Cooper has lent her support to agricultural initiatives that were started by local communities and sat on the boards of directors of organizations that promote

economic growth and educational establishments. After completing her service with VSF-S, Madame Cooper went on to work for the United Nations for a total of 13 years. Her most recent position was as the Directress of the Liaison Office for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Prior to that, she worked as the Permanent Observer to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa. Additionally, Ms. Cooper worked for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) in Kenya and for the Eastern and Southern Africa area.

FABRAR Liberia was established by Jeanine Cooper, who went on to become the country's largest rice processor and producer in 2009, and she served as the company's manager from January 2017 until 2020. Madame Cooper was given the nomination to serve as the Minister of Agriculture for the Republic of Liberia in January of 2020 by President George M. Weah. She was granted this position after receiving majority approval from the Liberian Senate and subsequent commissioning from the President of Liberia. As the new minister for Agriculture, she presented a clear strategy for the transformation of Liberian agriculture, a vision that is oriented on elevating Liberian farmers from subsistence farming to commercial smallholder farming. A mission to meet the growing need for high-caliber agricultural goods that are cultivated in a way that is ecologically sound and organically compliant in today's market. A plan for the new course that the Ministry of Agriculture should take, with the primary emphasis being on making it a service-oriented organization.

After being appointed to the position of Minister of Agriculture, she resigned from her positions in FABRAR. The shares in Fabrar Liberia Incorporated that belonged to Madame Cooper were placed in what she referred to as a "Blind Trust." As the new Minister of Agriculture, she took that measure to ensure there is no potential for a conflict of interest. *"In this public forum, I like to say something about my company FABRAR, which I was running peacefully before, but which I have now put my shares into a blind trust so that I can focus my attention on the affairs of the Ministry,"* she said in a published article ran by the Front-Page Africa (March 5, 2020).

Mawine Diggs (Commerce Minister 2020-)

Liberian professional Madame Mawine G. Diggs is the current Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia, in addition to her role as co-coordinator of the

G7+ WTO accessions group. In her role as Minister, Madame Diggs works toward the goal of developing effective policies for commerce and international trade, with the goal of encouraging the expansion and innovation of the private sector while simultaneously establishing criteria that will give all consumers more power and kick-start the economy (WTC, 2021). Honorable Diggs was named chairperson of the cabinet on two separate occasions while President Weah was out of the country. Diggs was tasked with managing the affairs of the state in consultation with the Vice President and the President over the phone. In her previous position at Foreign Affairs ministry, Honourable Diggs worked as Deputy Minister for Administration, heading the administrative division of the Ministry. In this role, Honorable Diggs was responsible for ensuring compliance with organizational structures, compliance with the Civil Service and other HR policies, and planning and executing the annual budget in accordance with the PFM law, amongst other responsibilities. In addition to this, she ensured that all of the diplomatic missions were properly supported and equipped with the necessary logistics to carry out their responsibilities. On numerous occasions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she served as acting Minister, and one time representation of President George Manneh Weah to President Muhammadu Buhari of the Republic of Nigeria to present a special message, and was given full presidential welcome in both countries. At the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), she served as Director for many years, among her responsibilities, was ensuring that all institutions of higher learning meets the criteria to operate in line of the Law, and making sure they appropriately complied with all applicable standards in offering quality education.

Before being appointed to positions in the government, she held the positions of President and Chief Academic Officer (CAO) at Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) at its Eastern campus in Detroit, United States of America. She was responsible for the organization and administration of educational activities, and student services for about 24,000 students, as well as the execution of a budget of \$15 million and supervision of 750 workers. Minister Diggs has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Roanoke College in Environmental Policy, and Master's degree of Education from Clemson University. She is a candidate of Doctor of Philosophy degree at National American University. Numerous awards have been given to her, including the Wayne County Community College District Outstanding Service Award, the Michigan Chronicle Women of Excellence Award, the American

Association of Women in Community Colleges (AAWCC) Under 40 Award, and a Certificate of Appreciation from the White House Communication Agency.

Ruth Coker Collins (Minister of public work 2021-)

Madame Collins is a Liberian engineer who attended Stella-Maris Polytechnic College in Monrovia, Liberia, from 2002-2007 to acquire her Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree in Civil Engineering. She established "Tabitha Renaissance Engineering and Design Incorporated" in 2012 and continues to work there to this day. In addition, during the years 2004 and 2006, she held the position of camp management assistant for the United Nations Peace Keeping Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Where her responsibilities were providing appropriate accommodations and support as required; including the renovation of buildings and warehouses for use as offices and storage facilities, the erection of tents, and support for the engineering section in the form of carpentry, painting, welding, and masonry works.

She was appointed by President George Manneh Weah as Minister of Public Works of Liberia on May 04, 2022. She replaced the late Mobutu Vlah Nyenpan as Minister of Public Works of Liberia after his passing; he had served in that capacity from 2018 to 2020, during which time Mrs Collins served as Deputy Minister. Mrs Ruth Coker-Collins served as the acting Minister of Public Works commencing in the year 2020 and continuing until her confirmation by the Liberian Senate in the year 2021. "After many Senators acknowledged receipt of a performance report from the Committee on Public Works and Rural Development" chaired by Senator Edwin M. Snowe, she was unanimously confirmed (Daily Observer, 2022).

These gains made through presidential appointment of women to serve in top governmental ministerial positions by both Madame Sirleaf and Ambassador Weah during their administrations, covering the years 2005 to 2022, signified their willingness to narrow down Gender Inequality in the political system of Liberia. In light of this, the following chapter would further elaborate, detailing the contributions and implications of the administrations of Madam Sirleaf and Ambassador Weah as president of Liberia in different times.

