

# Feminism and its impact on women's lives in Zambia

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## ABSTRACT

After a long time of suffering and discrimination, women have found recognition in society. Women now play important roles such as politician, socialist and economist. Feminism has generated an on-going debate world over as it came to solve women's problems and to put an end to the injustice suffered by women. It was a voice in times when they were not able to speak or to express their feelings and wishes. Feminism analyses the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using that knowledge to better their lives. Thus, it questions and addresses the differences between men and women, such as how race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and age; intersect with gender. Whether feminism is considered a social movement or a political movement, it is said to specifically focus on women's experiences in their daily life which they are subjected to in society. The advent of feminism granted women rights hence, the various achievements. However, despite these achievements, women have continued to suffer discrimination and injustice compared to men. The central objective of this paper was to examine the impact feminism has had on the lives of women in Zambia. The study relied on secondary data from various sources and studies done on women in Zambia. The paper surveys the birth of feminism, its various types and thereafter examines ways it has been helpful in women's battle for equal rights. The findings show that feminism has had both positive and negative impacts on the lives of women and that despite various efforts to bring about equality between men and women, there still exists discrimination of women especially in decision making. Thus, the paper recommends that more should be done to stop the glass ceiling and stop the discrimination suffered by women especially in decision making.

**Keywords:** Feminism, women's movement, gender equality.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of the 21st century, coupled in part with some of the progress made by the feminist movement, there has been an accelerated emphasis aimed at achieving gender equality in all spheres of everyday life. In most societies, the advancements in women's empowerment included women having to be constitutionally recognized as equal members of society to their male counterparts, giving women equal access to health care, as well as affording them the right to participate and vote in elections. Women constitute slightly more than half of the world population. Their roles in the social, political and economic development of societies is also more than half compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. After a long time of suffering and

discrimination, women have found limited recognition in society. They have tried to look for their rights by all means and now play important roles such as politician, socialist and economist. Women are an important part in the balance of power in the societies all over the world. Thanks to feminism, which helped them to be partners in all the domains of society because it reveals the social epistemologies shared and resisted within and across our communities that perpetuate gender injustices by concealing them (Ackerly, 2018).

Feminism is a movement to struggle for the equal social, political, economic and legal rights for women as men. In Zambia, most women are involved in raising voices for the rights of women. In essence, feminists seek to challenge the existing social systems that they

regard as responsible for the oppression and exploitation of women and other marginalised groups. Feminism concerns itself with autonomy, which refers to that which allows all persons regardless of gender, class, race, religion and sexual orientation to become fully self-actualised beings and to create a cherished community in which they can live together, realising their dreams, especially those of freedom and justice, giving effect to the truth that all humans were created equal (Heckman 2015).

### **Feminism in perspective**

The term feminism has a long history; it represents women's problems and suffering in addition to their dreams in equal opportunities in society controlled by men, that is his power, rules, wishes and order. Simone De Beauvoir (1908-1986) reported that Christina De Pisan (1364-1430) was the first woman who 'takes up her pen in defence of her sex' in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) urged her sister to divorce and criticized the social norms. She believed that women are rational creatures. She concentrated on the moral demands of equality, particularly in education for women as a source of freedom. Thus, feminism is defined as a struggle to correct laws and practices that prevent women from achieving full equality with men in all aspects of domestic and public life (Murphy, 1995).

### **History of feminism**

The history of women's writing in the West is divided into three phases: 1) A feminine phase (1840-1880) - women writers imitated the male writers in their norms and artistic standards, 2) A feminist phase (1880-1920) - a different and often a separate position was maintained, and 3) A female phase (1920 onwards) - a different female identity, style and content (Bressey, 2010).

### **First-wave feminism**

The first-wave feminism goes back to First World War around 1914. In Europe, the first wave was mentioned in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) who is considered the mother of First-Wave Feminism. She published 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' in 1792. Wollstonecraft believed that education is the best way to make women take their positions in society in equivalence to man. She argued that women would be equal to men in every respect if they are provided with the same education and opportunities as men. She also stood against injustices suffered by women. In the United States of America, it goes back to a time when members of the National Women's Party (NWP) made a strike in

USA outside the White House (Code, 2000). Thus, in the USA the rights of man, spelt out in the Declaration of Independence, were an obvious starting point to argue for the rights of women.

In the First-Wave Feminism, women institutions and organisations in all over the world started to speak about women's rights to vote and express their thoughts. The First-Wave was able to influence and inspire other feminists' movements in all over the world and allowed women to vote. The First World War had raised the profile of women in employment and so political recognition had to be made of their contribution to the war effort. In 1918 women were allowed to vote on reaching the age of 30. By 1928 women in Britain had the vote on the same basis as men, though in much of continental Europe the vote came much later (Harrison and Boyd, 2003).

