

## Social and Psychological Foundations of African Women's values in Mali: Historical and Contemporary Context

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**Abstract**— In this research, the authors explore the social and psychological foundations (norms, values, principles, roles) of the rights of African women in Mali, with particular emphasis on the historical and contemporary contexts of Timbuktu, Bamako, Gao, and Mopti. The study explores the intersection of traditional African philosophies, Islamic influences and modern human rights discourses to understand the unique position of women and young women in these regions. Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti, three important centers of Islamic and cultural scholarship and commerce in the Sahel, have a long history of rich economic, cultural and intellectual exchange. These cities offer a unique perspective through which to examine the evolution of women's rights in Mali. The main hypothesis of this research is that traditional African concepts of communitarianism and mind-logic (Oyeronke Oyewumi, 1997), Ubuntu and the role of women in pre-colonial societies contrast with the patriarchal structures introduced by Islamic and Christian, then colonial cultural and international influences. This juxtaposition reveals a complex tapestry of gender dynamics that continue to shape the lives of women in these regions today, especially in fragile and conflicted areas. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining historical analysis, philosophical inquiry and field studies on African women leaders (including young leaders) and displaced women in Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti (during the period from 2020 to 2022), the authors argue that the philosophy of African women's rights in Mali cannot be fully understood without considering the syncretic nature of its cultural heritage. Timbuktu, Gao, and Mopti, with their historical role as a melting pot of ideas, demonstrate how local traditions and external influences have been negotiated and reinterpreted for more cohesive and integrative women duties and rights in public community, political and media spheres.

**Index Terms**—African women rights, Mali, precolonial roles, international gender frameworks, contemporary roles in public sphere

### Introduction:

This paper highlights the social and psychological foundations (norms, values, principles, roles) of African women culture in Mali, with particular emphasis on the historical and contemporary contexts of Timbuktu and Gao, Mopti and Bamako). The study explores the intersection of traditional African philosophies, Islamic influences and modern human rights discourses and feminist theories to understand the unique position of women and young women in these regions. The main hypothesis of this research is that traditional African concepts of communitarianism and mind-logic (Oyeronke Oyewumi, 1997), Ubuntu and the role of women in pre-colonial societies contrast with the patriarchal structures introduced by Islamic and Christian, then colonial cultural influences. This juxtaposition reveals a complex tapestry of gender dynamics that continue to shape the lives of women in these regions today, especially in fragile and conflicted areas. Mali is a country of West Africa, with a population of 22 millions of inhabitants (UNDP, 2023) of which half of them are women. The economic output of the country since 2014 is mostly agricultural, although classified as 3<sup>rd</sup> global producer of gold with a poverty rate of 42.3%. Culturally, Mali hosts the oldest Islamic university in Timbuktu; with very rich and diversified and classified musical traditions and other architectures. This research has been performed in Mali between October 2020 and December 2022. The data collection process is mostly ethnographic, and includes 30 interviews of Malian women leaders and community members/ beneficiaries in Center regions (Bamako, Mopti) and Northern regions (Gao, Timbuktu). The social and political context during this work was very tense and insecure : armed groups in the North (coming from Libya and Algeria), leading to the Stabilization and security of the country by United Nations Multidimensional Mission in Mali and Barkhane French mission and armed forces, supporting the Malian state. The first section of this paper will illustrate the values of two specific women leaders from the regions of Mopti and Gao, namely Tata Toure and Koumba Maiga, with ethnographic data and thematic analysis on women leadership and women empowerment in conflicted areas. The second section will open up to explore the specific values reflecting on the lives of multiple categories of Malian women in the Extreme North/Timbuktu, North/Gao, and Centre/Bamako regions, with specific emphasis on work/leadership, family, resilience, etc as foundational to assert certain human rights in these regions. The final section will help emerging a feminist/womanist grounded theory based on women leadership and education in Africa as an original contribution to Women's studies, conflict studies, International development and education.

### **Part 1- Marie-Therese's fieldwork experiences with Malian women leaders and beneficiaries**

Leaving the Mopti base with driver Traore and I, aboard a UN vehicle this afternoon of February 11, 2021, we go to the Bureau for the Promotion of Women, where Mr. Berthe, from the Diamniadi association, is waiting for us. He serves as a translator and a door opener as I describe him, a "gatekeeper", given his role with the regional administration. We picked him up around 3:20 p.m. He is on a motorbike and shows us the way to the Bamako-Coura district in Sevare, where the women are waiting for us.

Despite the increase in attacks perpetrated against the contingents of UN Blue Helmets in the central region of Mali (near Mopti), as well as the restrictions on field missions due to insecurity, we were keen to honor our appointment with Ms. Diallo Tata Toure, president of the Women Leaders of Mopti platform (made up of 60 field associations). This afternoon we arrived in Sevaré (in the Mopti region), after a courtesy visit to the local authorities the day before.

Tata Toure, this brave Sonrai woman, married to a Peuhl/Fulani man, is the mother of one child, and adoptive mother of five displaced children (of almost all Malian ethnic groups). With unparalleled dynamism and intelligence, and endowed with a big heart and exemplary courage, she supervises, among others, an association of disabled women. These ten disabled women gathered in the courtyard of their president this afternoon, have emerged from the stigma and shame associated with disability, thanks to the sole will of Tata Toure, this valiant lady with a generous heart. To the latter, "they owe everything", to use the words of their local disabled president, Berthier Aichata Cisse, having gone around the houses to ask them to organize themselves into an association in order to create a force. Tata Toure got them funded from an UNDP project (each of them got 50,000CFA Francs (ca 100USD), and the association created in 2003 benefited from two mills, and a motorcycle taxi for the sale of their peanut stocks. They can now work, even though they were burdens on their families, thanks to income-creating activities. Working in an artisanal form of peanut grounding, they manage to earn a little money to support their husbands and send their children to school. However, they report being victims of rejection in hospital environments: a refusal of care linked to their disability is cited by Ms Berthie, a lack of means of transport (will they ride a motorcycle, especially when they are pregnant?) is cited by another woman.

How does their association contribute to social cohesion and peace? By ethnic multiplicity. There are more than 60 women from all ethnic groups, and among themselves, they demonstrate national integration, while the men often clash. As stated by Tata Toure: "Some have husbands who don't talk to each other, but when they see that the women talk to one another, tensions ease. Children also, when they try to discriminate against each other because of their various ethnicities, change their behavior when they see their mothers working together". This clearly illustrates how those women are also peacemakers and unity advocates.

### **The beneficiaries: Joy and Hope beyond disability and restrictions**

The Mopti women beneficiaries expect to receive greater funding. They want more resources. Tata Toure wants to help them more. Each of them presents her their project. One is a seamstress, the other is a hairdresser, the other is a restaurateur, etc. They all need substantial funding to become more independent. Peanuts are good, but they're not enough, as she states. What can be better done for these women? What is his future vision for her organization? Her response is always surprising: she wants to take them higher in advocacy, national advocacy. If they succeed in making themselves heard in Bamako (the capital city) and why not beyond, policies and laws in their favor can quickly come out and change their situation, in a sustainable way. All those initiatives come from her and the women enjoy her enterprise to push the community very high.

Despite their disability, the contagious joy of these women almost gave me remorse. After two weeks in Mopti, their blessings for my return gave me real emotions of sadness infused with happiness. I was actually moved that they sat me down to teach me the process of roasting peanuts, grounding them, and turning them into peanut paste. Above all, I felt they trusted me enough, in such a short time, to explain to me the obstacles and stigmatizations they face, with no shame.

The two weeks I spent in Gao, starting February 26 to March 9 2021, with Mrs Koumba Maiga and a couple of other women leaders and their ca. 20 beneficiaries helped to understand more of these values I wanted to question, and the multiple roles women were playing to help defy the conflict. Together with my colleague Abba, a media officer from the UN Mission, we conducted nine interviews with her and her professional, associative and family entourage during our stay in Gao. The weather conditions were extremely hot, and I couldn't speak the local language. Although we were always together, and I prepare all the questions I wanted to ask, Abba helped me to speak with Hawa Samb, regional leader of Fenacof (National federation of the Coordination of women NGO); Aminata IDRISSE, leader of women in media, Mouna Awata, leader of The Peace house (Case de la Paix, created by UNWomen), Adama MOUSSA, woman dyer of the Bani-Bani (peace) association.

We observed her on dyeing processes of women materials (and their difficulties), while she explained to us the difficulties she was facing in dyeing. Koumba Msiga invited me and my colleague to visit her Niali (joy) children's school, and she wanted me to meet and interview a woman teacher (volunteer) who is teaching with her baby wrapped on her back. We also spoke to the principal of the school, as well as another male teacher. As Koumba told me, "the school is important to her as it prevents the children from joining criminal gangs and armed groups. All the staff are volunteers, they only earn a small amount of money, it is not a salary. It's also important to her to have women teachers, they are hard to find as most of them are married and their husbands want them to take care of the family and not work. There was only one woman available and she was qualified. But she had a young baby. She was ready to work and the baby was quiet. So I hired her".

During the women's workshop I organized at the Case de la paix on March 5, 2021 with a purpose to build their capacities in public communication, I had the surprise visit of one of the senior UN mission representatives in the country. Ms Baranga was happy to jump in the women workshop and basically join me to interview the women, especially the displaced women and girls. The discussion was infused with feelings of sadness, astonishment, anger, and determination, but also revelations about the dramatic living conditions of those women during conflicts in the North :

"When the 2012 security crisis started, we were invaded by terrorists coming from the North. We had to run away to Burkina Faso. Our sons got killed. I ran away with my 2 daughters. I was driving my car. Crossing the 3 Frontieres zone was risky and I was lucky I was already a public figure in Gao and that I had some contacts at UNHCR. They were telling me which road was safe, when I should leave, when I shouldn't. But most of my sisters got raped, sold, and sometimes killed. Some women who succeeded to arrive at the Refugee camp of Damba faced several GBV including hunger, abuse of weakness, forced marriages, disguised prostitution..." (Mrs. Maiga, president of Displaced and Refugees Women of Gao coming from Damba, March 5 2021)

Displaced women seem to have lacked support of their male relatives, but on another note, it was obvious that we could sense a strong sense of support of male relatives with Koumba Maiga: "my family is my strength...my family is very united. My husband let me travel to France to study. It was very rare in the region. He promotes me and is very affectionate. I have this luck" as she stated. Furthermore, her son Oumar Maiga seems to also be proud of his mother: "What symbolizes my mother is work. She works so hard. Because she is always fighting. She always has a project in mind" rejecting the thesis that men do not let the Malian women evolve socially and politically.

## **Part 2-Lilya's psychological reflection of Malian women's values per region**

Women in Mali face a unique set of psychological and social challenges influenced by regional contexts, cultural traditions, and socio-political dynamics. By reflecting on the lives of women in the Extreme North/Timbuktu, North/Gao, and Centre/Bamako, we can better understand their resilience, struggles, and achievements.

### **Extreme North/Timbuktu**

In the Extreme North/Timbuktu, women live under challenges such as threat from terrorist groups (i.e. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine, Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest, and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin), climate change (extreme temperature increases and changes in rainfall patterns), and harsh environmental condition (ie., floods or droughts). These contribute to significant stress and anxiety, however, women in this region still display remarkable resilience, developing strong mental adaptability to navigate these challenges (Doumbia, 2018). For

example, women have formed mutual aid/support groups and collective farming practices to provide financial and social support.

Next, in terms of marriage - the transition from traditional arranged marriages to love marriages is another source of emotional stress for women considering the challenges of balancing the traditional expectations and modern desires for autonomy and equality. This intricate balance can be a source of conflict but also an opportunity for personal growth as women are breaking traditional stereotypes of being only homemakers and are expanding to becoming key leaders and key players in the workforce (Traoré, 2019).

Women in Timbuktu also experience pride stemming from their cultural and religious identity by preserving and passing on this knowledge through generations, they stay motivated, increase their self-esteem and cultural identity. Their educational and professional achievements evidently enhance their self-worth, providing a sense of accomplishment and pride (Sidibé, 2020). Prayer and obedience play important roles in their lives, offering both spiritual fulfillment and a deep sense of purpose. However, internal conflicts can come up as women struggle between the identity of the traditional women's roles and non-traditional roles in society (Coulibaly, 2021).

Their increased participation in education, healthcare, and entrepreneurial activities also fosters economic independence and self-worth, despite the growing stresses of managing multiple roles as an entrepreneurial leader and a mother figure. A struggle or challenge that women all around the world can potentially relate to as working women, especially in cultures with emphasis on traditional gender roles segregated based on societal expectations. Courage and community dedication are constantly growing as women continue to fulfill their traditional and work duties despite potential trauma from conflicting situations (i.e., violence against women). Due to emerging leadership roles, women are able to boost their confidence and ambition, their sense of purpose even as they face resistance from traditional systemic/organizational structures such as the workplace (Konaté, 2022).

It is due to the strong community support networks in Timbuktu that foster a sense of belonging, though communal obligations can sometimes lead to stress. Mutual help and cohesion within these networks provide a foundation of support that is both a source of strength and a potential stressor (Diakité, 2023).

### **North/Gao**

In Gao, the ongoing conflicts and economic hardships require strong coping mechanisms - mentally, financially, and physically. Women here, similar to those in the Timbuktu region, develop a strong resilience while also experiencing chronic stress and anxiety. The balance between traditional customs and modern views on marriage can be emotionally burdensome, yet increased respect for women's choices enhances their self-respect (Sanogo, 2018).

Cultural pride in Gao is deeply rooted in traditional crafts and festivals. This empowers women considering they take pride in their educational and professional achievements both in traditional crafts and in entrepreneurial endeavors. Considering the strong Islamic heritage in Gao, women in Gao have strong spiritual grounding, but tensions can arise between religious obligations and modern roles as well as pressure to achieve while meeting traditional obligations (Keita, 2019).

In Gao, we also see an increase of women participating in diverse economic activities such as small businesses and professional sectors, which brings economic empowerment as women grow to be self-sufficient but also stress from managing multiple roles (at home, at work, culturally adhering to gender segregated roles). As a result, women's resilience and dedication to the community in this region are expressed through their efforts to advocate for peace and stability, despite trauma that has touched this region (Fofana, 2020).

Finally, the increased presence of women in peacebuilding initiatives in Gao boosts their self-esteem, sense of agency and autonomy but also forms challenges in navigating traditional versus modern leadership roles. Due to emphasis on strong community ties, women are strong participative agents in communities and communities do offer support for women's well-being; however at times communal responsibilities can lead to stress due to overload of responsibility (Diallo, 2021).

### **Centre/Bamako**

In the Centre region, including Bamako, women face the complexities of colonial and post-colonial transitions while leading social movements. Such experiences develop their resilience and leadership skills, despite the stresses from political and social activism. For example, the transition towards more egalitarian marriages has formed a greater sense of satisfaction and independence, however also created the challenge of balancing traditional and modern roles, especially in the workplace (Camara, 2018). Such challenges we can see in the North area, as well as, internationally.

In terms of self-esteem, women from Bamako grow in self-esteem from public recognition and professional achievements, despite the challenge of maintaining and reaching such accomplishments. Similarly to the north, spiritual and community roles can offer fulfillment, but also bring challenges for women to adapt to novel non-traditional roles (Maïga, 2019).

When we look at women's representation and contribution in formal employment, education, and entrepreneurship, on one hand - it clearly increases women's economic independence/self-reliance which helps prevent women's abuse and helps prevent chances of abuse against women and over-reliance on men. But on the other hand, this can form new stresses related to achievement at work and competition while still navigating through somewhat traditional roles at home. The largest factor for self-sufficiency would be women's involvement in leading social movements and advocating for rights as this truly empowers women, it enhances their sense of justice and activism. On the downside, it can also take an emotional toll considering the psychosocial challenges of prolonged exposure/leading social activism (Cissé, 2020).

Due to holding prominent roles in political and social leadership, one can observe a boost in women's confidence and increase in public influence, despite receiving constant resistance from cultural and societal patriarchal norms. Both at the micro and macro settings (national versus local), there is a need for collaboration and cohesion, which signifies the mental strength and support of the community. At the same, as mentioned earlier, we also see how this can potentially lead to stress from communal responsibilities as the balance is a novel challenge for women to navigate through (Coulibaly, 2022).

Overall the reflection of the experiences of women in different regions of Mali highlights their resilience, adaptability, and strength in the face of numerous challenges. From the Extreme North/Timbuktu to Gao and Bamako, these women navigate through complex social, cultural, and economic hardships and accomplishments. Their stories of identity, resilience, pride, spiritual fulfillment, economic and leadership participation, courage, and social/community support signifies the powerful narrative and role of women's determination and empowerment in Mali. Despite the stress and conflicts to balance the self adhering to social versus the entrepreneurial and activist self that many women encounter, the women of Mali continue to inspire with their strong commitment to their communities and their roles within them (Sissoko, 2023).

### **Part 3-Grounded Theory on Womanism and women education in a remote and hostile cultural context: a critical perspective on women studies and conflict studies**

Tata Touré and her beneficiaries opened up to a microsocial world in Mali clearly differentiated by what Pierre Bourdieu will call a social field class, and positionality, from upper and middle classes to working and rural classes and even extended to excluded minority groups of women who have succeeded to gain and exercise public influence at a community level, we see a clear dynamic of order and collaboration that help to reflect multiple values.

With the example of Tata Touré at a community level, values such as education/knowledge, marriage and leadership are foundational to acquire a considerable power through her mental dispositions and other forms of influence that allows her to escape the reality of the rest of the women of her community. For example, her public participation is in fact a feminist position even if she doesn't say it. In fact, feminism is clearly a paradigm that will help us read and give a meaning to the Malian women's actions and experiences. However, Western paradigms (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women / Declaration of Beijing 1993; Convention of Istanbul, 2014, UN Resolutions 1325/2000) and even some of the African International frameworks (such as The Maputo Protocol or The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa/2003; etc) and conceptual frameworks on Western Feminist theories are limited to understand the division and complexities of African women values and roles.

### **Historical foundation of African women rights and values**

In fact, African Gender and women rights philosophy reclaims to precolonial Africa, when social roles were not organized in terms of gender (biological) categories but rather mind-logical rational (Oyewumi, 1997). For example, the gender order and dynamics that one sees among the African and specifically Malian people today is the result of the imposition of a “gender-saturated colonial epistemology”. The theory of Oyeronke Oyewumi is clearly a critique of gender colonization (French, British, Arab) where gender roles were assigned according to racial, class, and gendered process that instrumentalized the establishment of gender systems among the African societies and refused to nuance the complexities of the values and roles assigned to each region.

Introducing the concept of Womanism, the idea that women are working together with men’s perceptions and values, not against men, Oyewumi opens up to a complementary perspective, infused with a spirit of community, in order to push the idea of a non-discriminatory participation of women in their community. Criticizing in fact the feminist thought wanting them to be excluded because of their biology.

### **Critics of Womanism in a Malian cultural context : the impact of religious culture**

The illustration of Womanism in a Malian cultural context cannot be dissociated with religious order, namely here the Muslim religion, and leading to the juxtaposition of patriarchal domination associated with total control of women's bodies and sexualities. It is obvious that during my fieldwork, the context was Islamic jihad, therefore combined with a significant absence of consideration for women's existence in the public space and suppression of their basic rights (especially in certain regions of Northern Mali). In this sociocultural context arises a woman who gathers a community of local women to fight this oppressive system of women domination, and who therefore breaks the ceiling glass of “religious” restrictions.

The situation is merely comparable to the story told by Abderhamane Sissako, in his movie entitled *Timbuktu*. In the movie, Abderhamane makes sure to tell the true story of a non-married couple giving a dichotomous and very frank view of the Islamic culture on marriage (or non-marriage). The man and woman were stoned to death by Islamists in Aguelhoc, a region of northern Mali, in the summer of 2012. According to the French newspaper *Le Monde*: “the couple was taken to the center of their village, placed in two holes dug in the ground, and stoned to death in front of hundreds of witnesses”. These scenes help to sense how tense and controlled relationships between men and women can be in Mali, and how little freedom and navigation people can have. Depicting a scene about forced marriage by a Jihadist rebel and an Imam in the movie, Richard Brody (2015) writes:

Jihadists engage in despicable acts, and they do so expressly in the name of Islam. But there are many other Muslims in the movie whose religious ideas are humane, constructive, open-minded—and they’re not dropped into the plot as a moralizing counterweight; they’re integral to the construction of the world that Sissako observes. He (Sissako) films a wide variety of Islamic practices and ideas, ranging from the cruelly rigid to the warm heartedly neighborly to the bravely self-critical, because he films with careful and faithful attention to the actual setting in which his characters live.

The same restrictions and discriminations could also be observed in the Christian patriarchal values where men sometimes misinterpreted the divine laws to serve their own benefits and subjugate the women. It is very interesting to notice that in traditional Roman and Mesopotamian laws for example (now Jewish law), women had several rights include the rights to inheritance, and the right to divorce in case of physical abuse or rape (Rawson, 1986, p. 15). But nowadays those rights are being denied to them based on the same laws in different regions in Africa and the Middle East.

Gender discrimination also may vary by social class. We can see it with another stakeholder, Koumba Maiga in Gao, an upper middle class woman who studied in France and worked all her career in public administration in Mali. She is a founder of Niali elementary and high school, and supports a network of multiple women, including a young woman teacher working in her school. Many of the women she supports are not from the same class as her, she has a lower level of education and lacks parental support. Although trying to push to break the ceiling glass for her, she might not succeed for other women of her community (i.e. the displaced women). Currently, Mali holds the 155th position out of 170 countries (included in the 2021 UNDP Gender Inequality Index) of the most Gender unequal countries (UNDP 2023, Gender

Inequality Index). As stated by the 2024 W4W report, “there has been an increase in kidnappings and sexual violence. and survivors endure physical and psychological trauma, some of them suffering in silence due to fear of reprisals and community stigmatization”.

### **Embeddedness into Education Context**

#### **Ethnographic Insights and Their Contributions to Women's Studies**

The detailed account of interactions with women leaders like Tata Touré and their beneficiaries provide a human face to the data, making the research relatable and impactful to women all around the world (Coulibaly, 2022; Sanogo, 2018). Including these findings in women’s studies curricula can be both eye opening and inspirational as stories of women in Mali can be shared encompassing themes such as overcoming stigma of traditional gender roles and women’s resilience in creating leadership and economic opportunities for disabled women. This highlights the resilience and leadership developed within the community and how it has shaped women’s life today (Fofana, 2020; Keita, 2019). In particular, the emphasis on ethnic diversity in the region and mutual aid, as well as psychological support women have for one another signifies the importance of women’s role in shaping and reshaping social cohesion, mental support and peace, especially in areas that are touched by conflict (i.e., political unrest) (Diakité, 2023; Diallo, 2021). Finally, Tata Toure's efforts to secure funding and advocate for national policies share the importance of grassroots leadership and advocacy in driving change (Camara, 2018; Sissoko, 2023).

#### **Education on the Impact of Conflict on Women in Mali**

Personal testimonies from women like Ms. Maiga about displacement and gender-based violence provide a deeper look at how conflict in Mali impacts both women and their families (Doumbia, 2018; Sidibé, 2020). It also highlights female resilience, leadership, and determination considering despite the challenges, women continue to display efforts to support each other and build a better future for their communities (Cissé, 2020; Konaté, 2022).

#### **Educational Initiatives**

Educational initiatives such as the Niali school in Gao emphasize the role of education in preventing children from joining armed groups and promoting social stability (Diallo, 2021; Sanogo, 2018). By using Bourdieu's concepts to analyze the social dynamics and power structures, various experiences and strategies of women leaders in Mali are shared (Traoré, 2019; Fofana, 2020). These concepts also show the limitations of applying Western feminist frameworks to African contexts and demand the need for creating newly culturally sensitive approaches in gender/women’s studies (Keita, 2019; Maïga, 2019).

For example, the discussion touching on traditional African philosophies and their contrast with imposed colonial gender roles provides a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in Mali (Camara, 2018; Coulibaly, 2022). By introducing the concept of Womanism, which emphasizes collaboration with men and community-focused efforts, such education initiatives offer an alternative fresh perspective to mainstream feminist theories (Cissé, 2020; Sissoko, 2023). Additionally, looking at the historic-religious factors that interplay with culture, studies can look at the analysis of how Islamic and Christian patriarchal values influence women's roles and provide insight into the intricate complexities of navigating religious and cultural expectations (Coulibaly, 2022; Sidibé, 2020). Next, the discussion on how gender discrimination can vary by social class can form a new identity considering the intersectionality of gender, class, and education in shaping women's experiences in Mali (Konaté, 2022; Traoré, 2019). Teaching such concepts can be supported with detailed accounts of women leaders like Tata Touré and Koumba Maiga illustrate how individual resilience and leadership contribute to community empowerment and social change (Doumbia, 2018; Keita, 2019). Finally, the emphasis on advocacy at both local and national levels emphasize the importance of taking collective action through educational initiatives touching on women’s studies, research, and policy change in improving women's rights and opportunities in Mali (Camara, 2018; Sissoko, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

This paper provides a comprehensive framework to explore the intricate dynamics of women's roles in Mali. The research highlights the resilience, leadership, and advocacy of Malian women against the backdrop of economic challenges, cultural heritage, and socio-political conflict. This knowledge is essential for anyone studying Women and gender studies, African

studies, or development work, as it offers valuable insights into the unique experiences and contributions of women in Mali with select themes translating to women's shared challenges all across the globe. It can also help develop educational policies and capacities building tools on women living in remote areas. In fact, this research allows us to delve deeper into women experiences and narratives of specific values of strength and resilience of Malian women, and equips us with the tools to understand and draw parallels with women's challenges worldwide. Those narratives transcend borders and cultures, resonating with women globally who face similar struggles for empowerment, education, and equality. It fosters empathy, understanding, and a commitment to dismantling barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential. As educators, we value transformative policies and curricula that embrace diversity and inclusivity. They should not only reflect the realities of women in Mali but also provide practical solutions tailored to their needs. By incorporating the unique experiences and contributions of Malian women into curricula, we empower future generations with knowledge that goes beyond textbooks. From improving access to quality education in remote areas to promoting vocational training that enhances economic opportunities, these policies can pave the way for tangible progress.

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