CHAPTER IV

Unpacking the Implications of Administrations in Closing the Gender Inequality Gap in the Political System of Liberia

The core issues of the research are discussed in this chapter through centring on assessing the gender inequality in the political system of Liberia. In an effort for better examination, this chapter takes a closer look at the biographies of both leaders under whose administrations is the scope of this research. And endeavored to examine the gains made during Madam Sirleaf's administration in the fight against gender inequality in the political system of Liberia (2006 to 2017), and also ascertain whether or not those gains have being sustained under Ambassador George Manneh Weah's administration (2018 to 2022). In light of the above discussion, it compares the two administrations focusing on women empowerment through education, employment opportunities, and policies that enhance equality in the public sphere. It examined women political participation through presidential appointments, and as well as elective positions, which also help to understand how the Liberian society responses to gender issues and its role played toward gender imbalances in the political system of Liberia. This chapter also covers the key findings of this thesis, followers by discussions.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

She was born on the 29th of October 1928 in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. Madame Sirleaf became the 23rd president of Liberia. She did her secondary education at the College of West Africa (CWA), one of Liberia's best high school at the time, where she graduated. Like many Liberian girls, Sirleaf married young, and her union was blessed with four children. Out of the desire for her educational advancement, along with her husband applied to study in the United States of America, which was sponsor by the Government of Liberia. In 1964, she received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Madison Business College in Madison, Wisconsin, and in 1970, she received a certificate in economics from the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado. In 1971, at the Kennedy School of Governance, Harvard University in the United States of America, she earned a Master's degree in Public Administration, as narrated in her memoir "This Child Will Be Great" (2009)

Prior to these academic achievements, her professional career began in 1965 at the Liberian Treasury Department. Considering this position, as well as her independence and intelligence, she was appointed Finance Minister in 1979, and president of the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI) until the military takeover in 1980. However, the repressive rule of the military government caused her to flee the country. She was well recognized for her financial integrity, and she never held back when criticizing the administration for misusing cash. She was twice imprisoned and arrested during Doe's rule, narrowly escaping death on each instance (The African History, 2021). She openly condemned Doe while running for a Senate seat in Montserrado County in the 1985 elections, which led to her arrest and eventual jail. Later, she was freed and given the freedom to leave the nation. She previously worked at the World Bank and Equator Bank as a Senior Loan Officer and Vice President of the CITICORP Africa Regional Office in Nairobi, Kenya. Before running for president of the Republic of Liberia in the 1997 election, Sirleaf served as Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, and Director of the Regional Office of Africa as an assistant UN Secretary-General, a position she resigned in order to run in her country's presidential election that year, finishing second to Charles Taylor (Lyons, 1998). Sirleaf would contest in subsequent election and become president, wins the Noble Peace Prize in 2011 along with Gbowee who contributed immensely to the Liberian peace.

During the majority of her adult life, Sirleaf suffered verbal and physical abuse at the hands of her husband. Despite having a successful political career, Sirleaf was forced to live in a patriarchal society where men hold supremacy and play the leading roles in moral governance, and ownership of land. However, she kept her dreams alive. Sirleaf was named "Iron Lady" base on her bravery; challenging the patriarchal political system of Liberia. As the Unity Party's presidential candidate for 2005 election, Madame Sirleaf became the country's first female democratically elected president and as well the first on the African continent when she was formally inducted into office on January 16, 2006. She underlined the necessity to empower women in all spheres of national life and government in Liberia during the inauguration.

In line with the developmental agenda of the Unity Party during the administration of Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, which was labeled as the Poverty Reduction Strategy and an Agenda for Transformation, was based on four pillars (Emansion, 2010):

1. Peace and Security;
2. Economic Revitalization;
3. Governance and the Rule of Law;
4. Infrastructure and Basic Social Services.

Some of the agenda of vision 2030; Sustainable Development Goals –SDGs: 3. Health; 4. Education; 5. Gender Equality; 6. Clean Water and Sanitation; 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; and 17. Partnerships, were seen as complementing the national agenda of the Unity Party. They seek to address factors of social, economic, and political problem that affect mostly the developing democracies in Africa (Emansion, 2016).

In a short time, she began working toward realizing her promise of empowering Liberian women after being inaugurated (Adams, 2017, p.189). From the country's founding, women have consistently fallen behind men in all facets of society. She didn't only inherit the country with an unbending patriarchal culture, but in addition a damage economy due to the civil war that was fought in the country. A large number of traumatized people, presumably former combatants or victims of the war, exacerbated the situation. Addressing the public during her inauguration in 2006, Madam Sirleaf she said:

My Administration shall thus endeavor to give Liberian women prominence in all affairs of our country. My Administration shall empower Liberian women in all areas of our national life. We will support and increase the writ of laws that restore their dignities and deal drastically with crimes that dehumanize them. We will enforce without fear or favor the law against rape recently passed by the National Transitional Legislature. We shall encourage families to educate all children, particularly the girl child. We shall also try to provide economic programs that enable Liberian women to assume their proper place in our economic revitalization process (Sirleaf, 2009, p. 272).

These comments gave the women of Liberia optimism while most of them riveted to their radios, with a fervent belief that the moment had come for women's liberation and that they could now finally hold the same positions as males in the political leadership structure of their nation.

George Manneh Weah

Born on October 1, 1966, in Monrovia, Liberia. He is a retired professional soccer player who turned politician. He became the African, the European, and the world's best soccer player all in 1995, this accomplishment remains unbreakable as of now by any soccer player from Africa. He used his footballing popularity to contribute in bringing an end to the country's long civil war, and subsequently became active in the body politics of Liberia who would later become president of the country.

At the elementary schools of Daniel E. Howard and C. W. Brumskine, he started his early childhood education. Weah, afterwards attended junior high school at G. W. Gibson and Ellen Mills Scarborough. He also attended Muslim Congress and Wells Hairston High Schools for his secondary studies. As an active politician, criticism surrounding his lack of formal education became unbearable, he was courageous to go back to school and subsequently graduated from high school on September 21, 2007 at Continental Academy in the US (The Executive Mansion, 2018). Henceforth, in pursuance of higher education, he attended DeVry University in America where he earned his Bachelor degree in Business Administration in 2011, and at Keller Graduate School of Management with Master's degree in Public Administration in 2013.

Weah returned to Liberia as a goodwill ambassador for the UN after President Charles G. Taylor was dethroned in 2003. He entered the 2005 presidential election as a candidate for the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) party. In the runoff election in November 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of the Unity Party (UP) defeated him despite having won the first round of voting. Once more in October 2011, Weah ran against Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in the presidential and legislative elections, but this time as Vice-presidential candidate to Winston Tubman on the CDC ticket. The candidates with the most votes, Sirleaf and Tubman, were forced to a runoff election on November 8 because neither one of them did not receive more than 50% of the vote. Notwithstanding the Tubman-Weah ticket's withdrawal from the contest and the poor voter turnout, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was reelected with a sizable majority. However, her triumph was marred by these factors.

