Editorial
Gender Perspectives: Theory and Analysis

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Gender Perspectives: Theory and Analysis, collectively assist in combining theoretical and applied scholarship that focuses on gender-based differences in both status and power, and how these shape the needs, interests and priorities of women and men in society. This is critical, not only in theoretical analyses, but also in the policy context (within the socio-economic and political spheres) where gender perspectives are key in ensuring that the special needs, interests and concerns of women and men are considered as an integral dimension whenever plans, policies, programmes, and projects are designed, implemented, monitored, evaluated and reviewed such that they benefit both men and women with due consideration for the principles of equality and equity.

In addition, gender perspectives, are more clearly articulated when grounded on solid gender analysis and appropriate gender theories. It is when systematic methodologies and appropriate gender theories are utilized to facilitate a better understanding of the relations between men and women, their struggles and constraints, their access to resources as well as the relationship between gender and culture, class, status, ethnicity, race, and other variables, that gender perspectives are enriched and become informative in both aiding policy and building new knowledge. Gender theory, therefore, assists in explaining, predicting, and understanding gender as a concept and phenomenon, as well as challenging the existing 'thinking' around gender, gender relations and gender dynamics.

Further, the thematic focuses of 'gender perspectives: theory and analysis', present opportunities for the scholarship to engage in both qualitative and quantitative disciplinary approaches, and evidence-based research that engage current policy and theoretical debates on gender perspectives, gender

mainstreaming, gender aspects of policy, politics, economics, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics.

In the next section, we provide a brief overview of the articles in this issue of *Alter*nation.

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In **'Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in the African Continental Free Trade Area: Lessons from SADC'**, *Clayton Hazvinei Vhumbunu* engages the topic and prospective dynamics of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement, which has been signed by 54 out of the 55 African countries. It seeks to create a single continental market for goods and services and facilitate the free movement of people on the continent, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of intra-African trade and boosting intra-African trade. The agreement will generate employment, and improve the welfare of mostly young men and women on the continent. However, whilst the Agreement Establishing the AfCFTA, under Article 3(e), emphasizes that one of the general objectives of the AfCFTA is to promote gender equality, experiences in some African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) FTAs have proven that gender and gender equality have not been adequately mainstreamed and implemented in Free Trade Areas, which has resulted in gender inequalities in international trade and commerce. As a result, the majority of women have been left marginalized in trade and are faced with serious challenges in accessing opportunities created by regional trade agreements. In this context, this article examines the potential of the AfCFTA agreement to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in Africa, given the fact that the empowerment of women is a critical component of gender equality. Using secondary data sources, it draws from experiences of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on mainstreaming gender in regional trade agreements in order to proffer recommendations for the AfCFTA. The concepts of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and trade liberalization are utilized for conceptual analysis. Recommendations of the research are key in presenting possible options for implementing gender-sensitive measures and strategic interventions that address the differentiated implications of the AfCFTA on both men and women, such that the AfCFTA delivers more transformative, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development in Africa.

Aiming to promote gender equality in the corporate environment, **'Women's Participation and the Sustainability of Listed Commercial Banks in Nigeria'**, by *Solomon Ibrahim Audu,* examines the participation of women in the leadership and workforce of listed commercial banks in Nigeria and how their participation in the business process of these organizations affect the business organization's sustainability. The variables were x-rayed through the theoretical lens of the glass ceiling theory and the critical mass theory. The study employed a quantitative research method, and used an ex post-facto research design. The study population consisted of the 12 listed commercial banks in Nigeria out of which a sample of the 7 listed commercial banks were purposively selected. Secondary data were obtained from the audited annual reports from the sample of 7 listed commercial banks used in this study which covered a time frame from 2010 to 2019. The data were analysed using a multiple regression model to examine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The result revealed that women's participation in the activities of the listed commercial banks has a moderate positive effect on the profitability and asset growth of the listed commercial banks. The study further revealed that women's participation leads to an increase in the profitability and asset growth of the listed commercial banks in Nigeria. In conclusion, it was deduced that the glass ceiling effect was valid in the case of the listed commercial banks in Nigeria. It is recommended that listed commercial banks in Nigeria develop and promote policies that support the participation of women in business processes.