When women's rights activists gradually realised that their efforts were worthless, they started to act differently, by making it a universal controversial issue. The domination of men over women mainly existed in all the fields with no exception. Those kinds of segregations made women's rights activists argue that women should immediately gain the right to vote not only for themselves but for man as well. As the male franchise grew, the arguments for denying women the same rights as acquired by working-class men steadily lost their force. The results, however, were not entirely satisfactory as the extension of the franchise did not dramatically increase female participation in political life. In this way, feminism spread to all parts of the world and the leaders of those activities in those countries paved way to the Second-Wave Feminism.

### **Second-wave feminism**

The Second-Wave Feminism referred mainly to radical feminism and mainly to women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It dealt with the inequality of laws as well as cultural inequalities and the role of women in society. It was mainly concerned with raising consciousness about sexism and patriarchy, about gender based violence, domestic abuse and marital rape, inequalities in the work place, legalising abortion and birth control and sexual liberation of women. Alice Walker, a symbol of the second-wave feminism, is an author who embodies her own particular vision of black feminism in a work that transcends ideology by using the novel *The Color Purple*. Walker was the first person to coin and use the word Womanism (a Black Feminist Theory) in 1979. Black Feminism is a type of feminism which can be defined as a school of thought that states sexism, class oppression, gender identity and racism are inextricably bound together (Hill, 1990). Black Feminism existed because the racism that black women experienced was not adequately addressed by the

mainstream Feminist Movement which was led by white middle-class women.

Feminists in this period were not only looking for women's rights to vote or to be equal to man but they wanted them to be dependent in everything including their bodies and feelings. After a long period of struggles, strikes and events, women started to go deeper in looking for their rights. From asking only for the right to vote, the right to marry, they finally wanted their total freedom in almost everything: economic, political, social and religious field. During the Second-Wave, other groups joined like socialists and Marxists feminists who criticised the working condition for women and claimed for equal pay and salary with men and tried by all means to remove capitalism and raise socialism. For them, this was the best way to ensure that women will be equal to man and they will be no more dependent on man and family; the idea of dependency and self-reliance and to get involved in different working fields. The act of building women's identity paved the way and showed women all over the world that they had the right to be better by all means and to get their right to live lives the way they like (Rampton, 2008).

### ***Third-wave feminism***

This wave of feminism referred to a group of feminists' activity and appeared in the early 1990s and continues to present. Rebecca Walker is the symbol of this wave. Rebecca Walker is an American writer, feminist, and activist who has been regarded as one of the prominent voices of Third-Wave Feminism since she published an article on feminism in 1992 in Ms magazine in which she proclaimed: "I am the Third Wave." Walker's writing, teaching, and speeches focus on race, gender, politics, power, and culture. She defines "Third-Wave Feminism" at the end of the article by saying "To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women when often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them" (Rosenbloom, 2007).

The Third-Wave Feminism came as a reaction to the Second-Wave ideas and activities like women in pornography, sex work and prostitution. They consider themselves as the most powerful, effective and strong group between all the other previous activists of feminism. This wave was a movement of emancipation that was concerned not simply with the social, political and economic equality of women with men but with a fundamental re-imagining of the whole of humanity in relation to whole of reality including non-human creation. Third-Wave Feminists believed that the best way to make this Third-Wave effective than the previous ones was to develop and change the ways and methods of looking for the rights of women (Schneiders, 2000). They spread

their new ideas using new methods and technology such as TV, magazines, radio and recently the net. This activity took the responsibility of removing the stereotypical, traditional and typical pictures of women by deleting ideas like sexist language, unfair terms used for girls and women.

### **Background**

Feminism has generated an on-going debate in all over the world and it came to solve women's problems and to put an end to the injustice treatment of them. It was a voice in times when they were not able to speak or to express their feelings and wishes. Feminism is the idea that women should have political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights equal to those of men. It involves various movements, treaties and philosophies, all concerned with issues of gender difference, that advocate equality for women and the campaign for women's rights and interests (Walby, 2002: 533). Thus, without doubt, feminism has been a great help in women's struggle for equal rights, such that the once vast gap between the two sexes in this world is with time and effort diminishing. Women nowadays have climbed the social ladder to incredible heights enabling some of them to become no less than Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and various other prominent jobs have fallen into their capable hands.

Globally, women have been campaigning for their rights and social justice for decades, and have joined or formed movements as a vehicle for achieving their goals. Women's rights have been at the heart of a series of international conferences that have produced significant political commitments to women's human rights and equality. Starting in 1975, which was also International Women's Year, Mexico City hosted the World Conference on the International Women's Year, which resulted in the World Plan of Action and the designation of 1975–1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women. In 1980, another international conference on women was held in Copenhagen and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was opened for signature. These world conferences witnessed extraordinary activism on the part of women from around the world and laid the groundwork for the world conferences in the 1990s to address women's rights, including the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (Bari, 2005). From this, one can notice that there is international momentum around improving the lives of women and girls and reducing gender inequalities has high-level political support in several bilateral and multilateral agencies.