Weah ran for senator of Montserrado County in December 2014 as candidate of Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). He easily trounced Robert Sirleaf, one

of President Sirleaf's sons, who was his closest rival, winning 78 percent of the vote to Sirleaf's approximately 11 percent. Weah's CDC combined with two other parties to form the Coalition for Democratic Change two years later in an effort to bolster opposition power ahead of the 2017 elections (CDC). The senator for Bong County and ex-wife of the ousted president Taylor, Jewel Howard Taylor, served as Weah's running mate for president in the October 2017 presidential and representative elections. In these elections, Weah got the majority of votes in the first round of voting, garnering around 38% of the vote on October 10. He and his closest rival, incumbent vice president Joseph N. Boakai, who re-contested on the Unity Party (UP) ticket got roughly 29 percent of the vote, made it to the runoff election expected to be held on November 7 that year. The Supreme Court ruled on November 6 that the electoral commission could not hold the election until the commission had finished looking into allegations of fraud and incompetence made by the third-place finisher, Charles W. Brumskine, and his Liberty Party.

As a result, the election was indefinitely postponed. Several political parties, particularly the UP, agreed with the LP's grievances. Also, the UP claimed that Johnson Sirleaf meddled in the election in the interest of Weah, an allegation she refuted. On December 7, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal brought by the UP and LP and ruled that the runoff election will proceed after the electoral commission had finished its investigation rejecting the LP's claims. Weah easily prevailed in the election, which was held on December 26, receiving more than 60% of the vote. On January 22, 2018, he was sworn in as the 24th president of Liberia, marking the first democratically transfer of power from a sitting president since 1944 (Elebute and Ocheni, 2020). Weah's governance policy agenda, which was the electoral platform of the coalition (CDC), was repeated in his inaugural speech. The platform document outlines numerous particular policy suggestions under four major "pillar" topic areas, albeit maybe lacking cogency as written.

1. **Power to People:** Improve services for health, sanitation, and education; give young people more socioeconomic power; and promote gender equality.
2. **Economics and Employment:** Focus on agriculture, forestry, and infrastructure development to achieve long-term economic growth and diversification.

3. **Maintaining the Peace:** enhancing the military and criminal justice systems, advancing human rights, averting violence, and promoting unity.
4. **Governance and Transparency:** To strengthen accountability in the public sector, decentralize government, combat corruption in government.

However, the extent to which the Weah administration have fully pursued this agenda remains arguably undetected. Nonetheless, a large portion of Weah's program basically aims to incrementally advance previous policies and institutional goals, indicating significant likely continuity with a large portion of Sirleaf's agenda. Few months after his inauguration as president of Liberia, on October 17, 2018 at the international conference for women held in Liberia; "SHEROES forum", President Weah publicly committed himself to the cause of women, and declared himself as "*Liberia's Feminist In chief*"; this declaration by President Weah, assured his commitment in pursuit of feminism ideal, which calls for equal participation of all sexes. Furthermore, the president said "*on the basis of the ideal of feminism, I hereby pledge to the women of Liberia that I will do all that I can, during my tenure as president of this Country, to fight for gender equality and empowerment*" (The Executive Mansion, 2018).

Appointed Positions

In fulfilment of her promised to fight gender inequality, and highlighting the needs of women in Liberia as president. President Sirleaf started by appointing women to head some cabinet ministerial positions. Out of 21 ministerial posts, women were appointed as ministers to six major ministries: Finance Ministry, Commerce, and Justice, Ministry of youth and sports, Gender, Children and Social Protection Ministry, and Ministry of Internal Affairs. Later appointed several women as junior ministers and directors at many others governmental agencies. There were fifty two women appointed out of three hundred eighteen (318) Directors of Civil Service Institutions. Out of five member justices on the bench of the Supreme Court of Liberia, Madam Sirleaf appointed two women. Henceforth, Liberia has fifteen (15) political sub-divisions, in which each has a direct representation of the president under the title "Superintendent." She then appointed women in five (5) of the fifteen (15) political sub-divisions as Superintendents (Knights, 2014). In addition, the

twenty-two Liberian ambassadors she commissioned to serve in various ally states, six of these ambassadors were women.

Table 1: Women appointed to higher positions by President Sirleaf

Locations	Total Number	Males	Females	Percentage of Females
Cabinet Posts	21	15	6	28.5
C.S.A Directors	318	266	52	16%
Supreme Court	5	3	2	40%
Superintendents	15	10	5	33%
Ambassadors	22	16	6	28.5%

Source: Civil Service Reform Strategy, 2008.

For his part, President George Manneh Weah assures the women of his commitment to Gender Equality. During an international conference for women “Sheroes Forum” held in Liberia in 2018, where president Weah addressed the women and assured them his commitment to women empowerment- referring to himself as “feminist in chief.” He used the occasion to remind the Liberian women alongside with other international women, about his selection of Madam Jewel Howard Taylor as his Vice presidential candidate while running for the presidency, and his appointment of many women to lucrative governmental positions and a number of actions to emphasize his support to the progress of women’s cause. He declared:

Since my incumbency, I have appointed a woman to be the first female deputy Chief of staff of Armed Forces of Liberia, and there is a female who serves as Deputy Inspector General of the National Police. Similarly, I have appointed many women to ministerial positions and to boards of State-owned Enterprises and intend to appoint many more (The Executive mansion, 2018).

President George Manneh Weah appointed women as cabinet ministers in various ministries: Gender, Children and Social Protection Ministry, Commerce, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Agriculture, and Public Works Ministry.