A lingua franca is a common language used by people whose native languages differ from each other. In Sierra Leone, Krio is the lingua franca. The Krio language embodies a lot of idiomatic expressions that do not mean exactly what the words say but have a deeper or secret meaning. They are used to amplify a message and they add a uniqueness to the Krio language. Some of these idiomatic expressions, however, have negative connotations, such as expressions that perpetuate forms of sexism towards women. This in turn promotes discrimination, objectification, devaluation and violation of women. In **'Sexism and Language: An Analysis of Sexist Idiomatic Expressions in Sierra Leone's Lingua Franca'**, *Claudine Hingston* focuses her research on such expressions. The article calls attention to and analyses these idiomatic expressions that violate the rights and dignity of women in Sierra Leone. It further advocates a societal rethink of such expressions and their subsequent modification or disuse. The article takes a stance that, whilst idiomatic

expressions enrich the Krio language, those that promote sexism against women should be challenged. Drawing from textual sources and from the researcher's knowledge and experience, this qualitative study employs a feminist standpoint and motivates for a shift towards the use of non-sexist and gender friendly language usage in Sierra Leone.

Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality and continues to be a notable human rights violation within all societies. Gender-based violence is violence directed against persons because of their gender. Both women and men experience gender-based violence, but most victims are women and girls. Nigerian women and girls have witnessed incessant violence attacks related to gender-based violence during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. In **'Gender-based Violence: Its Impact on Women and Girls during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Lagos State, Nigeria'**, *Ezeji Chiji Longinus* focuses on gender violence targeted against women and girls in Lagos, Nigeria. The article is based on an ecological approach to gender-based violence, which argues that no one factor alone causes violence but rather that many factors combine to raise the likelihood that a particular man in a particular setting acts violently towards a woman. The study adopted a qualitative methodology. An interview technique was used for data collection. Sixty-five participants were purposively selected for the interview due to their vast knowledge on the topic under study. Findings reveal that domestic violence hinders full inclusion and participation of women in social life. Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which leads to domination over and discrimination against women by men. Perpetrators of violence are a minority group of mentally disturbed men. While poverty or idleness leads to attacks on and abuse of women, violence against women are caused by drug and alcohol abuse. Therefore, it recommends capacity building and partnership with the law enforcement agencies to provide services to the victims and survivors of gender-based violence. Hitherto, the court and criminal justices' systems should be strengthened in addressing gender-related, and especially sexual violence.

Debates about how gender differences and the ideology of patriarchy, have relegated some women in many developing societies to domestic, unpaid roles (mothers, homemakers, and nurturers) are not new. Such socio-culturally defined roles restrict women's effective participation in wider socio-economic developmental activities. However, thinking in terms of development, the 'tide' seems to be turning now. Women now, at least in theory, play a central

role in human development plans and programmes portrayed by their bene-factors (governmental and non-governmental agencies) as gender-sensitive, inclusive, and sustainable. So, in **'Revisiting and Rethinking the Agency of Women in Sustain-able Rural Development in the Eastern Cape, South Africa'** *Thokozani Patience Moyo* focuses on the authenticity of claims of women's inclusivity, full participation, and sustainability made by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) regarding community development programmes funded and supported by them (NGOs) in the Raymond Mhlaba and Ngqushwa Local Municipalities in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. A three-year, multi-method study of NGO-funded sustainable rural develop-ment projects in selected communities in the region found that women played pivotal roles in the design, implementation, and sustenance of the selected projects, thus making important contributions to food security in the house-holds of project members. The deep level of female involvement in the projects displays a robust testimony of the sponsors' claims of inclusivity. However, the study found that the supported projects epitomised what is termed a 'transformation paradox', as they are regarded by certain segments of the study communities as 'women's jobs' – that is, they are projects in which men do not, for cultural reasons, ordinarily participate. Besides, the sustainability question remains debatable, as some of the women participants are still economically dependent on welfare grants provided by the state, despite their full involvement in the projects.