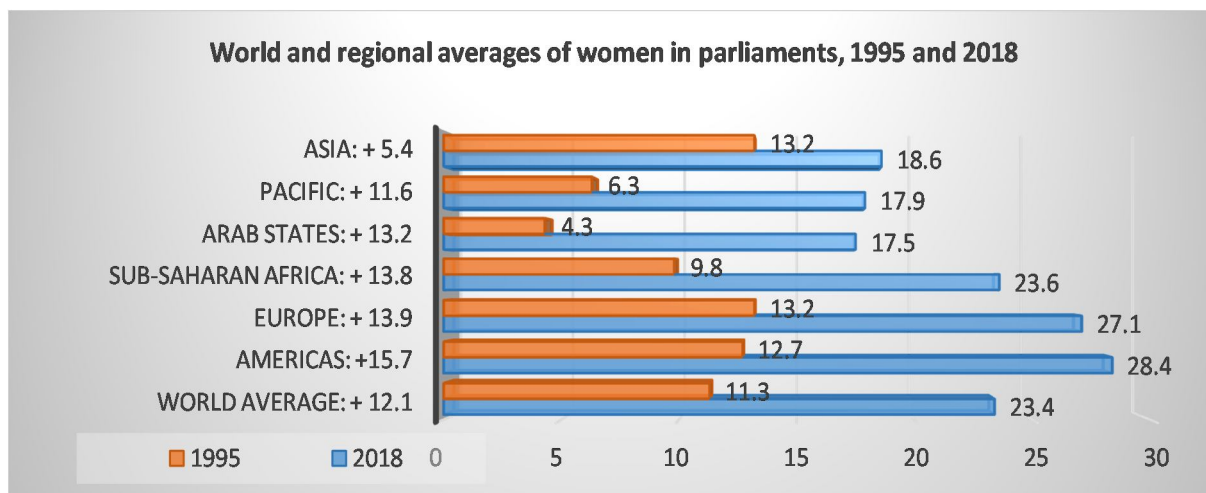
### ***Proportion of women in parliament around the world***

With the coming of feminism, there has been an increase

in the proportion of women involved in elected national assemblies around the world. This has occurred in most, though not all, countries around the world, particularly in Western Europe. This increase in elected women in parliament represents a shift in the political opportunity structure. The increase in women in parliament is associated with a change of attitude and a change of policies towards those which women prioritize. For instance in the case of the UK, female prospective parliamentary candidates for the 1992 election were more likely than male candidates to support women's rights in

abortion, action against rape in marriage and domestic violence, and equal opportunities, as well as to adopt positions more typical of women in a range of other matters including nationalization/privatization, nuclear weapons and the death penalty (Norris, 1996a).

Looking at parliaments for example, information from the Inter-Parliamentary Union Report of 2018, Figure 1 shows that there has been improvement in the parliaments around the world since 1995 to date. The figure shows the situation in July 1995 and January 2018, both houses combined.



**Figure 1.** World and regional averages of women in Parliaments, 1995 and 2018. Source: IPU (2018).

### ***Women's movement in Africa***

In Africa, the women's movement has, through popular mobilisation and protest, been able to secure significant gains for women such as key legal instruments, women's political participation etc. While independence and democracy in most Southern African contexts impacted on the vibrancy of women's movements, women managed to organise themselves so that they were still able to mobilise in varying degrees around advocating for women-friendly policies, addressing violence against women, and mounting campaigns around basic needs, the repression of women's democratic expression and other forms of sexism and inequality (Wilson, 2014).

Women have been aggressively using the media to demand their rights in a way not as evident in the early 1980s. Women are challenging laws and constitutions that do not uphold gender equality. In addition, they are moving into government, legislative, party, NGO and other leadership positions previously the exclusive domain of men. They are fighting for a female presence in areas where women were previously marginalized such as the leadership of religious institutions, sports

clubs and boards of private and public institutions.

### ***Women's movements in Zambia***

In Zambia, the marginalisation of women in politics and lack of an explicit national policy on women galvanised women into action to redress the political inequality by forming women's organisations. Various women's movements have been formed for example the Women's League, formed in 1975 under the leadership of the United National Independence Party (UNIP). The League was useful for lobbying government and the party to promote the interests of its members for example by issuing petty traders with trading licences (Geisler, 1987: 46).

Another organisation was the Zambia Association for Research and Development (ZARD). ZARD, formed in 1984, is a non-political organisation of educated and professional women, whose major objective was to conduct research on women, and then liaise with policy makers. ZARD's success has been evident in numerous publications designed to provide data on and publicize

the socio-economic situation of women, covering law, housing, education, inheritance, and political participation (ZARD, 1996).

### **Areas of feminism**

Feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms. There are many kinds of feminism in which sometimes each one of them gives principles and conditions for giving woman her rights. Among them liberal, radical, socialist, development, ecofeminism, cultural and individualist or libertarian feminism.

**Liberal feminism:** Theoretically, liberal feminism claims that gender differences are not based in biology, and therefore that women and men are not all that different - their common humanity supersedes their procreative differentiation. If women and men are not different, then they should not be treated differently under the law. Women should have the same rights as men and the same educational and work opportunities. The activists focus has been concerned with visible sources of gender discrimination, such as gendered job markets and inequitable wage scales, and with getting women into positions of authority in the professions, government, and cultural institutions. Liberal feminist politics took important weapons of the civil rights movement – antidiscrimination legislation and affirmative action - and used them to fight gender inequality, especially in the job market (Lorber, 1997). It is the most important type of feminism as it works within the structure of society to integrate women into society. It aims for individuals to use their own abilities and the democratic process to help women and men to become equal in the eyes of the law and in society. Its main thrust is that an individual woman should be able to determine her social role with as great freedom as does a man.

**Radical feminism:** Radical feminism locates the origins of women's oppression in the patriarchal control of female sexuality and female fertility. This perspective identifies male power and privilege in patriarchal relations as the essential determinant of women's subordination. Radical feminism emphasizes that in the existing social order women are oppressed and exploited primarily in sexual and procreative relations in the home, which is the sphere of life defined by the male culture as personal rather than as political. Just as with socialist feminism, radical feminism challenges society's basic structure and identifies the need for revolutionizing its existing organization. An essential strategy for eliminating women's oppression is the establishment of a woman culture separate from the lives of men, thus redefining social relations and overthrowing or undermining the present dominant patriarchy (Andersen, 1983).

Radical feminists deny the liberal claim that the lack of political or civil right causes women's oppression but challenges and overthrows patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and oppression of women and calls for a radical reordering of society. Radical feminism views oppression of women as the most fundamental form of man's domination, one that cuts across boundaries of race, culture and economic class. Radical feminists claim that the root cause of women's oppression is biological and believes that their liberation requires a biological revolution and demand a destruction of patriarchy (Lorber, 1997).

**Socialist feminism:** Socialist feminists are also known as Marxist or materialist feminists, who call for an end to capitalism through a socialist reformation of the economy. Socialist feminists view gender inequalities as intrinsic to the capitalist system, which makes vast profits off women's unpaid labour in the house and underpaid labour in the workforce. They argue that capitalism strengthens and supports the sexist status because men are the ones who currently have power and money. Socialist feminism locates the origins of women's oppression in the interaction of the capitalist system based on class inequities, with the patriarchal system based on gender inequities. As a result of this interaction, women are subordinated and exploited through misuse of their labor in the marketplace, for which they are persistently underpaid, and of their labor in the house, for which they are not paid at all.

According to them, feminism aims to abolish both capitalism and male dominance in order to end women's oppression. In contrast to the reform-oriented liberal feminist perspective, socialist feminism emphasizes the necessity for revolutionary societal changes in order to eliminate the existing unequal distribution of power. Equality is viewed not only in terms of opportunity but, more crucially, in terms of rewards. This perspective necessitates and facilitates an understanding of the experiences of women of all classes and races as a means of understanding oppression (Jaggar, 1983).

**Development feminism:** Development feminism addresses the economic exploitation of women in postcolonial countries as well as political issues of women's rights and oppressive cultural practices (such as child marriage, infanticide, female genital mutilation and honour executions) by stressing education for girls, maternity and child healthcare as well as economic resources for women, who contribute greatly to the support of their families (Nienaber and Moraka (2016: 147). Development feminism equated women's status with the control of economic resources, which they generally controlled as main producers of household food and distributors of surplus production. Thus, it made an important theoretical contribution in equating women's status with control of economic resources.

Development feminism's theory is that in some

societies, women control significant economic resources and so have a high status. In contrast, in societies with patriarchal family structures where anything women produce, including children, belongs to the husband, women and girls have a low value. As such, in a society, if the food women produce is the main way the group is fed, and women also control the distribution of any surplus they produce, women have power and prestige. If men provide most of the food and distribute the surplus, women's status is low. Thus, the mode of production and the kinship rules that control of the distribution of any surplus are the significant determinants of the relative status of women and men in any society (Lober, 1997).

**Ecofeminism:** Ecofeminism links ecology with feminism and sees the domination of women as stemming from the same ideologies that bring about the domination of the environment. Ecofeminists argue that women and the environment are both exploited as passive pawns in the race to domination, and that those people in power are able to take advantage of them distinctly because they are seen as passive and rather helpless (MacGregor, 2006). The issues of power, domination and subordination are important to ecofeminism and high on the list is toppling patriarchy. Therefore, ecofeminism argues that there is a connection between women and nature that comes from their shared history of oppression by a patriarchal Western society.

Vandana Shiva claims that women have a special connection to the environment through their daily interactions with it that has been ignored. She says that "women in subsistence economies, producing and reproducing wealth in partnership with nature, have been experts in their own right of holistic and ecological knowledge of nature's processes. But these alternative modes of knowing, which are oriented to the social benefits and sustenance needs are not recognized by the capitalist reductionist paradigm, because it fails to perceive the interconnectedness of nature, or the connection of women's lives, work and knowledge with the creation of wealth (Shiva, 1988). As such, ecofeminism is contrary to male values such as aggression, and it is compassionate to feminine values like, kindness, affection, and sympathy that would ultimately save the future of mankind. In short, ecofeminism offers a singularly powerful and comprehensive vision for attaining earthly peace and harmony.

**Cultural feminism:** Cultural feminism is the ideology of a "female nature" or "female essence" that attempts to revalidate what they consider undervalued female attributes. Cultural feminism is a variety of feminism which emphasizes essential differences between men and women, based on biological differences in reproductive capacity and attributes to those differences distinctive and superior virtues in women. What women share, in this perspective, provides a basis for "sisterhood," or unity, solidarity and shared identity? It

emphasizes the difference between women and men but considers that difference to be psychological, and to be culturally constructed rather than biologically innate (Kramarae and Spender, 2000). Cultural feminists believe that women have an intuitive perception that goes beyond reason to understand the subtle connections among people and among all life forms; so that, women's vision is holistic. And, they try to establish the reign of love and peace. Cultural feminists also analysed that the root of women's oppression was their economic and moral dependence on men. Cultural feminism commends the positive aspects of what is seen as the female character or feminine personality and praises the positive aspects of women (Lewis, 2019).

**Individualist or libertarian feminism:** Individualist feminists attempt to change legal systems to eliminate class privileges and gender privileges and to ensure that individuals have equal rights, including an equal claim under the law to their own persons and property. Individualist feminism encourages women to take full responsibility for their own lives and opposes any government interference into the choices adults make with their own bodies because, it contends, such interference creates a coercive hierarchy (such as patriarchy) (McElroy, 2002). Individualist feminists approached equality in a more strictly legal manner, appealing to natural-law theory. This approach not only embraced private property and natural rights, but also involved the refusal to impose virtue, or social purity, on peaceful individuals. Individualist feminists cared deeply about social problems, but they did not believe in governmental solutions. Thus, individualist feminism is not merely a position on affirmative action or civil liberties but a comprehensive, integrated system of beliefs concerning women's relationship to society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used both qualitative and quantitative methodology through secondary data collection especially from eminent writers like Walby, Lorber and Ackerly. The research design used was descriptive survey method aimed at establishing the impact that feminism has had on the lives of women in Zambia. Descriptive research encompasses much government sponsored research including the population census, the collection of a wide range of social indicators and economic information such as household expenditure patterns, time studies, employment and other statistics. Both internal and external sources of information were used and these included information collected by government departments, the reports from other countries, as well as international organisations. This is because secondary data has pre-established degree of validity and reliability which need not to be re-examined by the researcher who is re-using such data and also

because secondary it provides a baseline for primary research.

The type of review used was systematic review, which uses a well-defined approach to identify all relevant studies. It is based on a comprehensive and unbiased search for completed studies. The study used qualitative methodology because qualitative methodology generally aims to understand the experiences and attitudes of certain people. This method aims to answer questions about what, for example our study wants to know what the impact of feminism has been on women. Data was collected using systematic review and it was analysed using content analysis.

## RESULTS

Different studies, such as the one by Murphy (1995) show that women's movements around the world address a broad scope of gender policy issues. Results from our findings show the participation of women within women's organizations in society is necessary for achieving certain goals in the area of gender equality. That form of women's participation is considered to be the best way to articulate women's interests and the only possible way to really challenge structural relations of power between women and men. For instance, when analysing a range of women's movements and states in the Third World, Georgina Waylen argues that 'women's movements are most successful in their efforts to influence state policy when operating from the background of autonomous groups' (Waylen, 1996: 137).

Findings from secondary data show that in Zambia, feminism and women's movements have yielded good results and have encouraged women to achieve a lot. Historically, in the early decades of Zambia's independence, men's monopoly of leadership roles perpetuated gender stereotypes of men as naturally better leaders, which in turn reinforced their dominance. This trend has recently been disrupted with the coming of feminism. Feminism has been able to bring about the law, the right to vote, girls education, women's employment. It has effected change in society, including women's suffrage, greater access to education, more equitable pay with men, the right to initiate divorce proceedings, the right of women to make individual decisions regarding pregnancy (including access to contraceptives and abortion); and the right to own property (Butler, 1994: 272). As such, our study found that the impact of feminism on women's lives has been more positive than negative.

### Positive impacts

#### *Women's movements*

Feminism in Zambia has brought about the existence of

different women's movements because of their particular focus on the emancipation of women from class exploitation, male domination and subordination. Zambia has a fairly strong women's movement and a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with women's or gender interest as their main focus. Their programmes are designed for the advancement of women's development, empowerment and their equality. The Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Committee (NGOCC) acts as an umbrella organization for all other NGOs that target gender and development issues (Choongo, 2007). Some of the organisations that our study found in Zambia are; Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL), Women For Change (WFC), Women's League (WL), Campaign For Female Education (CAMFED), Forum for African Educationalist of Zambia (FAWEZA). Others also include Zambia Association of University Women (ZAUW), Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW), Zambia National Women Artists Documentation Project (ZNWADP), Women in the Media (WM), Business and Professional Women (BPW), Medical Women's Association of Zambia (ZWAM). These organisations are best considered to be manifestations of liberal feminism because of their aims and processes of change advocated for which is of a liberal stance rather than revolutionary (Organizations, 2007).

#### *Education*

Zambia recognises the principle that education is a fundamental human right. This is clearly stipulated in the national constitution and education policy. The Republic of Zambia recognises the need to tackle the issues affecting the education of girls within a broader context, so as to provide quality education to all school-aged children. To this end the government, in collaboration with various partners, started the Programme for the Advancement of Girls Education (PAGE) in 1997. Through this programme, specific actions have been developed to support successful strategies for increasing access, retention, and enhancing achievements, especially in mathematics and science for girls. In 1997, the Ministry of Education introduced the re-entry policy that allowed girls who fell pregnant to return to school after delivery. This was followed up with the 50-50 enrolment policy. The Strategic Plan embraced the equity programme, which specifically addressed gender issues within the ministry (Ministry of Education, 2003). The National Gender Policy supported these efforts.

Primary education in Zambia has recently seen an increase of the enrolment rate for girls to the extent that the number of girls in primary education slightly exceeds that of boys at present (the net enrolment rate in 2010 for the first through ninth grades was 83.7% for boys and 84% for girls). According to the 2011 Education Statistical Bulletin, at national level the Gender Parity Index (GPI) improved significantly for grades 1 – 9 at Government

schools from 70% in 2010 to 95% in 2011. In grant aided schools, the improvement was from 77% in 2010 to 105% in 2011. The GPI for grades 10 – 12 ranged from 86.4% in 2010 to 82% in 2011. Lusaka recorded the highest GPI of 97%. The performance of the rest of the Provinces ranged from the lowest 56% in Northern Province to 83% in Western Province (National Gender Policy, 2014). However, current statistics show that girls' enrolment has improved with time as shown in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** Gross enrolment rate by education level, 2013 – 2016.

Year	Grades 1 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
2013	128	127	30	36
2014	114	113	30	35
2015	111	111	43	48
2016	106	105	43	48

Source: MESVTEE, 2016 Educational Statistical Bulletin.

### Politics

There has been a significant change in the political opportunity structures as a result of the slow opening of positions in parliaments to women. The shift in the opportunity structure is implicated in the shift in emphasis of feminist politics from radical separatist autonomous political developments to mainstream more liberal politics focused on amelioration of the position of women through reform of state actions. Zambia ranked 116<sup>th</sup> among 145 countries which were surveyed for the Global Gender Gap Index in 2015 by the World Economic Forum. In terms of political empowerment which evaluates the situation of women's participation in politics, Zambia ranks 102<sup>nd</sup>. In the 2011 general election, women accounted for 11.5% of the members of the parliament (MPs) and 6.3% of the members of local councils elected. The proportion of female MPs is reported to be 13% in 2015 which makes Zambia 11<sup>th</sup> among SADC countries targeted for the survey (MDG Report, 2013). The number of women representation in parliament has been increasing in the past 6 years. The number of elected female Members of Parliament increased from 18 in 2011-2013 to 25 in 2016. For the year 2019, current statistics on elected members of parliament are such that 136 are males while 30 are females representing an 81.9 and 18.1%, respectively. This is shown in Table 2.

### Employment

Feminism has also increased the entry of women into the workplace beginning in the twentieth century and has affected gender roles and the division of labour within households. From the 1960s on, the women's liberation

**Table 2.** Elected to parliament 2011 – date.

Year	Sex		Total
	Women	Men	
2011	18	132	150
2012	18	131	149
2013	18	126	144
2014	20	123	143
2015	21	128	149
2016	25	131	156
2019	30	136	166

Source: National Assembly, 2019.

movement campaigned for women's rights, including the same pay as men, equal rights in law, and the freedom to plan their families issues, the right to bodily integrity and autonomy; to vote (universal suffrage); to hold public office, to work, to fair wages or equal pay to serve in the military (Taylor and Pereznieta, 2014). From the findings, in terms of sex, females are slowly moving towards achieving a higher rate of employment compared to men as seen from Figure 2 which shows a small margin between both sexes.

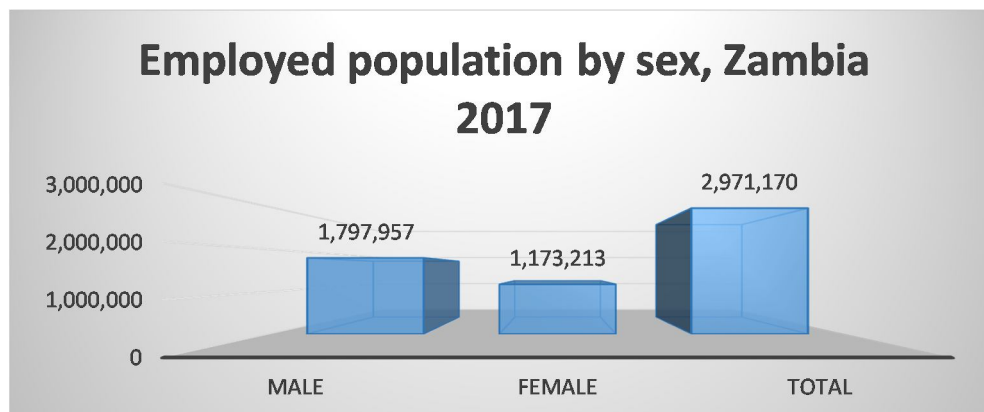
### Violence against women

Findings also reveal that feminism has helped reduced domestic violence, and has worked to protect women and girls from sexual abuse. In the last decade, the issue of violence against women has moved from the shadows to the foreground of commitments to attain sustainable development. Women's rights advocates have mobilized within and across countries and regions to secure significant changes in national, regional and international standards and policies addressing gender-based violence. In Zambia too, many women's organisations have been fighting against violence. For example, the Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Council (NGOCC) and Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) in particular have contributed to revising discriminatory statutory provisions against women, incorporating provisions assuring women's rights, and extensively advocating for holding a national referendum to have the constitution amended. They also support wide-ranging activities including awareness raising to domesticate CEDAW standard into the laws and policies, and support the capacity building of female MPs, as well as establishing gender equal society (JICA, 2016).

### Negative impacts

The feminist movement has not only brought about positive impacts to women in Zambia but also negative ones. It has created confusion regarding the permissible





**Figure 2.** Employment population by sex, Zambia 2017. Source: CSO (2018).

dynamics between the sexes. Men and women no longer trust their Darwinian characters;<sup>1</sup> instead they seem to adhere to new 'feminist' rules of intersexual conduct as they are highly fearful of being accused of being 'sexist pigs' or 'tools of patriarchy'. Some forms of feminism have been harmful in that they have built an ideological foundation that is anti-male. In other words, women are the face of feminism and understandably so, after all, women are the originators, advocates and dependants of the equal rights movement (Warner, 2015).

The reason for this negative impact can be explained by the dominance by males, reinforced by Zambian cultural values and customs which stress the father and husband as "heads" or power holders in the family, with women subservient to them, as well as gender role specialization. The diffusion of western culture in Zambia since colonialism has widened the scope of male dominance beyond the family into what Walby calls "public patriarchy," opening up opportunities for women beyond the home but at the same time fostering discrimination against them on the basis of sex, thereby encouraging gender inequalities. Another explanation is that it is not so much the socialization but sex discrimination that explains women's under-representation, because men refuse to appoint women in decision-making positions (Whitworth, 1994: 76).

## DISCUSSION

Globally, women have been campaigning for women's rights and social justice for decades, and have joined or formed movements as a vehicle for achieving their goals. In Africa, the women's movement has, through popular mobilisation and protest, been able to secure significant

<sup>1</sup> Darwin maintained that sexual selection had rendered man "superior to woman" both physically and intellectually. The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shewn by man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands" (Darwin, 1882, p. 564).

gains for women such as key legal instruments, women's political participation etc. While independence and democracy in most southern African contexts impacted on the vibrancy of women's movements, women managed to organise themselves so that they were still able to mobilise in varying degrees around advocating for women-friendly policies, addressing violence against women, and mounting campaigns around basic needs, the repression of women's democratic expression and other forms of sexism and inequality.

Therefore, the national goal of accelerated development cannot be attained without special attention to the needs of women and girls, and over the decades, women have mobilized themselves propagated by the works of the likes of Esther Boserup<sup>2</sup>. Since the 19th Century, the women's movement has fought unrelentingly for the eradication of gender subordination and other forms of social and economic oppression to ensure that all national policies include gender specific considerations. From the findings of the study however, in the case of Zambia, women form an integral part of, and play significant roles within, the nucleus and extended family as well as the traditional socio-political governance structures of matrilineal and patrilineal societies (Chant, 2011). In general, there have been a number of improvements to women's lives in the past twenty years. For example, more girls are going to school, more women are in the paid workforce, and, there are laws introduced to protect women's rights.

The results revealed that in Zambia, feminism has brought about positive impacts and women's movements speak for them and their needs. Results show that the National Women's Lobby Group (NWLG) has been spearheading these movements or organisations. A National Women's Lobby Group (NWLG) was formed in 1991, as a non-governmental body, seeking the increased participation of women in politics and

<sup>2</sup> Boserup was the first to point out that economic growth, and especially the spread of capitalism in the developing world, had not necessarily benefited women and men equally (Boserup, 1970).

education, and the advancement of women in general. It is a non-partisan group which encourages women to stand for election, and gives them training for this purpose. The NWLG has been successful in raising gender issues as items for inclusion on the political agenda. Issues which the NWLG has raised include: calls for women to have the same access to land as men and to be able to obtain title deeds in their own right; for access for women to loans from lending institutions on their own merit; and for equality in employment and housing rights. It has also called for girls to have equal access to all educational subjects and to have the right to paternity leave (Liatto-Katundu, 1993:81).

Women's participation in these movements has been able to provide an important opportunity to develop confidence and self-belief, and effective leadership skills. This paves the way for women to hone their skills by taking leadership positions and to build the necessary constituency to move into positions in other informal or formal structures, including public or political office. Movements are also the best training ground for women in political participation, and in the practice of democracy, leadership, and citizenship. Building movements compels women to engage in a wide range of activities such as mobilizing and organizing themselves, creating participation, leadership, and decision-making systems that are inclusive and democratic, confronting and overcoming their own internalized tendency to reproduce patriarchal patterns of hierarchy and authoritarianism, testing and developing political strategies and tactics, engaging the social and political environment at various levels, forming strategic alliances, and dealing with backlash, repression, or co-option. All these are invaluable lessons in political life and claiming full citizenship, and build vital political skills. As seen from the results, women now have joined politics and numbers are improving compared to the early decades when women were not allowed to participate in politics, thanks to the coming of feminism.

Movements are often the most effective way for particularly stigmatized, marginalized and socially excluded constituencies of women to become visible and have their voices heard. From the study results for instance women would not have been able to challenge popular opinion, public policy, or even the perception of women's movements about these groups, if they had not mobilized their own collective power in the form of the strong organizations and movements. Indeed, these women's movements in Zambia show that they could not have become a force for change by restricting themselves to lobbying and advocacy. In 2015, 10 heads of state and 14 heads of government were women, and the number of women in cabinet between 1999 and 2010 had increased from 9% to 17% (Hughes, 2014). While women's movements have been central to advancing gender equality agendas, campaigning and advocacy are just the most visible face of women's political struggles. Whether they are business, civic or political leaders,

influential women (just like influential men) are those able to leverage informal relationships, build alliances and convince others.

The expansion of women's organizations and associational life more generally accompanied the move away from the older single party systems toward multi-party politics and the demise of military regimes in favour of civilian rule. The expansion of freedom of speech and of association, although usually constrained, also increased possibilities for new forms of mobilization. The international women's movement and, in particular the 1985 and 1995 UN Women's conferences in Nairobi and Beijing respectively, gave added impetus to women's mobilization (Tripp, 2003). Building their collective power through movements helps women convert their quest for their human rights, for equality and justice into a force for change that cannot be ignored by their families, communities, governments, or society at large. While resistance or rebellion by individual women is easy to squash or isolate, resistance by large numbers, acting together on a common agenda of change, is not easily suppressed.

## CONCLUSION

Women have been campaigning for their rights and social justice for decades, and have joined or formed movements as a vehicle for achieving their goals. Results from our findings show the participation of women within women's organizations is necessary for achieving certain goals in the area of gender equality. The women's movement has impacted greatly on women's lives in Zambia such that many women now enter employment, politics, are leaders and have known their rights including rights to education and those that protect them from violence against them. This study therefore found that feminism has been a force of women's development in Zambia and its impact has been more positive than negative on the lives of women. Without these movements, women's lives would have not changed as feminism advocates for gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Thus, the study recommends that support to women's organisations should always be a priority. While short-term benefits might be difficult to predict or report, the importance of strong, independent women's movements to gender gains over time cannot be overstated. The study also recommends that more research needs to be done on the topic of feminism as more information needs to be availed.

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