Women head five (5) of the nineteen (19) cabinet ministerial posts (UN Women, 2021). Henceforth, he appointed several women to various ministries and agency as junior ministers and directors respectively, including the directors of the “National Fishery Authority”, and the Freeport of Liberia. Under his administration, there have being forty (40) women out of three hundred eighteen (318) serving as Directors at Civil Service Institutions of Liberia. Since he became president in 2018, Ambassador Weah have made three appointments at the Supreme Court of Liberia; two males, and one female. His appointments of women in respectable government positions was felt at the Supreme Court of Liberia, when a sitting Supreme Court Justice was appointed to serve as Chief Justice of the republic of Liberia. Meanwhile, the number of women at the Supreme Court remain two, with woman serving as Chief Justice.

At the fifteen political sub-divisions, president Weah appointed five (3) women out of fifteen (15) superintendents who directly represent the president in these counties. In furtherance, serving at the diplomat mission around the world, President Weah commissioned twenty four ambassadors and Charge d'affairs to represent Liberia to ally countries, only eight of which are women (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). However, these are marginal gains made against gender inequality in the political system of Liberia.

Table 2: Women appointed to higher positions by President Weah

Locations	Total Number	Males	Females	Percentage of Females
Cabinet Posts	19	14	5	26%
C.S.I Directors	318	278	40	12.5%
Supreme Court	3	2	1	33%
Superintendents	15	12	3	20%
Ambassadors	24	16	8	33%

Sources: Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022

Education

As discussed previously in chapter II, one of the cardinal causes of gender inequality is: lack of education, and illiteracy. Prior to the year 2005 elections that brought Madam Sirleaf as president, the country was faced with many structural challenges that were affected by the 14years civil conflicts, which desperately needed to be rebuild including the Educational sector. In this vain, and in keeping with her promised made to the Liberian women, President Sirleaf established the Liberian Education Trust (LET) within the first year of her administration to meet the women of Liberia's educational requirements. This group has built more than 50 schools, hired and trained more than 500 teachers in short-term intense programs, and offered almost 5000 scholarships to women and girls who enrolled in formal education and literacy initiatives. LET purportedly reached every county through building, literacy, and scholarships three years after its launch (Knights, 2015). Several scholarships were also introduced by LET for particular groups. To further promote and fund its purpose, LET formed alliances with other corporations and organizations. In this regard, the female literacy rate is a crucial statistic to examine. The rating assesses the reading and writing skills of females between the ages of 15 and older. Prior to 2005, female literacy stood at around 20%. It was measured at 27 percent in 2007 compared to 2017's measurement of 34 percent. According to the World Bank, the measure percentage for education spending at the time was 6.5 percent, while the percentage for military spending was only 0.7 percent. It would be fair to say that the fact that more funding was going to education than the military is proof that Sirleaf's administration placed a high priority on human development.

For President Weah, many of his institutional goals are substantially likely to continue with much of former president Sirleaf's agenda in relation to girls' education. Girls' education has been one of the greater achievement of Weah's administration since taking power in 2018. There have being marginal increment in female education. Before his ascendancy to the presidency in 2018, the literacy rate of female from 15age and above was 27 percent. Of 2018, the literacy rate of female in proportion to their male compatriots is measured at 34.1 percent. This is a clearly shows that the administration of President Weah, like the immediate administration before his, prioritized the education of females. During president Weah's

administration, comparing the national expenditure for Education and that of the Military in the year 2020 and 2021. Educational expenditure accounts for 13.7 percent in 2020 and 6.9 percent in 2021, while that of the military in 2020 was measured at 0.9 percent and 1 percent in 2021. This indicates, the fact that there have been more financial support to education than the military, president Weah's administration has been committed to human development like his predecessor, which incorporates female education. However despite this increment, much still has to be done to close the huge gender gap in the educational sector as females are underrepresented. Liberia is ranked 178 of 191 countries and territories, positioning the country in a "low human development category" (HDI, 2022).

Women Empowerment

Violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) are global crises with enduring effects on people's health and welfare as well as the welfare of their families, communities, and society as a whole. Adolescent girls may not have access to violence prevention or response programs because of their age; the majority of supportive interventions are targeted at helping either married adult females or younger children (Ellsberg et al., 2017; Bruce & Hallman, 2008). In the past, there have been armed conflicts in Liberia, the study's location, in which women have endured immense suffering; now, there are still high rates of sexual violence (SV), especially in places where there have been many violent incidents and fatalities during the civil war (Kelly, Colantuoni, Robinson, & Decker, 2018). In this light, the Sirleaf's administration made an intervention to empower young girls with knowledge and the requisite skills that would enable them to be economically stable, to make strategic healthy choices, and as well to stay safe from sexual abuses.

The Liberian Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection launched the Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) project in 2009 with the aim to increase the employment and income of 2,500 young Liberian women by offering training in livelihood and life skills and easing their transition to productive work. This noteworthy initiative by the Sirleaf's administration proposal states:

Smooth the path of adolescent girls to productive employment through job skills training and business development services. The training will focus on technical skills, as well as the integration of life skills training to address some of the crucial barriers to

the development of adolescent girls in Liberia. A program as such is beneficial to the Liberian adolescent girls as they will learn skill that would transcend the conventional female's skills like sewing and cooking (Adoho, Chakravarty, et al. 2014).

According to analysis on EPAG's effects in 2011, EPAG increased employment from 47% to earnings 60% (Knights, 2015). Additionally, a number of empowerment indicators, such as self-esteem, financial availability, and worry about the present and future, showed good results. A UN report claims that Liberia took steps to implement the recommendations of the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women while Sirleaf was president (CEDAW).

For most part, president Weah's administration have continued to remained committed to female empowerment; making tremendous effort to eliminate gender discrimination, equal access to economic empowerment. Prior to his administration, land ownership had been one of the contenting issues for Liberians since the end of the civil conflict, the government of Liberia had given most of the indigenous lands to international concessions, thereby limiting Liberian access to their ancestor lands. After four years of debate about the "Land Rights Act", on September 2018, President George Manneh Weah signed it into Law. This new land law, allows communities or individuals to presenting the authorities with proof, such as oral testimony, maps, and documented agreements with neighbors, enables people to assert ownership of customary land. Before the passage of the land Act, women had no access to ownership of land, were viewed as outsiders in the communities they married into, and were seldom ever permitted to take part in decisions relating to land. Several rural women have recently started exploiting the provision to acquire lands after the Act's adoption to achieve economic independence. Their socioeconomic position has increased as a result, and they are now taking part in local decision-making processes that are related to the management of land and other natural resources.