In 1954, the United Nations (UN) ratified a Convention for the protection of stateless persons. Subsequently, in 1961, another Convention aimed at reducing statelessness in all countries was ratified. In his, '**An Exploration of Gender and Statelessness in Zimbabwe's New Dispen-sation: Opportunities and Problems,** *Norman Chivasa* addresses the question of whether and under what conditions statelessness has been created and the extent to which gender dynamics have been played out through citizenship laws in Zimbabwe. Informed by the moral responsibility theory, the article argues that in fulfilling its moral duties, the Zimbabwean state took some action without considering the wider consequences of plunging citizens and people of foreign ancestry, in particular Malawians and Mozambicans, into statelessness. The analysis shows that citizenship laws in Zimbabwe have historically been politicized against people of foreign ancestry, favouring masculinity and discriminating against women. The article concludes that collaboration and coordination between government and various stakeholders

are important aspects to be considered if politicized and gender discriminatory citizenship laws are to be done away with in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has changed social, economic and health dynamics. In '**Frontline Women Healthcare Workers: The COVID-19 Global Pandemic '**, *Mariam Seedat-Khan, Oluwatobi Joseph Alabi, Khalida Akbar and Aradhana Ramnund-Mansingh* studies the impact of the pandemic on gender, race, class and geography, with women, frontline healthcare workers (HCW) facing an intense burden in managing the COVID-19 virus. Through a systematic review of literature on HCW experiences, they bring to the fore the multiple and intersectional burdens that HCW face. The domestic role of HCW is significant for both nucleus and extended families. The increased risk of exposure is a concern, affirming that women face a greater risk of exposure. The increased vulnerability relates to the ill-fit of personal protective equipment (PPE). Physical exhaustion, mental stress, extended shifts, fear of transmission, and regulation of patient access to medical care pose complex challenges. The global north HCWs reflected noticeable confidence in patient care associated with adequate resources and medical-grade PPE. The global south HCW faced higher exposure levels, with inadequate care resources and medical-grade PPE. This study outlines critical responsibilities that highlight social and psychological support with consideration for the safety and wellbeing of women HCWs. A secondary desktop research approach was adopted to present a gendered analysis of COVID-19 patient-care experiences. The ethical requirement of research is preserved. The clinical model amalgamates the gendered perspective that the healthcare sector reinforces in the interest of gender equity in patient-care delivery. The data span from January 2020-March 2021. We reveal the significance of prioritising women's experiences burdened with an increasing workload.

In recent times, there has been an increasing awareness of the need to empower women to improve their socio-economic status, cope with their economic situations, and contribute effectively to economic development. The contribution of women to economic development is germane and this necessitates the incorporation of gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5). With that in mind, access to information is imperative to empower women in this digital era. However, there are perceptions, beliefs, and challenges about the use of information technology tools for women's information accessibility; hence there is gender inequality in information

accessibility. In their study, **'Information Accessibility in the Digital Age: Empowering Women for Poverty Eradication'** *Ajayi, Taiwo Bosede, Stanley Ehiane and Mosud Y. Olumoye*, examined how women should be empowered in a manner that enables them to have access to information in the digital age, and the challenges faced in accessing information for economic development. A qualitative approach was used for the study. A review of relevant literature was done to examine how Nigerian women are empowered to have access to accurate and timely information. The study found that initiatives like Information Communication Technology (ICT) training skills, education, and financial support are strategically useful for the empowerment of women, but this is still at an undesirably low rate. The study concludes by suggesting that policymakers ensure that information be provided for women in the format that it will be easy for them to access, younger women should be encouraged to be literate, and organisations should collaborate with library professionals who are trained to disseminate information to a diverse population of women so that they may access the information they need.

In 2020, *Ujjwala Gupta, Mariam Seedat-Khan and Aradhana Ramnund-Mansingh* conducted research for the article, '**Tribal Fertility Behaviour: The Case of Jharkhand, India'**, in three districts in Jharkhand, India. They argue that researchers have failed to capitalize on developing tribal demographic scholarship in India. The absence of connecting fertility to fundamentally embedded cultural, interpersonal, and familial features is problematic. The research underscores sociocultural, familial, circumstantial socialized behaviour and how generational cultural practices determine fertility as a demographic outcome. The study is based on the theoretical framework of children's original value, reflecting upon the complexity of the social system that functions behind couples' fertility intentions in a family system. The study adopts a mixed methodology to examine the relationship between the value of children and fertility plans of couples within a familial, cultural, and tribal context. The study appraises an extensive review of available secondary data in addition empirical research. A multistage sampling method was adopted to identify 180 married couples between the ages of 13 and 49. The data were collected via semi-structured interviews. This framework facilitated an understanding of the lived experiences and determining factors associated with fertility plans. The study has identified a gradual decline in fertility levels, indicating families opting to reduce the number of children in their families – indicated ratios include 5:4 and 5:3. The impetus is attributed to a set of

intersecting factors, including gendered preference and the modifications of cultural and religious influence.

