

# Media, Gender, Politics and Evolving Mentalities: A Discursive Construction of Female Emergence in Cameroonian Newspapers

Caroline Stephanie Jiogo Ngaufack

Department of English Modern Letters, the University of Ngaoundere, Ngaoundere, Cameroon

**Email address:**

[jiogocaroline@yahoo.com](mailto:jiogocaroline@yahoo.com)

**To cite this article:**

Caroline Stephanie Jiogo Ngaufack. Media, Gender, Politics and Evolving Mentalities: A Discursive Construction of Female Emergence in Cameroonian Newspapers. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 9, No. 2, 2021, pp. 39-47.

doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.20210902.12

**Received:** March 7, 2021; **Accepted:** March 22, 2021; **Published:** March 30, 2021

---

**Abstract:** Many feminist media studies tend to show that media's contribution to the relegation of women to second position. Some even present the media play role in silencing women in the society. Contrary those publications, this paper demonstrates that, despite the patriarchal pressure, Cameroonian newspapers have enhanced female gender visibility in 2013. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as theory helps us to examine how speakers use language to represent, construct and/or negotiate meanings and values on gender. As method of data analysis, we have used the Socio cognitive Approach of Critical Discourse Analysis; it posits that our discourses reflect mental constructs to analyse discursive strategies used on articles. Essentially qualitative, the analysis centres on three main arguments supporting the idea of discursive progressive feminist visibility in politics in Cameroonian media. Firstly the reproduction of international discourses imposing women in politics; secondly, the necessity of women to fight for equity in political context is presented using linguistic strategies; and thirdly, the construction of female participation in public life as a source of hope for change. We concluded that these discursive strategies have contributed to the numerical increase of women in the political sphere during the 2013 senatorial, parliamentary and municipal elections. Although these changes are not yet strong enough, what has been achieved is a step forward to implement gender sensitivity in news reported to citizens. Women are discursively better constructed in media, and the visible effect of the said construction is that more opportunities are given to them as decision-makers.

**Keywords:** Discursive Strategies, Challenging Ideologies, Women's Numerical Increase

---

## 1. Introduction

An observation of articles on political issues in newspapers in 2013 gives the opinion that women are better constructed in the media. Contrary to traditional discourses, women are now constructed as belonging to the public sphere and capable of being members of many decision-making institutions through nominations and even elections. Thenjiwe Mtintso, speaking at the Southern Africa gender in Media workshop in 2001, said "The media is a product of society and thus it reflects the values, ideas, attitudes, culture and practices of any given society. Simultaneously, it influences and shapes society." Holmes and Jones [6] declare gender sensitive governance not only supposes a greater number of women in the political sphere but also their ability

to influence social constructions which have media productions as a means of expressions. This article answers the question: what are the discursive strategies put in place by journalists while writing their articles and how could these strategies have had a transforming effect on populations' gendered constructions? The above question calls us to analyse elements that have favoured women's entry in politics and examine how the analysis newspapers made of those elements reflects and /or contributes to a transformation of mentalities.

Contrary to Feminist Media Studies, Tuchman [17], Zoonen [24], Gill [5], Des Freedman [3] that tend to show how media contribute to the relegation of women to second roles or silence, this article demonstrates that newspapers have helped in the positioning of women in political spheres.

It shows that despite patriarchal ideologies that sustain female gender condescendence, newspapers use of language makes women more visible; this suggests an evolutionary trend in mental representations. This argumentation is threefold: firstly, the presentation of international context discourses and their influence on Cameroonians; then the discursive strategies displayed to construct women as those to fight for equity and lastly the construction of female participation in public life as source of hope for change. Before developing these arguments, it is worth presenting theoretical and methodological perspectives that guide our analysis.

## 2. Discourse, Gender, Media and Politics in Cameroon: Theoretical and Methodological Framework

### 2.1. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as Theory

Since the beginning 2005, Cameroon has witnessed an increasing interest of its researchers in language and gender studies (see Atanga [1]). Most of the works of that period emphasise the gender inequality between men and women; they showed that the Cameroonian society still has gender division of spaces and gender division of roles. It is for this reason that some men and even women think that there cannot and should not be equity between men and women as each of the sexes is distinct from the other, not only biologically but also socially. However, an observation of past three years researches leads us to say that there have been a shift in gender studies, which are no more only interested in emphasizing the gap between men and women in social discourse, but has moved to how social actors construe discourses that help at filling the gap. As women constitute more than half of the Cameroonian population is worth to interest on the media discourses that are constructed around their gender. It is in this sense that Rieffel [16] declares that media are means of transformation or conservation of mental representation. Atanga and Djimeli [2] using interviews and data from print and audio visual media show that female journalists and politicians strategically exploit opportunities and gaps within the system to increase the numbers of women in decision making positions.