The Liberian Government with the support of the UN Women in Liberia; women economy empowerment (WEE) unit, in 2019 there was a capacity building program for women with the concentration on agriculture, and gaining access to agricultural tools, and high-quality seeds for investment, which 576 women and 60 men benefited. This ensured they would have enough money to invest in their own Village Savings and Loan Associations and run their respective agribusinesses

(VSLAs). VSLAs are self-sustaining, self-managed organizations of 20 to 30 women in targeted communities that can borrow money from their combined savings. In addition, more than 50 rural women from Liberia's 15 counties, with ages ranging from 25 to 58, now possess the requisite knowledge and abilities to prepare, package, and market rice and cassava. This is the outcome of a technical workshop on the creation of value chains for rice and cassava that was conducted with assistance from the UN Women regional office in Dakar, Senegal. Now that they have gained new knowledge and abilities, these women are actively working as local trainers, imparting them to other rural women who are relying on agriculture for a living. Nine months of reading and numeracy skills training, which included company creation and financial management skills, were attended by 500 young women and teenage girls. Also, 200 young women had the opportunity to take part in vocational skills training such as; cosmetology, and tailoring as well as education on sexual and reproductive health, including managing menstruation hygiene. Rural women farmers who trade agricultural products all over the southeast of Liberia have organized sixteen new VSLA groups, totalling 420 rural women entrepreneurs. These are in accordance with international commitments like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, “the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women” (CEDAW), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as with national priorities outlined in the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2019-2023), the National Gender Policy, the Women Economic Empowerment Unit works to support gender equality and women's empowerment.

Another noteworthy empowerment of adolescent girls by President Weah's administration, is the establishment of “smart city” a vocational training center exclusively for underprivileged girls who are mostly on the streets and been affected by drug addiction. The center aims at rehabilitating those affected girls, provides them with the requisite skills for self-sustenance.

Women Participations in Elections (2005-2016)

As discussed in chapter III, there are now no legal restrictions on women's participation in politics, because they have been able to vote in political elections since 1946 and later run for elective offices. However, the political decision-making landscape hasn't seen much participation by women. Women held 8% of the lower

house's seats in the legislature (5/64) and 19% of the upper house's seats (5/26), respectively, in 1998. During the time of National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), the immediate government before the Sirleaf's administration, women had only 4 out of the 76 accounting for 5% legislative seats in the unicameral National Transitional Legislative Assembly that were selected in 2003.

The NEC's recommendations for the registration of political parties and independent candidates were implemented in the 2005 elections in an effort to increase the participation of women in the political process, indicating each political party's candidates nominated for public elective offices and its governing council should not be less than 30percent of both women and men. However, the electoral law did not include this quota, and the NEC did not impose penalties for failing to meet the standard. As a result, out of the 21 political parties, only one party; Labor Party of Liberia (LPL), met the 30% threshold. The three front runner parties of that election; Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) candidate listing had 21.7%, the Unity Party had 8.8%, while the Liberty Party accounted for 22%. In total, 109 women out of the 802 candidates in 2005 were female, or nearly 14%. These percentages were higher than they were in any subsequent election. Due to this, the 2005 elections saw the highest number of women elected to the Legislature: there were 14% of women elected to the House of Representatives, which has 64 members, and about 17% of women elected to the Senate, which has 30 seats (UNDP, 2021). Henceforth, this election produced the first female president, along with 13 women in the entire legislature of 94members accounting for 14 females out of 105 elected officials.

Table 3: Percentage of Women's Political Participation in 2005 Election

Location	Total Number	Males	Females	Percentage of Females
President	22	20	2	9%
Vice- President	22	21	1	4.5%
Senate	215	194	21	9.7%
Representatives	543	458	85	15.6%
Candidates	802	693	109	13.5%
Elected officials	105	91	14	13%

Register. Voters	1,352,720	676,340	676,360	50%
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Source: NEC Voter's Registration Statistics, 2005.

In 2011, the gender quota guidelines were not followed. Thus 49% of the total voters were women, there was one only woman presidential candidate. For the legislative seats, and both the presidential and vice-presidential posts, women candidates accounted for 158 out of 860 registered candidates. This under representation in the electoral processes was at the result of the failure to implement the gender quota regulation. During this election, nine women were elected at the legislature, including the one elected during the representative by-elections in 2015. In these elections, five (5) of the female incumbent representatives were reelected, and three (3) new female representatives were elected, at the senate only one woman was elected out of fifteen contested seats. In the new legislature, the number of female representatives were eight, and two at the senate. Indicating that the proportion of female lawmakers has decreased from 16% in 2006 to less than 10% in 2012 and 11% from 2014 to 2017.

Table 4: Percentage of Women's Political Participation in 2011 Elections

Location	Total Number	Males	Females	Percentage of Females
President	16	15	1	6%
Vice- President	16	15	1	6%
Senate	248	238	10	4%
Representatives	580	450	130	22%
Candidates	860	702	158	18.3%
Elected officials	90	82	8	9%
Register. Voters	1,798,930	920,448	878,482	49%

Source: NEC Voter's Registration Statistics, 2011

Women Participations in Elections (2017-2022)

In 2014 the new electoral law was amended, which talked about the phrase "endeavor to ensure" however there was not definite meaning to what constitutes

endeavoring to ensure, nether do any accountability thereof (Elections Law, 2014). During 2017 Representative and Presidential elections, of the 24 registered political parties or coalitions, there was only one that met up with the gender quota of 30% representation on candidate listing; the “Liberia Restoration Party,” also nominated the lone female presidential candidate. The three largest parties or coalitions did not come close, with the Coalition for Democratic Change having 11.5% of the gender quota, Unity Party accounting for 17%, and the Liberty Party at 10% (UNDP, 2020).

During the presidential and representative elections in 2017, women remained fully engaged as 2011 general elections. In these elections, women constituted 49% of the total eligible voters, the females accounted for 16% of the candidature. Despite this huge engagement with the political process, the number of representatives remains the same with 9 women 64 men, and in the Senate, there are 2 women and 28 men, along with a female Vice-president. Placing the total number of female legislators at 12.3, which fell in the year 2021 and is now under 11%. Therefore, the total number of females elected in these elections is 10 with the additional two women in the senate.