In **'The Boko Haram Conflict Dynamics and Gender-Based Violence in The Lake Chad Region'**, *Stanley O. Ehiane, Ayuba Caleb and Gabi Mkhize*, examined Boko Haram's activities and gender-based violence in the Lake Chad Basin. The conflict typified by the Boko Haram insurgency against regional authorities has been characterised by violent attacks against the civilian population, particularly women. The article's key objective is to establish the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Lake Chad area. This goal is informed by the allegation that the conflict has exposed women to various kinds of gender-related violence, including rape, kidnapping, and forced marriages. The article gives a snapshot of the origins, ideology, and conflict dynamics. The study applies 'hegemonic masculinity theory', as a framework for analysing and explaining the GBV in the region. The manuscript depended on the content analysis of historical and contemporary literary materials in the humanities and social science traditions to articulate its perspectives. It recommends the contextualisation of relevant conventions that seek women's protection in the Lake Chad conflict. It is expected that this might prompt the region's governments to be more proactive in protecting vulnerable groups and the victims of GBV.

Flooding is a recurrent problem affecting countries across the globe, causing suffering to people and destroying livelihoods and homes in its wake. The disastrous effects have led to the implementation of several disaster mitigation strategies aimed at curbing flood-induced socio-economic losses. Early warning systems are extensively regarded as a critical component to disaster risk reduction initiatives, significantly reducing the loss of lives and property by issuing early warnings to communities at risk, allowing adequate lead-time for evacuation. Notwithstanding its documented success stories, the efficiency of early warning systems is often undermined by the high flood-induced mortality rates of women, demonstrating a glaring gender gap. This is an indication that gender dimensions are at play beforehand, throughout, and in the aftermath of flood disasters. In **'Leaving No-one Behind': Mainstreaming Gender in Flood Early Warning Systems',** *Takunda Mathathu and Mariam Seedat-Khan* use the early warning system model to evaluate the deliberation of gender in warning dissemination channels. Disaster risk mitigation initiatives that maintain a gender-blind approach intensify the vulnerability of women and fortify gender imbalances. We utilize desktop

analysis and employ intersectionality theory to emphasize the lived expe-riences of rural women's accessibility to early warning systems. Rural women's participation in early warning initiatives is likely to be obstructed by their prescribed gender roles, patriarchal norms, and the lack of ownership of prevailing resources to access early warning information. Consequently, the integration of a gender perspective will not only improve the effectiveness of early warning systems but will similarly go a long way towards saving the lives of women, particularly those in rural areas.

Civic space constitutes the substratum for women to be able to organise, communicate and participate in democratic processes, including claiming their rights as well as influencing the trajectory of the political and socio-economic structures around them. With the proliferation of the recognition and participation of women in political processes, their attempts to occupy the civic space have also intensified. While the civic space is theoretically open for women's civic participation, structural violence and cyber-violence have militated against women's civic space visibility. This has culminated in the shrinking of the civic space for women's articulation of political and socio-economic issues, especially in the African context. Against this backdrop, *Torque Mude, Peter Makaye, Tafadzwa Maramura and Gabriella Nguluwe***,** in **'Women and the Civic Space in Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe: Constraints and Counter-constraints',** aims to examine the constraints women in Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe experience in operating in these spaces and the strategies they deploy to deal with these constrictions. Having said this, the paper intends to examine the way physical, cyber, and structural violence against Namibian, South African and Zimbabwean women manifest and affect their participation in civic spaces. It also explores the strategies deployed by women to counter the various forms of violence and other stumbling blocks inherent in the civic space. Data for this paper were generated from both primary and secondary sources and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

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