The theoretical framework of this study is the combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Media studies (FMS) termed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) by Lazar [8-10]. Critical Discourse Analysis looks at language as a social practice and is characterised by the common interest to demystify ideologies through investigation of data. According to the Feminist Media Studies, the relationship between gender and communication is a cultural one, a negotiation over meanings and values that inform whole ways of life. Media are regarded as central sites where those discursive negotiations over gender take place. As the main tool of communication is language, the combination of these two theories in this work helps us to examine how speakers use language to represent and/or

construct the society in order to negotiate over meanings and values on gender. It specifically shows how cultural relationship between gendered discourses and media ones are discursively negotiated. The critical aspect of CDA helps to unveil the unsaid intentions behind news producers' choices of language devices.

### 2.2. Method of Data Analysis: The Socio Cognitive Approach of Van Dijk

The data on which the above theory and method is applied are mostly discourses. Common CDA-based definitions of discourse hold it is a circular process in which social practices influence texts, via shaping the context and mode in which they are produced, and in turn texts help influence society via shaping the viewpoints of those who read or otherwise consume them (see Richardson [15]). Here discourses are found in three newspapers: *The Post*, *Le Messenger* and *Cameroon tribune*. These data were collected during the year 2013; the choice of this period is justified by the elections that took place during that year and witnessed a numerical increase of women; 20% for the pioneer Senate, from 25 to 56 women in the Parliament and a 2% increase in at the head of Council. The choice of newspapers is justified by their longevity, their representation concerning official languages which are English and French, their coverage as far as the country is concerned, their numbers of issues per edition and the experience of the journalists. Primary data were in English and French; we translate French excerpts before integrating them in this paper.

The Socio cognitive Approach (SCA) of Van Dijk [20-23] is used as method of data analysis. It posits there is a strong relationship between mind, discursive interaction and society; in fact, our discourse reflects our mental constructions and /or representation society, and these constructions can transform the reality. SCA claims there is no direct link between discourse and society and that social and political structures can only affect text and talk through minds of language users. Social members represent both social as well as discourse structures in their minds and thus are able to relate these mentally before expressing them in actual text and talk. This approach firstly shows the implementation of gender equity as an international affair.

## 3. Implementation of Gender Equity Policies: An International Affair

### 3.1. Reminding National and International Laws in Order to Sensitize Elections' Actors

Sensitisation on the necessity to be gender sensitive in politics is mostly portrayed in the pre-electoral period. Newspapers report on international organisations insistence on gender mainstreaming, calling on governments not to forget that they have to respect the 30 per cent quota for women's presence in electoral positions. Civil Society Organisations (CSO) relay this sensitisation of international

Organisations in Cameroon; they use those international protocols and conventions and even some national laws to advocate for positive discrimination, calling on governments to offer more possibilities for women to enter decision-making domain. The IPU report [7] recorded that in 2012, following sustained pressure from the women's movement; Cameroon's Electoral Code was amended to include gender among the criteria required in determining candidate lists for municipal, legislative and regional elections.

In *Le Messager* [32], Agnès Longue Edibe, the National Coordinator of "Cameroon Women in leadership and Development" (Cawoled), in the article "Femmes et elections au Cameroun" '*Women and elections in Cameroon*' p. 10, shows that women's integration in politics is encouraged by international organisations. She comes out with some recommendations given to the Cameroonian Government by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2009. Among those recommendations is the call to look for special measures to encourage women's representation in political life. Following is the excerpt of that article:

The Committee beseeches the State to undertake national sensitization campaigns on the importance of women's participation to public life and political life especially in rural areas. It asks the State to intensify its efforts so that more women should be present in decision posts and in the public life of their country. It also recommends to the State to encourage parity in political parties and develop its efforts with the aim of increasing women's participation to international public life. The Committee encourages the State to examine the recourse to temporary special measures as provided by Paragraph 1 of Article 4 of the Convention as well as in its general recommendation N° 25, hoping that the measures taken to increase women's representation in political life are accompanied by objectives and schedules or provide more important quotas. (My translation)

If we look at the four verbs that introduce each sentence, reporting CEDAW's recommendations (begs, asks, recommends, encourages), we can see that it moves from asking a favour to fostering the State to change its attitudes. Therefore, rather than asking a favour, the CEDAW is forcing the Cameroonian State to take concrete actions. The main verbs of the reported sentences all describe a specific action that is to be taken: "undertake", "intensify", "encourage", and "examine". Thus, rather than promises, the CEDAW is awaiting for actions whose effects have to be visible. By reminding this to the readers, the coordinator of Cawoled is implicitly sensitising the Cameroonian State not to forget these recommendations. She also reminds the CEDAW to verify that these recommendations are put in place; for the population, it is an information so that those who are reluctant to the entry of the female folk into political life should know this is an international recommendation. This strategy contributes to manipulating people social cognition by creating a new mental model.

Van Dijk [19] affirms that it is sometimes important to

discursively manipulate how recipients understand one event, action or discourse. For him, the most influential form of such manipulation is not to focus on manipulating people's Short Term Memory (STM) that has to do with how individuals understand information, but rather to influence their Long Term Memory (LTM) as it is where both subjectively interpreted personal experiences and more stables, permanent general and socially shared beliefs sometimes called "social representations" are stored. These "social representations" are gradually acquired throughout our lifetime and although they can change, they do not typically change overnight. The challenge of social representation generally focuses on social cognition because social belief in turn control what people do and say.

### 3.2. A Call for Punishment of Those Who Fail to Apply Gender Considerations

In their desire to see gender equity implemented in the Cameroonian political sphere, CSO pleaded, called for and even demanded that lists without female candidates should be rejected. Basing on the national and international legal provisions, they requested to punish those who will infringe those legal provisions by rejecting their lists. Two articles were published in *The Post* during the year 2013, with almost the same theme and content. The first entitled "Bits & Pieces on Senatorial Elections: ElecCam should reject lists without female candidates" [36] was published, the day after the submission deadline for senatorial elections lists. In the said article, Prof Justine, was advising ELECAM that the right thing they have to do to implement gender equity in Cameroon is to reject all lists without female candidates.

The second article was published under the title "ELECAM urged to disqualify gender insensitive lists" [38]. The use of the verb "urged" in the title of this article shows that rather than an advice or a proposal as pretended by the modal verb "should" in the text, it is more an order.

In a statement to support the participation of more women in politics read during the meeting, prof. Diffo said ELECAM boss should reject any list of candidates which constitutes a hundred per cent men. She quoted Law N° 2012/001 of April on the electoral code that prescribes the consideration of gender in the electoral cycle, notably in articles 151, 164, 171, 181, 218, and 246.

What is inferred from this article published some months after the first one is that "More Women in Politics" was not satisfied by ELECAM reaction during senatorial elections. The first article was published when candidates already made electoral lists. Therefore for municipal and parliamentary elections, the article is published almost a month before the deadline for lists' submission. Prof Diffo, still insist on the necessity not to make distinction with the use of the article "any". She also calls out for other legal provisions that stipulate gender sensitivity.

The repetition of these articles with almost the same message aims at emphasising on the need to punish those who did bad and encourage those who did well as far as gender equity implementation is concerned. The demand of

Prof Difo has been respected as many lists have been rejected because of non-respect of gender consideration. Through these rejections, people are being forced to consider women in political lists if they want their lists to go further. *Cameroon tribune* [27] reports that political parties submitted 69 complaints to the Constitutional Council for pre-elections matters concerning lists rejections for municipal and legislative lists. 29 of those rejections were due to non-respect of gender consideration, which was to be taken as a serious aspect in constituting municipal and parliamentarians.

International Organisation observers were watchful on the consideration of gender mainstreaming in lists' constitution and on the sanction reserved to those who infringed to legal provisions. In its report on "Cameroon legislative and municipal elections" [14], the Commonwealth Expert Team (CET) declares:

ELECAM rejected lists of some political parties on the basis that they did not comply with the relevant provisions in the law in relation to gender consideration in drawing up the list. This was perceived as an indicator of ELECAM's increased assertiveness in supervising the electoral process (p. 14).

The CET considers lists rejection due to lack of gender consideration as a success of these twin elections organised. We have seen that at the national as well as international levels, measures were taken to impose change to a patriarchal system that was reigning in Cameroon. With this spirit, the shared knowledge that men are those to fight for the welfare of the family started to be destroyed, giving room to the idea that nobody more than women can fight for their growth.

## 4. Women as Those to Fight for Equity

### 4.1. The Necessity to Challenge Masculine Hegemony

Considering the common saying, "power is not given, it is conquered", women are the ones who can fight for their entry into decision-making; they should stand up and fight for equity for a change in the construction of gendered roles in societies. Women are the first people to benefit from equity, therefore, one can understand why, in our data, the consideration of women presence in decision-making milieu is constructed as something women should struggle for. In this fight, women are advised to cultivate some qualities that would help them; besides some examples of women who have made their way in the political milieu are presented to the audience to say it is something possible.

In order to fight for change, women have to understand the necessity to challenge the men dominated society in which they live. They should go against the established order. For such awareness, women should first understand the important roles they have to play in the political milieu and the relegation they are victims of; it is only after such an observation that they have to decide to put an end to the said situation. Elizabeth Tamanjong, the Regional Commissioner of Women Academy for Africa, decries gender discrimination and emphasises the urgency to challenge it in *The Post* [37]:

Expressing joy about the strong militancy of the women who came for the seminar, Tamanjong wondered why women who constitute a majority in terms of members are always relegated to the background when it comes to occupying political positions. She called on her female folk to stand up and reverse the situation as she observed that the economic and social wellbeing of every community depends on the strength of women.

The first sentence of this extract linguistically represents contrast between the joy of the strong militancy of women and the surprise of their absence in political positions. With this construction, Tamanjong touches the emotions of the audience, begging for their pity. The sentence starts in a mood of happiness "expressing joy" and ends with a sad mood "wondered why women (...) are always relegated to the background". The use of the adjective strong to qualify militancy here is not without a specific effect, she wants to show that removing women from the political sphere could weaken it. Besides the adverb "always" that modifier the verb "relegated" stresses on the regularity of this relegation that is permanent. After such a presentation, readers understand with ease that if they want the joy to come back, they have to improve women's conditions in the political milieu. As no one, more than the concerned can fight for their welfare, she continues by emphasizing on the need for women to understand they are marginalised. Power is conquered and not given; the female gender is to fight in order for them to get access to it. Tamanjong makes use of two phrasal verbs, that reflects fighting spirit: "to stand up" and to "reverse the situation". Through these two phrasal verbs, the female folk have to understand that it is not a small task but a difficult one; thus, there will surely be reactions but women have to be ready to fight till the end of the battle. She encourages her gender folk to invest all their energy for things to change.

For the efficiency of such a battle, women should firstly learn to use the multiple days dedicated to them purposefully. Rather than celebrating it in ways that dishonour women by drinking until drunkenness for example and many others excesses women do on those days, they should utilise them as occasion to sensitise others. Especially decision makers, on the necessity to find out a means to integrate them in leadership positions for their problems to be debated in those spheres and effective solutions found.

The celebration of the multitude of days consecrated to women is a good occasion for women to think of their situation. It is the time for them to identify obstacles to their autonomy and find out appropriate means that will, despite socio-cultural constraints, help them to assume their important roles society. It is an opportunity for them to call out decision-makers to speed up the realisation of their needs and expectations contained in their policies, programmes and projects for the wellbeing of their families and their own blossoming.

If women constitute a numerical force, the fact that they are agents of change and actors of development, but less present in decision-making spheres, it is essential that the

situation improves for the construction of a just and equitable Cameroonian society. (My translation; *Le Messenger* [34])

The first paragraph of the above excerpt is an emphasis on what the celebration of days dedicated to women should be. The verb “to be” used in the present simple tense in all the sentences of this paragraph reveals the convincing power the writer gives to the paragraph, as to say there is no doubt, this is how those days have to be celebrated, rather than the way those in power encourage people to do.

The second paragraph is a conditional sentence; but rather than using traditional grammar structure if + present + future, the speaker makes use of if + present (constitute) + present (is). This challenge of grammatical norms could reflect the challenge of traditional ideologies readers are called for. For the author, rather than using the grammatical structure that gives room to some percentage of non-fulfilment, he has chosen the grammatical structure that has one hundred percentage of fulfilment. This choice is not made for pleasure, rather it betrays the certainty the writer has that women need to be empowered, as they are more in number. In the fight for equity, women should also use their numerical force should as a weapon; women constitute about 52% of the Cameroonian population. Therefore, if women are united in their desire to have more to say in decision-making sphere, even if it was to be by vote, they could win.

The effective contest of masculine hegemony takes place in our cognition. Van Dijk [18] said ideologies have both social and cognitive properties, which need to be accounted for in an integrated theory. Cognitively, ideologies are a special kind of social belief systems, stored in Long-Term Memory; and socially as well as cognitively, these ideological belief systems are socially shared by the members of specific social groups, or ideological communities. Among the attitudes to develop acquaintance with politics, four qualities are discursively constructed as good weapons for the fight against women’s relegation to second roles in politics: togetherness, courage, determination and perseverance.

Some women who are already in decision making spheres, do not hesitate to give their opinion for an effective parity and equal opportunity; the Parliamentarian of the Momo East Constituency, recommends togetherness as a good weapon that can be used to enter decision sphere. *The Post* [40] presents an advice she thinks it will make women’s status to become better; “Hon. Edena Enih Mbah wishes that the women should all unite to come as front to project the issues that concern women and improve on their lots.” The expression of this wish call us to remind the common proverb “united we stand, divided we fall”. Togetherness is constructed here as a good weapon that women have to use if they want to be victorious. Engaged in the battle, women should show off some qualities among which we are to talk of courage, determination, and perseverance.

#### 4.2. *Courage and Perseverance as Good Weapons*

In a society, where about half of the population is contended with how things are, only courage can bring about

some changes. Women are invited to be courageous enough and not to wait for men; the latter will not react as they have nothing to gain but only many privileges to lose. Women were called in newspapers to go and register massively to change the stagnant situation of the Cameroonian women; rather than always being observers of political affairs; they were invited to engage in politics. However, this needs some strong desire and audacity as the journalist reported in *Le Messenger* [31].

Courage. It is based on this word that women of “Ensemble pour la parité” have decided to become active in politics. (...) For this platform, the Cameroonian woman is strong but sometimes lack courage. She is confined to household activities. “*Women should not more be content with doing housework; they should get involved in politics. This is not impossible if there is will and courage*” argue Valery Ze, a member of the platform. According to her, it is a way for the female folk to be recognised. (my translation)

The article starts with the word “courage”; it forms a sentence alone and is written in bold. When one takes the article, this is the first word of the text and among the first word to be seen; this position and the typographical difference are used for emphasis, likewise the third sentence of the excerpt is written in italics. One can understand that, if there is something to remember from the press conference given by this NGO, it is the concept “courage”. In the above extract, the repetition of the word courage (three times) aims to insist on its importance in the construction of a society with equal opportunities given to each sex. The speaker deplores women’s lack of courage; in the above excerpt, this is one of qualities the speaker presents as an essential condition, a prerequisite for a changing society. She concludes by affirming that women entry in political sphere will only be possible if there is willpower and courage.

In the Socio Cognitive Approach of Van Dijk, one finds motivation when actors, based on the societal ideologies, construct their own visions of the world; these visions can aim at legitimating or challenging the social world. *Le Messenger* [33] “Que peuvent les sénatrices du Septentrion” ‘what can female senators of Northern Cameroon do?’ presents five women of the Northern Cameroon who have been courageous enough to register as candidates for Senatorial elections. The article presents these women as those who have decided to challenge social ideologies that do not give possibilities to women to enter the public sphere. Despite the fact that their integration in the list of candidates was due to the quota number imposed by ELECAM, they have been courageous to seize the opportunity and were ambitious. Thus, the call to courage here should be followed by determination to go further.

Determination is the result of the strong desire to see things changing; it calls for firmness of purpose. Women have to take the fight for equity by heart, as they are the only ones who can change the situation; Edith Mongue Din, coordinator of the “Ensemble pour la parité” Association, draws women attention to it:

The fight for parity must first be that of women, as men will never willingly renounce to a society that offers privileges to the masculine gender. Women must mobilise themselves in order to write their own history. Nothing can be done in a day, month ... No delay should not more be taken". Even though she confesses that resistances are many, she also knows that "the on-going force of progress is stronger than ever. (My translation)

Most men will not share power with people who are not ready to fight for; women should therefore struggle for their concern if they want things to change. The supremacy of the masculine gender has been promoted in the society and as men, those benefiting from these advantages are those in power, they are not ready to accept change. Some men are attached to power and the perpetuation of the masculine hegemony through social institutions sometimes stands as an obstacle to the fight for gender equity. Therefore, if women want things to change, they have to make proof of determination.

Determination, we can see from the extract, starts with the commitment to engage oneself to do something to empower the female gender from the moment we are informed of the message of this article. "No delay should not more be taken", Edith Mongo Din implicitly means that women have been postponing their mobilisation for the fight for gender equity to a future period. If women want to integrate the political sphere, they should stop postponing actions. In *Cameroon tribune* [25] "Decision-making positions: Women seek more representation", Delphine Tsanga, the first Cameroonian female minister prescribes to women to be perseverant in their work if they wish to occupy decision-making position. The female folk has to be hard-working as this is the key to success; this is the essential tool Delphine Tsanga gives as secret to women who want to struggle for equity; it is a long and risky process; as to engage herself into politics is to go against traditional discourse.

## 5. Female Participation in Public Life as a Source of Hope for Change

The Female folk in our data are constructed as those capable of bringing changes on the public landscape. In fact, since the end of 1980s, Cameroon is witnessing many difficulties. The country has experienced an unprecedented crisis between 1985-1994, due to the fall of export revenues following the fall of oil prices and principal cash products (cocoa, coffee). The fall of revenues that resulted from the mentioned crisis forces the government to implement various measures to improve the economy. Indeed, the liquidation and restructuring of numerous private and public companies, the freezing of recruitments in the public service, the retrenchment of some civil servants and the steep decline of private investment implemented by the government led to an explosion of under-employment. Despite these reforms, the conditions of living and of activity of Cameroonians remain alarming. In fact, the third Cameroonian Households Survey

(ECAM 3) has revealed that the poverty headcount has been steady at 40% between 2001 and 2007; thus for many decades Cameroonians are witnessing a continuous decrease of their standard of live in almost all the domains (Nguetse et al [13]). The newspapers we analysed portrayed women as a source of hope for change in such a desperate context. Going throughout the articles, one sees that this hope is based on three main arguments: women's past achievements, the belief that women's presence in political sphere would lead to the consideration of women problems and lastly the thought that considering women's problems will lead to positive transformation in the society.

### 5.1. Presenting Women's Achievements to Justify the Hope for Change

The hope based on women's presence in politics is due to some examples the Cameroonian society has witnessed. In an interview published in *Le Messager* [35], Denise Fampou is presented as having redressed an indebted council she inherited. In fact, as outgoing mayor of Douala II council, Denise Fampou is presenting her achievements through an interview; this is something not common on the Cameroon political field, to give an account of one's management of an institution. She is portrayed as somebody who has redressed the falling structure she was given. In the introduction of the interview, Blaise-Pascal Dassié describes Denise Fampou as the "iron lady" who explains how she proceeded to get the Douala II council out of debt; we can see how determination characterises Fampou. In the first question, the journalist asked to her, he presents how the council was by the time she took over:

When you took over the reins of the council, it was highly indebted. Among these debts were included arrears of salaries of about 58,000,000 Fcfa, those of NSIF of about 254,000,000 Fcfa that was rendering the personnel on retirement and even the active one ineligible to retirement pay, dependents' allowances, and medical care if there is an accident at the workplace. Today, can one say that the debt is entirely cleared? (My translation)

The continuation of the interview presents all the methods she uses to save the council economically; moreover, it also shows how she has worked for the social welfare of the population. Even though the last sentence is a question, we think it is a rhetorical one, as the author knows the answer. In the introduction of the article, the journalist writes, "the iron lady explains how she processed to get the Douala II council out of debt". Thus, the journalist who has affirmed this in the introduction is aware the answer to the question will be positive. This first question is a comparison of what the council was before and what it is today; this comparison aims at making visible how harder Fampou has worked and the change witnessed by the Council. This article is like challenging the ideology that men are good leaders as women are better ones; they do correct men's mistakes and even do a report on their management at the end of mandate. Fampou is not the only woman described as good politician; *Cameroon tribune* [28], Ewi Elizabeth (the former Social Democratic

Front, SDF, First Deputy Mayor for Wum from 2002-2007) is presented as another example of good a politician as she is attached to the population's interest.

In *Cameroon tribune* [29], the population give their point of view on the question: "are you favourable to the election of women as mayors?" Four people's opinions are reported: one woman and three men; the woman and two men answered as being favourable and one man is doubtful on the fact that women can assume such roles. Among the three who agree, the woman give an opportunity to women. The two men go further than the woman's point of view; they think women will be better than men will; for them, female mayors are closer to their populations and rigorous in the management of institutions. Arguments they brought to justify their opinions is experience "*In my village, a woman is the mayor and we are really happy*" (my translation) said Martin Angue Ndi a voter in Nkol-Afamba; "*Experience has shown that women are more rigorous than men in their management*" (my translation) declared Emmanuel Nyama, a voter in Yaoundé III. For the two interviewees, electing a woman is bringing change, specifically positive change. Apart from what women have done in the political sphere, hope is also nurtured by the thought that if there are more women elected, problems faced by this gender will be given a greater attention.

### 5.2. Women Presence on Politics and a Better Consideration of Their Issue

Relying on the saying that nobody can defend one's rights more than the concerned, people believe that women's presence in public sphere is an occasion to consider women's problems. Marie Claire Nnana, in an editorial published in *Cameroon tribune* [26] appreciates the fact that women have broken the glass ceiling in the political domain as we have twenty (20) female senators for the pioneer Senate of Cameroon. She concludes by declaring that the presence of these female senators will surely put in place just and fair laws for women. "*Female senators will without any doubt be of a great help in putting in place just and encouraging laws for women*." (my translation) The use of the indicative in this sentence followed by an adverb of certainty; "*without any doubt*" shows how confident the journalist is as far as such a change is concerned.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) [12], after a study of 31 democratic countries, has affirmed women's political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace, among other benefits. As more women reach leadership within political parties and get elected to legislatures in significant numbers, these institutions tend to prioritize issues such as health care, education and economic issues that impact the daily lives of citizens (2013). During a seminar to elect councillors and mayors of the Southwest region reported in *The Post* [41], the Southwest Regional Delegate of Women empowerment and the Family emphasises the necessity to integrate women in councils'

projects and have budgets that take into consideration the women folk; most often, they are not prioritised. The more women are present in decision-making sphere, the more the society will change, one can say. But how would it affect the society?

### 5.3. Improving Women's Conditions and the Development of the Society

Improving women's conditions has an impact on households. In Africa, Women are regularly constructed as the motor of the family welfare and most of the times; they are at the heart of the family entity. As such, ameliorating their living conditions will influence the basic cell of the society, the family. By improving women positions, we are simultaneously strengthening the Cameroonian society as a whole as well as enhancing the country's broader development. "If you want to develop Africa, you must develop the leadership of African women" notes Soukeyna Ndiaye Ba (quoted in EADD [4]), President of Women Development Enterprise in Africa, A Dakar based Non – Governmental Organisation. One can therefore understand why during her campaign, Naomi Nfor, a parliamentary candidate for the Nkambe and Ndu Constituency, did not hesitate to call the population to vote women as they will be voting for the welfare of the entire society. *The Post* [39] reports "*she believes that if the situation of women is improved upon, it would positively affect households in the area*." The use of the verb "believes" rather than another show how confident the candidate is.

It is shown that considering women in public sphere is also a means of sustaining peace. If more than half the population is marginalised, it can lead to an uncontrollable revolt. For a country which is planning its emergence in less than two decades, constructing a peaceful environment for its population is something important so that in unity, Cameroonians (men and women) will build the country of their dreams. International organisations such as United Nations, European Union, and African Union have acknowledged promoting gender equity and women's empowerment is a necessity for the development of a country; according to these organisations, a society cannot achieve its development goals if they do not consider women's problems as a specific issue. United Nations classified it as the third objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); on a scale of eight, putting it third means it is among the prior aspects to be challenged for an efficient and positive transformation of our society. In the newspapers analysed, two women are described as the youngest parliamentarians. Old people who are attached to power govern the Cameroonian society. Thus, women integration in politics is also an occasion to renew the corps. In *Cameroon tribune* [30], men are constructed as oldest members of the parliament whereas women are the youngest. Women's presence in politics has challenged the gerontocracy of the Cameroonian society.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, it could be possible that most media industries convey discourses favourable to maintain and even consolidate dominant patriarchal ideologies. It is also probable that in mass media, men as they are the major actors there continue to relegate women to private spheres. But the supremacy of these perceptions regularly oppressed the social tendency which, even though embryonic, has a significant role to play on the ideologies of tomorrow. This article has showed that despite the masculine domination visible most newspapers articles, there is a call to evolution of mentalities. Thanks to a qualitative analysis, we have seen that women are more and more represented as belonging to the public sphere. The recall of international protocols and policies helps the audience to understand it is a worldwide affair; therefore rejecting women in politics means going against what international organisations have decided with the risk of been punished. Words chosen by journalists while writing articles show how necessary it is for women to fight for equity this contributes to persuade the readership to challenge their patriarchal ideologies on gender and politics. Media industries have chosen to highlight women in politics to break the ceiling glass and help readers to question their perception of gender.

One can remark a certain evolution of mentalities in editing teams; in the middle of women domination by men, there are some discordance, this is a sign some want to see things changing. Madeleine Albright, NDI Chairman [12] corroborates this vision concerning women importance for the wellbeing of our societies. "In the modern world, women's empowerment is not merely a goal, but a cornerstone of democratic growth. This is because women raise issues that others overlook, devote energy to projects that others ignore, reach out to constituencies that others neglect, and help societies move forward together." For her, women's participation in politics includes responsiveness to citizens' needs. Following this opinion, Narayana and Ahamad [11] affirm that media can play a powerful and positive role in the empowerment of women and gender equality. For this effect, they show focus on success stories of established, successful and renowned women in spite of indecent representation of women.

Despite the dominance of patriarchy, some newspapers articles have shown that women are capable of politics, therefore, contributing to a different point of view and even to a transformation of mentalities on gender equity. One can understand why international Organisations affirm media played a role in the numerical increase of women in the Cameroonian political sphere. Newspapers have been the instigators of the change and at the same time, they have been the window portraying the changes of the society. Newspapers' use of language has contributed to the amelioration of gendered ideologies in the Cameroonian political field by (re) constructing and /or deconstructing gendered ideologies. Through its depiction of political activities, media can instigate social and political change and has to be taken as a means of accompany transformation of mentalities.

## References

- [1] Atanga, Lem Lilian (ed). 2013. *Perspectives on Gender and Language in Cameroon*. Bamenda: Langa Research and Publishing CIG.
- [2] Atanga Lem Lilian and Djimeli Alexandre. 2015. "Women in Politics and the Media: The Discursive Construction of Collaboration for Female Leadership in Cameroon." In *Discourse, Politics and Women as Global Leaders*, ed. by John Wilson and Diana Boxer, 169-192. Amsterdam: John Benjamins publishing company.
- [3] Des Freedman Goldsmith. 2008. *The Politics of Media Policy*. Malden, Polity Press.
- [4] EADD news. 2010. *EADD and the Gender*. vol 5.
- [5] Gill, Rosalind. 2007. *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- [6] Holmes, Rebecca and Jones, Nicola. 2010. *How to design and implement gender-sensitive social protection programmes*, Overseas Development Institute.
- [7] Inter-Parliamentarian Union Report: the Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas. 2014. Downloaded at <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reference/2016-07/atlas-electoral-gender-quotas> on 16 February 2021.
- [8] Lazar, Michele. 2018. "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis." In *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*, ed. by Flowerdew John and Richardson John, 372-387. London: Routledge.
- [9] Lazar, Michelle. 2007. "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis" *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4 (2): 141-164.
- [10] Lazar, Michelle. 2008. *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Studies in Gender, Power and Ideology*. London: Palgrave.
- [11] Narayana, Ananta and Ahamad, Tauffiqu 2016 "Role of media in accelerating women empowerment" downloaded at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303998838> on 19 august 2018.
- [12] National Democratic Institute (NDI) Report. 2013.
- [13] Nguetse, Pierre. 2010. *Pauvreté et Vulnérabilité des Ménages au Cameroun [Poverty and vulnerability of households in Cameroon]*. Banque Mondiale.
- [14] Report of the Commonwealth Expert Team (CET). 2013. *Cameroon Legislative and Municipal Elections, September 30*.
- [15] Richardson, John. 2007. *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [16] Rieffel, Rémy. 2005. *Que sont les médias? Pratiques, identités, influences [What are media? Practices, Identity and Influences]*. Paris: Gallimard.
- [17] Tuchman, Gaye, 1978. "The Symbolic Annihilation of Women in the Media." In *Health and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, ed. by Tuchman Gaye; Daniels Arlene Kaplan and Benét James, 9-29. Oxford: Universities Press.



- [18] Van Dijk, Teun. 1998. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.
- [19] Van Dijk, Teun. 2006. "Politics, Ideology, and Discourse." In *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, vol. 9 ed. by Brown Keith, 728-740. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- [20] Van Dijk, Teun. 2009. "Critical Discourse Studies: A Sociocognitive Approach." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Wodak Ruth and Meyer Micheal, 62-84. London: SAGE.
- [21] Van Dijk, Teun. 2014. *Discourse and knowledge. A sociocognitive approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [22] Van Dijk, Teun. 2015. "Critical Discourse Studies: a Sociocognitive Approach." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, ed. by Wodak Ruth and Meyer Micheal, 62-85. London: SAGE.
- [23] Van Dijk, Teun. 2018. "Socio-cognitive approach." In *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*, ed. by Flowerdew John and Richardson John, 26-43. London: Routledge.
- [24] Van Zoonen, Liesbet. 1994. *Feminist Media Studies*. London: Sage.
- [25] *Cameroon tribune* N° 10334/6535 of 03/05/13 "Decision-making positions: Women seek more representation" p. 5.
- [26] *Cameroon tribune* N° 10362/6563 of 14/06/13 "un donner à penser" p. 3.
- [27] *Cameroon tribune* N° 10400/6600 of 07/08/13: "Contentieux des législatives: le tableau des recours" p. 6.
- [28] *Cameroon tribune* N° 10431/6632 of 23/09/13 "Ewi Elizabeth: The "Iron Lady" p. 14.
- [29] *Cameroon tribune* N° 10434/6635 of 26/09/13 "Paroles d'électeurs" p. 5.
- [30] *Cameroon tribune* N° 10455/6656 of 30/10/13: "9e legislature: c'est parti" p. 3.
- [31] *Le Messenger* N° 3777 of 15/02/13 "Les femmes doivent s'inscrire pour peser de leur voix" p. 4.
- [32] *Le Messenger* N° 3831 of 06/05/13 "Que peuvent les sénatrices du Septentrion" p. 5.
- [33] *Le Messenger* N° 3877 of 11/07/13 "Femmes et elections au Cameroun" p. 10.
- [34] *Le Messenger* N° 3891 of 31/07/13 "Les camerounaises courent après la parité" p. 7.
- [35] *Le Messenger* N° 3899 of 13/08/13 "Notre bilan est notre avocat auprès de nos concitoyens" p. 11.
- [36] *The Post* N° 01416 of 15/03/2013 "Bits & Pieces on Senatorial Elections: Elecam should reject lists without female candidates" p. 4.
- [37] *The Post* N° 01440 of 21/06/13 "Socialist Women urge party leaders to remain tenacious" p. 3.
- [38] *The Post* N° 01446 of 12/07/13 "ELECAM urged to disqualify gender insensitive lists" p. 10.
- [39] *The Post* N° 01467 of 23/09/13 "Aspiring MP for Ndu Targets Women" p. 10.
- [40] *The Post* N° 01475 of 1/11/13 "Female MPs to promote gender, education, agriculture" p. 2.
- [41] *The Post* N° 01484 of 18/11/13 "Female Councillors schooled on gender mainstreaming" p. 11.