Table 5: Percentage of Women's Political Participation in 2017 Election

Location	Total Number	Males	Females	Percentage of Females
President	20	19	1	5%
Vice- President	20	14	6	30%
Senate	NA			
Representatives	984	828	156	15.8%
Candidates	1024	861	163	16%
Elected officials	705	696	10	1.4%
Register. Voters	2,183,683	1,120,950	1,062,733	49%

Source: NEC Voter's Registration Statistics, 2017.

Policies to Enhance Gender Equality

The Organic law of Liberia, article 5 creates necessities for national unity into one polity, thus to enact laws that would encourage the participation of all of its citizenry in the political system. This lay the legal framework for policies that address inequalities. On this note, one of the noteworthy policy during madam Sirleaf's regime was the Liberian government, women's NGO and civil society groups, religious groups, youth and community-based organizations, public and commercial institutions participated in the multi-dimensional strategy group that formulated the National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2009. This strategy, which calls for an interdisciplinary effort and approach for a gender policy, that is crucial to ensuring Liberian stability. The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Madame Vabah K. Gayflor, talked of the significance of the NGP and the part it plays in the growth and stability of Liberia:

The Government of Liberia is strongly committed to gender equality as a means of maintaining peace, reducing poverty, enhancing justice, and promoting development in the country. It is the furtherance of this commitment, that a National Gender Policy was developed in 2009 through a wide consultative process with inputs from various stakeholders. The policy recommends that gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting should be adopted as a development approach and shall inform the economic reform agenda, medium and long-term development planning, value reorientation, social transformation, and other development initiatives of government (MoGD, 2009, p. 9)

The NGP intends to promote gender responsive systems so that both women and men can participate in the public sphere and get benefits from development initiatives on an equal basis, as well as to empower Liberian women and girls for sustainable and equitable development (Knights, 2015). This policy is a blatant example of Sirleaf's administration's priorities. She has worked on strategies and tools to advance gender equality, as promised. These measures are also top objectives because preparations for them started soon after Sirleaf was elected president.

As mentioned in chapter II, women play important roles in the economic development of Liberia specifically in the agriculture sector, yet still, they remain in a disadvantage position of receiving its substantial benefits. Women didn't have a protected ownership to the lands on which they worked. The separation of the labor market, and domestic roles women play limited their opportunities for economic empowerment. To mitigate these gender imbalances, the NGP became the top priority. However, some progresses were being made to close the gender gap in

political participation during the Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's administration in some areas, such as the electoral law. The Liberian Senate overwhelmingly agreed in March 2013 to uphold the 2011 Election Reform Legislation, which provides in section 4.5 (1A): *“In submitting to the Commission, a list of candidates for elective office, a political party or coalition should endeavor to ensure that the governing body and its list of candidates should have no less than 30 percent of its members from each gender.”* Reason for this policy as explained under (1B) of the electoral law, *“Is to support the move to gender equity in the representation of both genders in the governance of political parties and in the list of candidates they present for every election”* (Elections Law, 2014). There have been several national policies adopted by Sirleaf's administration in an effort to addressing various aspects of women's political participation and their under-representation in Liberia.

In 2018, during the administration of President George Manneh Weah, there was adoption made affirming the action policy and legislation for women's political participation of the National Gender Policy (NGP), which demand promoting gender parity at all level governance. Additionally, agenda of the national government under the theme *“Pro-Poor for Prosperity and Development (PAPD),”* under its first pillar: *“Power to the People”* is to increase the number of women who participate in politics at the national and municipal levels in order to meet the target of 30% by 2023. Another significant policy achievement that deserves commendation is the amendment of some sections of the 1986 electoral law, which included section that demands all political parties and coalitions to have no less than 30% of either gender for political representations and on their governing councils. However it failed on enforcement, and punishment of those who did not adhere to the 30% gender quota. In February 2022 during the administration of Ambassador Weah, the amended version of section 4.5 was passed by the House of Representatives, clearly stipulating the means of enforcement and punishment thereof- *“the National Elections Commission can reject candidate listings that do not meet the 30% quota.”* This would now place political parties, and coalitions in a situation with no option, but to adhere to the electoral law that seeks to narrow the gender inequality gap in the political system of Liberia. Liberia has ratified a number of regional and international legal frameworks to advance women's political and civic rights at the local and national levels, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women (The Maputo Protocol). Liberia is expected to put into practice the AU's 50/50 gender parity guideline as an AU member. It is also anticipated that Liberia would execute the Women and Elections Strategy Framework and Action Plan as an ECOWAS member, which involves passing progressive election legislation, as well as the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. In an effort to obtain "Sustainable Development Goal 5" that promotes equality among genders and social economic development, national legislature of Liberia in 2019 passed into law the domestic violence bill that seeks to protect vulnerable and also specified corrective measures for perpetrators of the Law. Henceforth, the government of Liberia have established sex offender registry and allocated 2 million dollars in 2020 (UNPRESS, 2020).

Key Findings

Both Presidents Sirleaf and Weah had diverse priorities as relate to their administrative agenda, and the cogent need of the country at the time of their service varies. Nevertheless, the both leaders have unpretentious interest about the empowerment of women and gender equality in the public sphere of Liberia. While Madam Sirleaf was undoubtedly more outspoken in her support for women's rights, she did not achieve any outcomes that would suggest she gave gender-centered policy a higher priority than President George Manneh Weah. Regarding the prioritization of gender-centered policies, both Presidents performed on a par, if not at the same level, and as well the institutional steps towards closing the huge gender gap. Both leaders remained in office and continue to commit to gender equality and women empowerment; acknowledging that much still have to be done to track down on gender imbalances in the political system of Liberia, if the country is to have sustainable development. Considering the research questions of this thesis in chapter one:

1. What were the gains made during Madam Sirleaf's administration in the fight against gender inequality in the political system of Liberia (2006 to 2017)?

2. Are those gains being sustained under Ambassador George Manneh Weah's administration (2018 to 2022)?

To answer these questions, this research explored five cardinal areas: Appointments, Education, Empowerment, Participation in Elections, and Policies to Enhance Gender Equality. In view of this, the following are key findings of this thesis:

Findings for Research Question I

- I. In her effort to narrow down the Gender Inequality gap in the political system of Liberia, President Sirleaf appointed considerable number of women to occupied prominent positions in government during her administration to increase women political participation. Women were appointments to all sectors of the public sphere as directors, and cabinet Ministers. Among the many positions women served, there were five Ministry where women served as Cabinet Ministers; including the Ministry of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Commerce, as well as Gender, children and Social Protection Ministry. Women also serve as supreme courts Justices.
- II. As lack of education, and illiteracy among the women population being one of the cardinal causes of Gender Inequality in the political system of Liberia, education of women and girls was one of Madam Sirleaf's priorities. During her administration, the Liberian Education Trust (LET) was established to address the educational requirements of the Liberia women and girls, through formal education. Providing them over five thousands scholarships, which has contributed immensely to growth of the literacy rate of women and girls in Liberia, which her administration took from 20percent to 34percent (Knights, 2015).
- III. During the administration of Madam Sirleaf, intervention was made by the Liberian's government through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, to empower young girls with the requisite skills, and knowledge that would enable them to be economically stable, to make strategic healthy choices, and as well to stay safe from sexual abuses, when the Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) project was launched in 2009. The EPAG aimed at increasing the employment and income of 2,500

young Liberian women by offering training in livelihood and life skills and easing their transition to productive work. With this intervention by the EPAG, the employment rate of female increases from 47% to 60% in 2011 (Knights, 2015).

- IV. Additionally, a number of empowerment indicators, such as self-esteem, financial availability, and worry about the present and future, showed good results. A UN report claims that Liberia took steps to implement the recommendations of Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) while Sirleaf was president.
- V. The National Gender Policy (NGP) was formulated in 2009 during the administration of Madam Sirleaf, which provided the legal framework for equal participation of every citizen in the political system of Liberia; to enact equal participation laws base on gender. This policy is one of the strategic tools to promoting gender equality in the public sphere of Liberia.
- VI. In 2013, the electoral reform bill in 2011 was pass in to law by the legislature. This Gender Quota states in section 4.5 (1A), and (1B) respectively that *“In submitting to the Commission, a list of candidates for elective office, a political party or coalition should endeavor to ensure that the governing body and its list of candidates should have no less than 30 percent of its members from each gender”* and *“Is to support the move to gender equity in the representation of both genders in the governance of political parties and in the list of candidates they present for every election”* (Elections Law, 2014). However, the law did not mention specific punishment against violators at the time.

Findings for Research Question II

- I. Many of the institutional goals of President Weah administration were likely a replicate of former President Sirleaf’s administration in relation to Gender Equality. Weah’s administration appointed women in top decision-making positions in the public sphere like Madam Sirleaf did. Among his many

appointment of females, President Weah appointed a sitting Supreme Court Justice to serve as Chief Justice in a dominant male Supreme Court.

- II. One of the greatest achievements of President Weah in the fight against Gender Inequality, has been girls' education. Of 2018, the literacy rate of female from ages 15 and above is measured at 34.1percent, a marginal increment of percentage in which Madam Sirleaf left it. Since his ascendancy to the presidency in 2018, the educational expenditure has increased. Comparing expenditure for education, and the military from 2020 to 2021, the financial support to education has being more, accounting for 13.7percent and 6.9percent respectively of the national budget, while that of the military stands at 0.9percent and 1percent. This indicates the Weah's administration commitment to human capacity development, which incorporates the education of females.
- III. On September 2018, President Weah signed into law the Land Right Act of Liberia. This Law alleviates all the barriers faced by Liberian to have access to their ancestor lands. Therefore enabling individuals, without gender barrier that have been in place before the enactment of the law, to reclaim their ancestor's lands, and customary lands through presentation of documentary proofs of ownership, or by oral testament from neighbors. This has contributed to the empowerment of women through land ownership.
- IV. The Liberian Government with the support of the United Nation Women in Liberia; women economy empowerment (WEE) unit, in 2019 there was a capacity building program for women with the concentration on agriculture, and gaining access to agricultural tools, and high-quality seeds for investment, which 576 women and 60 men benefited. This ensured they would have enough money to invest in their own Village Savings and Loan Associations, and also be able to transmit the knowledge gained to other young women by training.
- V. Another noteworthy empowerment of adolescent girls by President Weah's administration, is the establishment of "smart city" a vocational training center exclusively for underprivileged girls who mostly live in street corners

around the country, and been affected by drug addiction. The center aims at rehabilitating those affected girls, provides them with the requisite skills for self-sustenance.

- VI. The amended vision of the electoral law section 4.5 (A1) was enacted into law in 2022, clearly mentioning the punishment of the previous law that called for not less than 30percent political participation of all gender from political parties, but failed to indicated punishment for violators. This amended vision states “*the National Elections Commission can reject candidate listings that do not meet the 30% quota.*” This would now coerce political parties, and coalitions to abide by the electoral law that seeks to narrow the gender inequality gap in the Liberia’s political system.
- VII. Another noteworthy policy that was enacted into law to promote gender equality is Domestic Violence Bill”, which seeks to protect the vulnerable, by specifying corrective measures for perpetrators of the Law. Henceforth, the government of Liberia have established sex offender registry and allocated 2 million dollars in 2020 (UNPRESS, 2020).

Discussions

From the findings of this Research, state institutions in Liberia remain largely male dominated. On the global sphere, of 191 countries, Liberia is at 178th position of countries with gender inequality (HDI, 2022), and for countries with higher numbers of women in parliament, out of 185, Liberia is the 163rd (UNDP, 2022). Women account for just 11% of the 103 seats at the national Legislature of Liberia, as of 2021. These statistics indicate under-representation of women and girls, given that they account for 47.3% of the country’s population per census conducted in 2008. Women between the ages of 20-24 who are married, or in a committed intimate partnership do so before age 18, which accounts for 35.9 percent of women population. This is a major factor affecting women equal political participation, and also affect their employment in Liberia, which can’t go unnoticed. Being married comes with lot of commitments and responsibilities that mostly affect the women, especially when that family is blessed with children. In this light, women spent more times on unpaid care and domestic works. The proportion of time spent on unpaid care and domestic works is measured at 6.7 percent for women and girls aged 15+

compared to 2.6 percent spent by men as of 2021. According to the World Bank Development Index, the employment rate of women of the total labor force is recorded at 47.4 percent. Indicating, there are more men in employment than women, which impedes the financial strength of women to compete with men in the public sphere.

This research also uncovered that women play a marginal role when it comes to education. The literacy rate shows that, the proportion of women to men who can read and write, and understand common daily activities from ages 15 and above is at 34 percent. While men in the same category account for 63 percent. These are factors that impede women's equal political participation in the national polity of Liberia. In order to be successful in narrowing down the gender inequality gap in the political system of Liberia, these fundamental barriers must be fully addressed.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

December 24, 1989 marked the beginning of the fourteen years civil war in Liberia, the war which affected every fabric of the political system of Liberia. Approximately, after the death of 250,000 Liberian citizens because of the civil war that resulted to the rape and mutilation of women, it came to an end in 2003 through the instrumentality of the Accra Peace Agreement, which was signed by warring factions (Dahir, 2018), and the involvement of Liberian women in the peace-making processes through continual nonviolence protests, pressuring the warring factions to settle for peace under the banner “Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace” headed by Madame Leymah Gbowee. The Accra Peace Agreement resulted to forming a National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) that incorporated all warring factions, headed by Mr Charles G. Bryant, a business man. The NTGL took the country to election in 2005.

The issue of Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia has been practical like in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Liberia is a patriarchy society, since its independence in 1847, the country has been predominantly governed by men. The country has had twenty-four elected presidents most of whom are men, as matter of fact, it was just in 2005 post war election Liberia produced her first democratically elected female president (Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) since its founding. Nevertheless, Gender Inequality remains pervasive in every spectrum of the public sphere of Liberia, as women continue to be under-represented. Among many others sectors in the political system of Liberia, at the parliament women constitute only 11percent of 103 parliamentarians. The political institutions of Liberia remained predominated by men. During the most recent presidential and representative elections held in 2017, of the twenty political parties that participated, only one was headed by a woman. These elections recorded the total number of 1024 candidates for elective offices out of which women accounted for only 163 candidates, including one woman out of 20 presidential candidates. This indicates the underrepresentation of women at the level of political parties in Liberia, thus there have being gender quota law that makes it mandatory on political parties to submit a list, not less than 30 percent of each gender as their candidates to the National

Election Commission (NEC), and their governing council must constitute not less than the 30percent representation of each gender.

Women in Liberia have served in several top decision-making positions even before Madame Sirleaf historic election in 2005. These women paved the way for women political participation by motivating the young generation of women. However, the presidency of Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf gave the women of Liberia the hope to fully participate in the political system of Liberia during her administration from 2006 to 2017, and then democratically turned power to Ambassador Weah in 2018. She appointed women to top government positions such as Cabinet Ministers, Justices at the Supreme Court, and many others as junior Ministers, and Directors of government's agencies. In 2018, Ambassador George Manneh Weah became president, after a peaceful transfer of power from Madame Sirleaf; the country's first democratically elected female president. His administration from 2018 to 2022, empowered many women. Women were involved hugely in the political system of Liberia as his Vice-President is a woman, upon the writing of this thesis.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis was to assess the gains made against Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia, covering 2006 through 2022 under the administrations of Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Ambassador George Manneh Weah as president. For better assessment of this aim, taking into account of the research questions as mentioned in chapter IV, the study was concentrated in specific areas of empowerment that have the potential to close the huge Gender Inequality gap in the Political System of Liberia: Education and Literacy programs, Presidential Appointment, Women Participation in Elections, Women Empowerment, and Policies enacted to enhance Gender Equality in the Political System of Liberia. The both leaders worked tremendously hard to ensure women empowerment, and Gender Equality in the political system of Liberia. However, despite steps taken forward by the administrations of both Leaders to narrow down Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia, women remain underrepresented in the public sphere of Liberia. They continue to play marginal roles when it comes to national decision making, as women account for just 11 percent of parliamentarian, and public institutions are still being dominated by men. This instant case of Liberia highlights the issue of gender inequality in many developing democracies in Africa.

Recommendations

- Since one of the surest way for political participation is through political parties, in a developing country such as Liberia, there should be provision of direct public funding to political institutions seeking to promote gender equality among their candidates. Political parties that meet the electoral gender quota, should benefit from additional financial advantages such as; waiver of 50 percent of candidate registration fees to National Election Commission. This would greatly encourage political parties to adhere to the 30% electoral gender quota.
- Economic Empowerment for Women. Economic policy that would support the female farmers as they continue to lag behind their male counterparts. Making it easier to participate in works that are dominated by men, such as mining, forestry, infrastructural development, as well having additional advantages to commercial financing programs without bottle neck. Being economically empowered, would make women independent and attracted to political parties.
- There should be a national campaign, educating the population about the risk of limiting women to domestic chores. Women constitute about 50 percent of the country's population, excluding them from the decision making of the country, and other forms of empowerment, and creating obstacles that hinder their political participation would only affect the overall growth of the country. Therefore the traditional perception of gender roles in the Liberian society much be changed.
- Presidential Appointment. There is a need for gender sensitive appointment to top governmental positions, there should be a policies enacted to support this quest. Though there have been some level of improvement against gender inequality in the political system of Liberia through presidential appointment, there is no policy that makes gender sensitivity appointment mandatory to the national government. Such a policy would place leaders in the best position to encourage competent women in their cycle.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Turnitin Similarity Report

Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia: An Assessment of Presidential Administrations from (2005 to 2022)

by Dauda Sekou Bility

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Appendix B

Ethics Committee Approval



17.05.2023

Dear Dauda Sekou Bility

Your project "Gender Inequality in the Political System of Liberia: An Assessment of Presidential Administrations (2005 to 2022)" has been evaluated. Since only secondary data will be used the project does not need to go through the ethics committee. You can start your research on the condition that you will use only secondary data.



Prof. Dr. Aşkın KİRAZ

The Coordinator of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee