

Women's Political Representation in Norway and Namibia: Stark Differences, Stark Similarities

by

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## **Abstract**

Throughout the world, women are underrepresented in national parliaments. Scholars have determined that the primary causes of this gender gap are: electoral systems, gender quotas, and political parties. Yet their determination has been based on single-nation studies or global comparative studies, which neglects an important area of research—namely, the comparative study. In this paper, I address that gap with a comparative study of Norway and Namibia, where women have nearly reached equal representation in the parliaments that represent them. Despite the vast differences between these two countries, there are commonalities between them that can help us to better understand why women are represented at the level they are in these countries. Specifically, what Norway and Namibia share are the party list electoral system, voluntary party quotas, and political parties that have women in leadership positions. The research confirms past findings and further emphasizes the importance of these elements for furthering female representation.

## **Acknowledgments**

I'd like to thank my dogs: Cooper, Georgia, Daisy, Gurley, and Rascal, formerly known as Champ.

## Introduction

Women comprise nearly half the world's population and, yet only twenty-five percent of all the members of national parliaments world-wide are women. In 2021, in only twenty-one countries are women heads of state or government. One hundred and nineteen countries have never had a woman as their leader (UN Women 2021). This gap between the population of women and the percentage of women represented in their governments paints a solid picture of the status of women's political participation across the globe. That is, women are underrepresented in one of the fields that is most relevant to their own lives. Politics determine women's health, economic rights, educational rights, and other aspects of women's lives, making women's representation in political office incredibly important to all women worldwide.

Women's journey into direct participation in politics has mainly occurred within the last one hundred and thirty years. While women have always had some influence in politics through their relationships with men, it was not until they received the right to vote that they were directly involved. In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote (Women and the Vote 2021). Soon after, the other European countries followed and then the rest of the world. The latest place to allow women to vote, though only in municipal elections, has been Saudi Arabia in 2015 (Quamar 2016). What must be noted here, however, is that in the times when women did not have the right to vote, most of the rest of the world, e.g. non-white men and men without land or wealth, did not either. Furthermore, non-white women did not receive the right to vote in many countries until much later than their white counterparts. While women's rights to vote in general did lag behind men's rights to vote, considerations must be

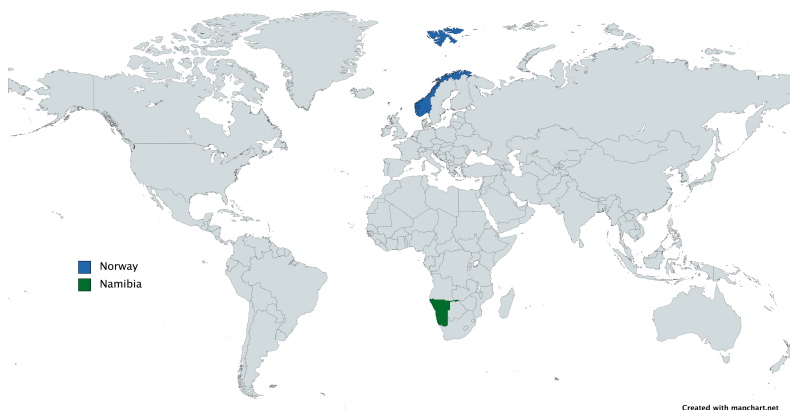
made to the historical context of voting in general, that it was a privilege of the white and wealthy, and that women of color's rights to vote were even further behind.

Once women's right to vote was established, the next step in women's journey into political participation was running for and being sworn into office. The first state to allow women to do so was Finland. In 1906, Finland passed an act that allowed women to run for political office. By 1907, nineteen women were sworn into Finnish parliament (Finland Promotion Board 2020). In terms of higher offices, the first woman to be the head of a government, not the head of state or ceremonial figure, in a state that still exists to this day was Vigdís Finnbogadóttir of Iceland in 1980 (Britannica 2021). Since this first woman was elected, seventy-five countries have had female heads of government. In fact, some have had multiple. The country who has had the most female leaders is Switzerland with 5 total (Women's Power Index 2020). Once again, it is important to note that political offices have historically been associated with those who are white and wealthy. Non-white men have had a difficult task of being represented in office and non-white women have had an even more difficult time, especially in western countries.

As was touched on in previous paragraphs, women still lag behind men in terms of representation in political office. Even so, there are some countries that do significantly better than others in having women in office. Two such countries are Norway and Namibia. They respectively rank as numbers 14 and 15 in the world for having women in their parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union Open Data 2021). What is most interesting is how they have major differences between them and yet are incredibly close in how they are able to put women into political office. For instance, they are less than one percent away from one another as to the percentage of women in Norway's parliament and in Namibia's parliament's lower house, the National Assembly (Inter-Parliamentary Union Open Data 2021). These two countries excel

when compared to the representation of women in many other states, even to those who are their neighbors. They are so similar in this way and at the same time are so different in how their governments function, their geographic locations, their cultures, and a variety of other factors, making them ideal candidates for “most different” comparative methods research design. This is why I have chosen them as the case studies of this paper.

The goal of this thesis is to better understand factors that are associated with higher female legislative representation. The focus comparison of Norway and Namibia should result in the identification of factors, if there are any at all, that indicate and influence the percentage of women in office in the cases of Norway and Namibia with hope to expand this understanding into the broader scope of women’s participation in political office throughout the world. The first section of this paper examines past research on the status of women’s participation in politics throughout the world and goes into the common themes and takeaways from this work. The second section focuses on Norway and the status of women in that country. The third section is on Namibia and the status of women in that country. The fourth section compares and contrasts the two countries and their relationships with women’s political participation. The thesis concludes with how this information can be used in the wider realm of women’s representation in political offices throughout the world.



## Chapter 1: Literature Review

As women have only gained access to political office in most countries within the past one hundred or so years, women's political representation is a newer topic of study. Nevertheless, it has been looked into heavily both in the past and in the modern day. The majority of this research can be broken down into broad studies at a global level and studies that focus on specific countries or specific factors in specific countries. The research that is global primarily focuses on the status of women in politics in the world at large, focusing on a hundred or so countries at a time. The more specific research is on women's representation in either specific countries or regions throughout the world. In general, scholarship on the subject of women's political representation mostly surrounds topics such as what affects women's political aspirations, the ability of women to get into political office, what type of legislation women pass while in office, the kind of scrutiny women face when in office, and the affects of women being in office on other women and their countries at large.

The specific topics or themes most relevant to my research are electoral systems, political parties, and gender quotas. When researching women's political representation, it is likely to see these topics come up. They are vital to examine and provide an ample baseline for one to begin researching questions concerning the topic at hand. Each of these topics provide a new aspect of women's political participation to consider such as why women are represented better or worse in certain countries, how legislation and non-governmental actors can affect women's political participation, and the effects women actually being in office have on other women running for office. Despite how abundant research on this matter is, there is still work to be done and more to be said on the topic of women's representation in political office.



## Electoral Systems

When discussing women's political representation, it is important to analyze the kind of governments and political systems that are being represented. For the purposes of this paper and as is common amongst scholarship on this topic, the political representation of women will be discussed solely in those countries who are democratic and free. In order to qualify for this criteria, a country must be ranked as free by the Freedom House. This criteria is important as measuring the representation of women in non-democratic countries is difficult as their methods of getting into office are significantly different than the methods of those who use elections to receive their representation. This is why most of the work done on women's political representation is done only on those countries who are democratic.

Discussion on electoral systems in democratic countries is prevalent amongst those researching women's political representation. For the most part, this discussion can be broken down into three categories of electoral systems: those countries with single-member districts, those with multi-member districts, and those who have a combination of both. Single-member, also commonly called majoritarian, districts occur when an electoral district is represented by one officeholder. In these cases, a candidate wins their district by getting a larger percentage of the vote than their opponent. A multi-member district, or proportional representation, is when an electoral district is won by multiple officeholders. The ways in which multi-member districts operate is variable. What occurs most often is that constituents vote for a party, rank candidates, or a mix of both occurs in which one votes for both a candidate and a party. The type of electoral systems in which the type of districts are mixed between single-member and multi-member are

usually due to regional differences in election rules or are cases in which constituents both vote based on party and the decision of who has won is based on who receives the most votes.

The studies analyzing the effects of single-member districts versus multi-member districts on women's political representation typically focus on the differences of the percentages of women in office in the different systems. The results that have come from this research almost unanimously decide that proportional representation or multi-member districts are better than majoritarian representation or single-member districts. In fact, twice as many women get elected to national parliaments under proportional representation than they do under majoritarian (Norris 2006). Combined or mixed systems of representation stand between single-member districts and multi-member districts in their percentages of women in office (Norris 2006). Even as a country shifts from one electoral system to another, do the percentages of women in office change. For example, New Zealand shifted from single-member districts to multi-member districts in 1993 and women's representation promptly went from 16.5% in 1991 to 21.2%. By 1996, 29% of parliament was composed of women. (Norris 2006). Further research on this matter proves that electoral systems do matter for women's representation in parliaments. Broader studies have shown that shifts from single-member districts to multi-member districts can increase the percentage of women in office significantly and newer research even says that a combination of the two systems may provide an even greater impact (Salmond 2011).

One of the major reasons as to why electoral systems with single-member districts perform worse than those with multi-member districts in terms of women's representation is related to parties. In single-member districts, political parties tend to run candidates who they believe have a good chance of winning. In most cases, these candidates are men. In multi-member districts, parties have reason to balance the ticket between diverse candidates with

ties to different social groups, e.g. women, and candidates who represent different parts of their party (Htun 2005). As constituents are voting not just for one candidate in these systems, parties can take more chances with who they run and try to use the diversity of candidates to attract different social groups to their party.

The problems found with research on electoral systems are that there are often exceptions to the research and that there are many issues that cannot be solved by changing an electoral system. An example of an exception to this research is when majoritarian systems, such as Australia, elect more women than those countries with proportional party list systems (multi-member systems), such as Israel (Norris 2006). When these exceptions arise, it raises questions about what other factors are at play. The factors that also need to be considered when speaking about women's political representation are the number of candidates per district, gender quotas, party ideologies, and party organization (Norris 2006). These factors heavily influence whether or not female candidates are given a chance in the first place, changing the data to be significantly less straightforward.

When discussing electoral systems, it is important to also note how quotas and political parties tie in. Both of these subjects are often mentioned when researching the subject and have a significant part to play in women's political representation under electoral systems. Quotas help to ensure a certain number of women are put into office, providing a minimum amount of representation for women, and are a vital part of the elections themselves. While political parties do not have the legal requirements quotas do for women's representation, they have informal requirements for women's participation. If half of the voter base is women, it is likely that political parties feel pressure to gain their votes and support by putting women in the running for political offices as well as putting women in positions of power within the political party itself.

As a major part of research on women's political representation is on these subjects, they have warranted sections of their own and discussion on these topics will follow soon.

### Gender Quotas

Gender quotas are one of the methods most commonly used to increase women's political representation worldwide. To be precise, 118 countries and territories, over half the countries in the world, use some type of gender quota in their elected offices (Dahlerup et al. 2014). The use of gender quotas has a relatively short history. While they first emerged in the 1970s, it did not become common to have them until the 1990s when gender quotas became a global trend. During this period, quotas appeared in over 50 countries and by 2000, 40 more had introduced them (Crocker 2010). The thinking behind the implementation of these quotas was that they were a fast-track to gender equality and that they would put women in the political offices previously unavailable to them (Dahlerup 2006). Due to the popularity of this trend, scholarship on gender quotas has come to the forefront of research on women's political participation.

In terms of gender, quotas can be broken down into three major categories. These categories are candidate quotas, reserved seats, and gender-neutral quotas. Candidate quotas are the type of quotas in which a minimum percentage of candidates for an election must be women and/or political parties' lists of candidates for an election must have a certain percentage of women (Dahlerup 2006). Reserved seats are when there are a certain number of seats specifically for women in a parliamentary house. The percentage of seats that are reserved is around 30 or 40 percent, what is known as the "critical mass" for women's representation (Dahlerup 2006). Gender-neutral quotas are gender-neutral in that they do not specifically say a certain gender needs to maintain a number of seats. Instead, with these quotas, no gender may have more than

60 percent or less than 40 percent of positions either on a party list or in a parliament (Dahlerup 2006).

There are many arguments for and against quotas. Arguments in support of quotas center on how they assist women in overcoming the barriers that they face in getting their fair share of seats and how women's experience is needed in politics, especially on the legislation that directly affects them. Additionally, some arguments focus on how men currently occupy around 80 percent of the parliamentary seats in the world and ask how this statistic is justified (Dahlerup 2006). Those that are critical of gender quotas focus on how they do not promote true equality. This is as if everyone does not have equal opportunities for the seats in parliaments, then parliaments are not elected based on notions of equality. Furthermore, many believe that political election should be about who has the best ideas, not because of someone's gender (Dahlerup 2006).

Gender quotas have been proven to be somewhat effective in getting women into office. Out of the 37 countries who have more than 30 percent or more women in their lower houses of parliament, 80 percent use some form of a gender quota (Dahlerup et al. 2014). Furthermore, since the inception of gender quotas in the 1990s, the percentage of women in political office has more than doubled (World Bank 2021). With this statistic, it is difficult to know whether or not to attribute the increase solely to gender quotas. It is possible that the adoption of gender quotas signifies a change in public attitudes and beliefs which can also lead to the election of female candidates. However, gender quotas have certainly played a major and vital role. What is often not mentioned but equally important is the drawbacks to gender quotas, such as how gender quotas appear to increase women's representation at the expense of minority men's election odds (Hughes 2011).

## Political Parties

Women's involvement in political parties is a major aspect of women's involvement in political office. This is as in order for someone to be in a political office, it is likely that they will have to be first involved in a party. Moreover, political parties directly affect what choices are available to voters. If a political party does not put forth female candidates, then there will be little to no women in office. In this way, political parties are the gatekeepers to women's political representation (Kunovich et al. 2015). The type of research surrounding women in political parties and how women's representation in political office correspond with one another mainly focuses on the overall influence of women in their political parties, what happens when women are given highly ranking positions in parties, and how women are treated within their parties.

Within the last hundred or so years, many women have reached the higher ranks of their political parties. What researchers have noticed from this is that as women have reached these positions, it has become increasingly difficult for the parties themselves to ignore the problems of women's representation. That is, with more women among the top ranking male officials, party leaders have become more willing to take measures that ensure women are given access to national legislators (Caul 2001). In summation, if women are in power, it becomes difficult to exclude them in the future (Caul 2001).

What the involvement of women in political parties helps to highlight is how women are given a different set of rules to play by in politics than men. This is exemplified in how women are more likely than their male counterparts to be selected for leadership in failing or struggling parties and are also more likely to leave their roles when there are major losses (O'Brien 2015). Therefore, women's leadership roles in political parties are much more demanding than men's.

Women are set up to fail often and when they do, they are removed from their high standing positions, resulting in less women in these positions of power and less confidence in women's ability to lead.

When women are given leadership positions in political parties and these parties do not fail, women make strides in increasing their representation. For instance, studies have shown that female party leaders are able to increase the amount of female candidates in proportional representation systems and that in majoritarian systems, female party leaders help female candidates get elected (Kunovich et al. 2005). Therefore, it is incredibly important for women to be in leadership positions in political parties. That is there is a direct affect on women's political representation when women are given power in political parties.

An additional note on political parties is that there is a connection between political parties and gender quotas. As women become high ranking in political parties, there are greater chances that these political parties will adopt gender based quotas (Caul 2001). This is because as women are given power, they are more able to emphasize how there are not enough women in parliament and how lacking parliament is in gender equality. This then allows them to directly pressure their parties to adopt quotas, pushing more women into office or at least into candidate lists (Caul 2001).

The central topics covered in the research surrounding women's representation in parliaments are of electoral systems, gender quotas, and political parties. From previous research, it can be seen that these aspects of countries significantly impact women's political representation and that research on these topics is important for understanding women's status across the world. Thus, previous research has provided a baseline for this thesis.

While scholars have determined the primary causes of the gender gap, there is still need for further research. Their research has been based disproportionately on single-nation studies or global comparative studies. A significant arena for further confirmation of that research exists—namely, in the form of the comparative study. I fill this gap in the literature through a comparative analysis of Norway and Namibia which utilizes a “most different” comparative method research design, providing further insight into the underlying dynamics of women’s unequal political representation across the world.



## Chapter 2: Methodology

### Framework of the Paper

Data from both the Freedom House and the Inter-Parliamentary Union provided the initial information used for case selection. Because the thesis topic is female representation in government, only democratic countries would be considered. Thus, only countries that were rated free by the Freedom House were considered as potential cases. These “free” countries have legitimate elections that determine the percentage of women in office. Those who are not considered “free” do not and so comparison of female representation in government between “free” and “not free” cases would not be methodologically sound. Once those countries not considered “free” were taken out, I was left with 80 countries remaining out of the 210 countries and territories that the Freedom House measures (Freedom House 2021). These 80 countries ranged vastly in their geographical locations, electoral systems, and scores on women’s political participation.

Out of these 80 countries, there were several cases that are close in scores with one another in terms of the percentage of women’s political participation in parliaments and yet incredibly different from one another. For example, the countries of Samoa and Japan, two vastly different countries, grace the bottom of the list with respectively 10 and 9.9 percent of their lower or single houses being women. Other unlikely pairings whose percentages of women in their parliament’s lower or single houses are very similar to one another included the United States of America and Bulgaria, the United Kingdom and Dominica, and Canada and Croatia, all ranking in the middle tier of women’s representation (Parline: the IPU’s Open Data Platform 2021).

Near the top of the list at 14th and 15th places for women’s representation in parliaments worldwide are Norway and Namibia. As seen in chart 1.1 below, Norway’s parliament is composed of 44.4 percent women while Namibia’s lower house is composed of 44.2 percent (Parline: the IPU’s Open Data Platform 2021). As they are both ranked “free” by Freedom House and are highly ranked in female representation but also contain significant differences from one another, these two countries fulfilled the criteria for “most different” comparative analysis. Given the vast economic, social, geographical, and historical differences between Norway and Namibia, any similarities between the two should provide insight into what makes a country successful in promoting female representation in parliament. Given the differences in types of governments, electoral systems, and other factors concerning women’s representation between Norway and Namibia, the focused comparison should shed light onto what impact these factors have on female representation.

	<b>Lower or Single House</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>Total Seats</b>	<b>Number of Women</b>	<b>% of Women</b>
<b>Norway</b>	169	75	44.4
<b>Namibia</b>	104	46	44.2

*Chart 1.1: Data Pulled From The Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments as of January 2021*

For the purposes of this paper, the lower house of Namibia will be compared to the single house of parliament in Norway. The Inter-Parliamentary Union compares parliaments in this way. The reasons for this are not only to continue in line with the data but also because of how Namibia’s parliament works. Namibia has an upper and lower house of parliament but the lower house is more powerful. The lower house actually creates bills while the upper house solely

reviews bills and makes recommendations for legislation (Parliament of the Republic of Namibia 2021). Therefore, it is more worthwhile to compare the countries by the houses of parliament that are in power, Namibia's lower house and Norway's single house.

### “Most Different” Comparative Methods Research Design

As noted before, the method of comparison used in this thesis is the “Most Different” comparative methods research design. This method consists of comparing cases that are very different from one another that have a common dependent variable. Therefore, any other variable present in both of the cases can be regarded as an independent variable. The cases here, Norway and Namibia, are vastly different countries who are nearly the same in their percentages of women in parliament. Their percentages of women in their parliaments are therefore the dependent variable studied here. Those independent variables between the two countries are explained in the section below called “Variables.”

The differences between these countries that make them such good candidates for this analysis are their political histories, levels of economic development, GDPs, GDPs per capita, and levels of human development. Norway has been an independent country for over one hundred years while Namibia has only been so for 41 (The Royal House of Norway 2012; Britannica 2021). Norway is a wealthy country with a high GDP and high GDP per capita. Namibia is significantly less wealthy with a low GDP and a very low GDP per capita, especially when compared to Norway's (World Bank 2021). Furthermore, the levels of human development in these countries are extremely different to one another with Norway being first in the world for human development and Namibia being in the lower-middle (Human Development Reports 2021). Within the following chapters, these differences will be further explained.

## Variables

The main focus of this paper is the factors that influence the percentage of women represented in parliaments. These factors that have previously been researched to influence women's representation have been electoral systems, gender quotas, and political parties, as was noted in the literature review section of this paper. However, conventional wisdom often points out other variables as likely to be important. Some think that women's equal representation first requires a country to be developed. Others argue that women's equality depends on culture and religion. Thus it is important to analyze other elements, such as economics, political history, and other aspects of a society to determine their possible impact on women's political representation.

In this thesis, multiple characteristics of Norway and Namibia are explored. These variables can be divided into independent and dependent variables. The independent variables analyzed will include each country's history of women's rights, electoral system and type of government, human development ranking, level of economic development, GDP and per capita GDP, women's economic role, and political parties. These variables were chosen as they are both what scholarship has previously focused on and are new variables that I believe will either have an impact on the percentage of women in office or will provide an interesting look into what makes Norway and Namibia different from one another.

The dependent variables of this research are the countries' respective percentages of women represented in either the lower house of parliament in Namibia or the single house of parliament in Norway. Each of the independent variables will help present the differences and similarities between the two countries with hope to help determine which variables are important in determining whether or not a country will have high levels of women's representation.

## Chapter 3: The Case of Norway

### An Overview of Norway

Norway is ranked first in the world for human development by the Human Development Index. Their index is .957 out of a possible total of 1. The world average as of 2021 for the index is .737 (Human Development Reports 2021). This index is calculated based on a combination of factors: knowledge/education in a country, standard of living in a country, and life expectancy and health in a country. What this index means for Norway is that Norway has a high standard of living, a high life expectancy, and many expected years of schooling (Human Development Reports 2021).

Norway has both a high GDP and a high GDP per capita. Their GDP, as of 2019, is 403.336 billion in USD (World Bank 2021). Norway's GDP per capita, as of 2019, is 75,419 USD (The World Bank 2021). For both of these measurements, Norway ranks high in the world. According to the CIA, Norway ranked 14th in 2021 for GDP per capita (Central Intelligence Agency 2021).

### The History of Women's Political Rights in Norway

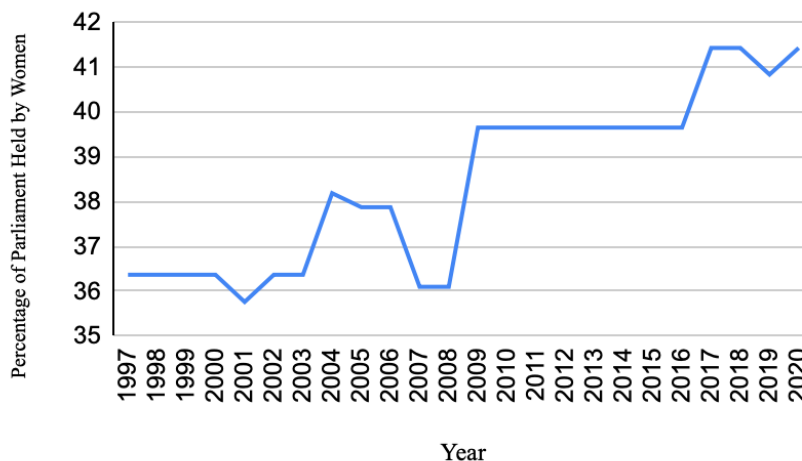
Like much of Europe, women's political rights in Norway began to be considered and put into legislation in the late 1800s to the early 1900s. In 1901, women in Norway were granted limited rights to vote and were given the ability to run for office for the first time, though only in municipal elections. Following this, in 1906, the first woman, Mathilde Schjødt, in Norway became a government official. In 1907, women were granted the right to vote in the general elections for the Norwegian Parliament and to be elected for further political offices (The

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud 2007). This voting was limited, however, to women who were over 25 and met a certain tax bracket (Oxford University Press 2012). In 1911, the first woman, Anna Rogstad, was elected to parliament as an alternative representative. Finally, in 1913, every Norwegian woman obtained the right to vote (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud 2007).

In the middle to late twentieth century, Norwegian women made many gains in politics. In 1945, the first woman cabinet member, Kirsten Hansteen, was appointed. In 1965, Aese Lionæs, became the first woman to serve as President of one of the chambers of parliament. In 1968, Lilly Helena Bølviken became the first woman to be a Supreme Court judge. Excitingly for Norwegian women, the first female prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, was elected in 1981. The first president of the parliament, which is a position in the parliament's administrative body, was Kirsti Kolle Grøndahl in 1993 (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud 2007).

The twenty-first century has been an excellent time for women's representation in Norway. In 2007, was the first time in which there was ever a majority of women in any Norwegian governmental administration. This occurred when the Prime Minister's cabinet was reshuffled and the cabinet became majorly composed women ministers (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud 2007). In the period between 1997 and 2020, women were very successful in parliament, with the proportion of women in the national parliament staying between 35.758 percent and 41.42 percent, as shown by figure 1.2 below. As of 2021, 44.4% of the parliament are women, with women taking up 75 of the 169 seats (Parline: the IPU's Open Data Platform 2021). Furthermore, the current prime minister in 2021 is a woman, Erna Solberg of the Conservative Party.

Figure 1.2: Proportion of seats held by women in Norway's National Parliament



### The Electoral System and Government of Norway

Norway is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The monarchy is one of the oldest institutions in Norway and has ruled the country since around the year 885. Since the installation of the monarchy, Norway has had more than 60 sovereigns (The Royal House of Norway 2006). A portion of these monarchs were not strictly Norwegian, however, as for a major part of the last millennium, Norway was either in a union with Denmark or Sweden. First, Denmark became a part of the country and was so for nearly 500 years. In 1814, this union was dissolved and within the same year, there was a union between Sweden and Norway. In 1905, Sweden and Norway's union was broken and the current monarch's house came to rule the country (The Royal House of Norway 2007). What has changed since the inception of monarchy in Norway is that today, the king is mostly a figurehead. The king's roles as head of state are ceremonial, such as being the one who must open the National Parliament each year, visiting other countries, and hosting foreign heads of state (The Royal House of Norway 2012). In fact, the king is the commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces but the real control of the armed forces is in the parliament and prime minister.

The national parliament of Norway is called the Storting. It is a unicameral parliament with 169 members that are elected every four years (Freedom House 2020). Unlike many parliamentary systems, there are not by-elections, elections that take place when there is a vacancy in parliament between the general elections, and parliament cannot be dissolved by either the monarch or prime minister. The Storting's role in Norway is to pass new legislation, repeal existing legislation, supervise the Government which is the executive branch, determine the annual budget, and other legislative duties (Stortinget 2021). Out of the Storting comes the prime minister.

The prime minister of Norway does not have many powers outside of controlling the parliament and the cabinet, and therefore the executive branch. In fact, they do not have the typical power to advise the monarch to dissolve the parliament and call for a snap election (Stortinget 2021). As mentioned before in this paper, Norway's current prime minister is a woman, Erna Solberg.

The prime minister's cabinet forms the executive branch. It is called the Statsrådet and is composed of the most senior government ministers. In name these ministers are chosen by the king, but in actuality they are chosen by the prime minister (Encyclopædia Britannica 2021). Due to this technicality, the Statsrådet is a part of the executive branch instead of the legislative. The duties of this branch are to submit budget proposals and other government builds (Hong Kong's Legislative Council Secretariat Research Office 2014) This branch is also known as "the Government." So, in the case of Norway, the government and the Government are two different things.

The Norwegian electoral system is both composed of direct elections and proportional representation in 19 multi-member districts. Voters both directly vote for representatives in their



district and vote for a party who then uses a party list in order to put candidates in office. The number of seats a party gets is therefore proportional to the number of votes received for the party in any given electoral district. Additionally, there are “seats at large.” These seats are used to balance out any issues with the portion of votes received and the number of seats given to any party. A party must receive at least four percent of the vote in order to obtain one of these seats and are given one if they would have received a seat if there was one larger district instead of several smaller ones (Stortinget 2021). Gender quotas are another aspect of Norway’s electoral system but due to their significance to women’s representation in parliaments, this factor is explored separately below.

### Gender Quotas in Norway

Norway was the first country in the world to implement any sort of gender quota. In the mid-1970s, Norway implemented what are called voluntary political party quotas (Caul 2001). These quotas have been influential across the world, causing many countries to implement gender quotas of their own. In fact, it started the trend mentioned earlier that resulted in around ninety countries having gender quotas of some sort by the year 2000 (Crocker 2010).

Voluntary political party quotas are quotas in which political parties implement quotas for their own party lists for elections without legislation from the government itself (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2021). Due to these quotas being completely voluntary, they are not consistently the same across all political parties in Norway. For example, the Liberal party has gender quotas for only internal party organization while other parties have quotas for both internal party organization and for their election lists. Five of the major Norwegian political parties, with the exception of the Conservative Party and the Progress party,

have voluntary agreements of “minimum representation.” Minimum representation in this context means that there must be at least 40 percent male candidates or female candidates (Teigen 2015). This is a more gender-neutral type of gender quota, as mentioned previously in this paper, but it specifically aimed at increasing women’s representation.

Before the implementation of gender quotas in Norway, the country was already one of the world leaders in women’s representation. In fact, women already held 25 percent of parliamentary seats belonging to the country's Labour Party prior to their implementation. Since their inception, these quotas have played an important but not a vital role (Matland 2004). There have been major increases in the percentage of women in Norway’s parliament since the 1970s, from around 5 percent to 41 percent in 2021 (Matland 2004; Parline: the IPU’s Open Data Platform 2021). Gender quotas in Norway have certainly not hindered this growth. The growth itself has been somewhat gradual as between the period of 1953 to 2001, there was never a period in which from one election to the next, the percentage of women in parliament grew over 8.3 percent. This even holds true in the elections following the implementation of gender quotas by parties (Matland 2004). Gender quotas therefore did not completely change the status of women’s representation overnight. Instead, they played their part in women’s representation’s gradual climb and helped to ensure that women would remain a part of politics and the Norwegian national parliament.

### Political Parties in Norway

The Storting, the Norwegian parliament, is composed of 169 members and can be broken down into eight political parties. The Labour Party holds the most seats with 49 members in parliament, the Conservative Party holds the second most with 45 seats, the Progress Party holds

27, the Centre Party has 19, the Socialist Left Party has 11, the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party both have 8, and the Green Party and the Red Party both hold a single seat (Stortinget 2021). As of 2021, a coalition of three parties control Norway's Parliament, the Conservative Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party (Holter 2020). As Norway is composed of so many parties, it is often necessary for parties to join together to create a government.

The beliefs of the political parties in Norway range across the board. Those on the "left" are notably the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party, and the Red Party. Those in the center or who are not on the traditional scale of liberal versus conservative are the Green Party and the Centre Party. Those on the "right" are the Conservative Party, the Progress Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party (European Election Database 2015). Despite their differing beliefs, the political parties of Norway have all had female leaders. Four parties, the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Progress Party, and the Green Party, currently have female leaders (Nikel et al. 2020). The Socialist Left Party's first leader was a woman, Berit Ås (Stortinget, 2021).

As women have been heavily represented in Norway's political parties, women have been able to influence candidate lists, help implement gender quotas, and ensure that policy supported by their parties protects women's rights. As mentioned in the literature review, women's representation in political parties is key for women to be able to accomplish these tasks. Leadership makes it more difficult for women to be excluded and ensures that women's interests are represented (Caul 2001). Therefore, women's leadership in Norway's political parties has most likely played a key role in women's representation in Norway's national parliament being as high as it is today.

### Women and their Role in Norway's Economy

Women in Norway heavily participate in economic activities. From the 1970s onwards, women's participation has grown exponentially and in 2017, the rate of women's participation in the labour force was only 5 percent lower than men's (Hagen 2019). Women's participation is so vital to Norway that research has shown that Norway's GDP would be reduced by 3.3 trillion NOK in 2013 if this growth had never happened. Furthermore, research has found that the GDP of Norway would be 2.3 trillion NOK higher if all women worked full time instead of part time over the period of 1972 to 2013. This statistic comes from the fact that 40 percent of employed women in Norway work part time as of 2013 (Stoltenburg 2021).

One of the ways in which Norway pushed for gender equality in the economics sector was through gender quotas for corporate boards. In 2003, Norway's national parliament passed this quota law and by 2009, every type of corporate board included in the legislation, e.g. public limited companies, boards of state and municipality owned companies, and co-operative companies, had to implement them. These quotas ensured that at least 40 percent of a corporate board should either be men or women, much like how the quotas of political parties' candidates in Norway are at least 40 percent men or 40 percent women (Teigen 2012). These quotas have done much for women's representation in the economic sector. For example, the percentage of women on corporate boards when these quotas were passed was 7 percent. In 2019, the percentage of women is more like 40 percent (Hagen 2019).

## **Chapter 4: The Case of Namibia**

### An Overview of Namibia

Namibia has a human development index of .646, ranking 130th in the world. What this means for Namibia is that their rankings for life expectancy, education, and standard of living are lower than many other countries in the world. In fact, as mentioned before, the world average is .737, which is higher than Namibia's human development index (Human Development Reports 2021).

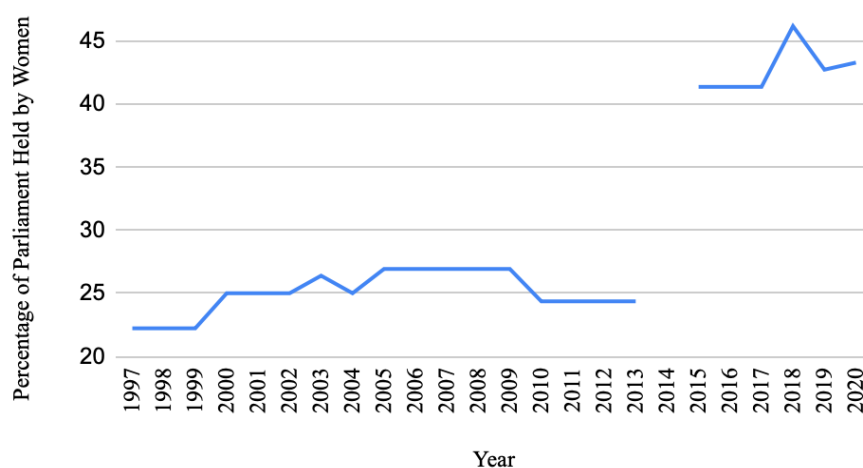
Namibia's GDP and GDP per capita are significantly lower than much of the world's. Their GDP, as of 2019, is 12.367 billion USD (World Bank 2021). Namibia's GDP per capita, as of 2019, is 4,857 USD (World Bank 2021). For both of these measurements, Namibia ranks relatively low in the world. In terms of GDP per capita, in 2019, Namibia ranked 146th (Central Intelligence Agency 2021).

### The History of Women's Political Rights in Namibia

Women did not receive the right to vote in Namibia until 1989 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2005). However, this occurred before Namibia was even an independent country. Prior to this, the country was ruled by South Africa and before that, Germany ruled. In the year 1990, Namibia became its own and a new constitution was formed (Britannica 2021). This new constitution upheld women's right to vote with the clause that, "No persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status" (Namibia 1990). Additionally, under the new constitution, women were allowed to run for and be elected into office.

In the first National Assembly, which was the first session of Namibia's lower house of parliament directly after the implementation of Namibia's new constitution, under ten percent of those elected to voting positions were women. In the second National Assembly, this number rose to around double that. As exemplified in figure 1.3, the proportion of seats held by women in Namibia's National Assembly has risen sharply since the 1990s. From the elections of 2010 to the elections of 2015, in particular, there can be seen a large jump of around 20 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021). In this period, women made many gains in Namibia's legislature. In Figure 1.3 below, there is a hole at the year 2014. This is due to a constitutional amendment that occurred in this time period that increased the size of the National Assembly (Namibia Legal Database 2014). A problem with the research surrounding the National Assembly in Namibia is that a lot of the information is inconsistent. However, what is consistent is how the percentage of women in parliament has increased over the years.

Figure 1.3: Proportion of seats held by women in Namibia's National Parliament



Namibia has a president, a vice president, and a prime minister. While there has never been a woman president of Namibia nor a woman vice president, there has been a woman prime minister. In fact, the current prime minister of Namibia is a woman, Saara Kuugongelwa-

Amadhila. In 2014, she was appointed Prime Minister by the nation's president (Republic of Namibia - Office of the Prime Minister 2021).

### The Electoral System and Government of Namibia

The parliament of Namibia is bicameral. It is composed of the National Assembly and the National Council. The National Council is the upper chamber of parliament while the National Assembly is the lower. The National Council is composed of 42 indirectly elected representatives who are from all thirteen regions of Namibia (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016). Its purposes are to review bills and to make recommendations for legislation. The National Assembly is composed of 96 directly elected representatives and 8 who are appointed by the president (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016). These who are appointed by the president are non-voting members. The purpose of the National Assembly is to represent the people of Namibia by making and passing legislation that is in the interest of the people. Furthermore, the National Assembly approves the budget of the government each year, decides taxes, and approves agreements between Namibia and other countries (My Democracy Tree - Namibia 2021).

The President of Namibia in 2021 is Hage Geingob (Office of the President 2021). The President's position is the Head of State, the Head of Government, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Force. The requirements, from Namibia's constitution, for the presidency are to be 35 years old or older, Namibian by birth of descent, and be eligible to be elected as a member of the National Assembly. Notably, since Namibia's constitution was created in 1990, women have been eligible to become President. The functions, duties, and powers of the President are to dissolve the National Assembly, appoint ambassadors, negotiate and sign international

agreements, appoint the Prime Minister, and sign laws passed by parliament (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations 2021).

As mentioned above, the current Prime Minister of Namibia is Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila. (Republic of Namibia - Office of the Prime Minister 2021). The Prime Minister's primary functions are to lead government business in Parliament, coordinate the work of the Cabinet, and advise and assist the president (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations 2021). Furthermore, the Prime Minister is the next person in line for succession of the presidency if the President is unable to continue their term (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations 2021).

Namibia's cabinet is composed of the President, the Prime Minister, and other ministers who are appointed by the President. The duties of this cabinet are to direct the activities of the various ministries and government departments, to create bills for submission to the National Assembly, to formulate a budget, to attend National Assembly sessions and answer questions concerning the effectiveness of government policies, to assist the President with international agreements, to advise the President on matters of national defense, to implement laws administered by the executive, and various other duties (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations 2021).

In the original constitution of Namibia, 72 seats in the National Assembly were elected through a closed-list proportional representation system every five years. In 2014, these election laws were updated and now ninety-six of the members of the National Assembly are elected in the same way as before. In the closed-list proportional representation system of Namibia, citizens vote for a certain party and these parties submit candidate lists. Therefore the number of seats a party receives in the National Assembly depends solely on the percentage of citizens who vote



for their party (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021). In 2021, there were fifteen political parties that submitted candidate lists for the National Assembly (Iiekla 2019). There are also eight additional members of the National Assembly who are appointed by the President and are non-voting (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia 2019). On the other hand, the National Council of Namibia is composed of 42 members who are indirectly elected by the 14 regional councils of Namibia. These regional councils come from each of the 14 districts of Namibia. The terms for these members are 5 years long (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021).

Presidential elections in Namibia occur every five years, like parliamentary elections, and are conducted through a two-round system. With this system, if no presidential candidate receives a majority, more than 50 percent of the vote, in the first round of voting, there is a run-off election in which the two candidates with the highest percentages of the vote are voted for again by the people, resulting in one candidate reaching the 50 percent mark. Historically, the second round has never been used as candidates have reached a majority in the past (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations 2021).

### Gender Quotas in Namibia

Namibia has two types of quotas. The first of which are voluntary party quotas (International Institute for Democracy 2021). As noted above, these types of quotas are solely implemented on a voluntary basis within Namibia's political parties. The political party that has this type of gender quota is the South West African People's Organization with a quota that requires that each gender is fifty percent of the candidates on a party list. It appears that other parties in Namibia do not yet have gender quotas but many of them have gender equality and equal gender representation in politics and business in their platforms (Gender Links 2019;

International Institute for Democracy 2021). The second type of quotas in Namibia were actually written into law in 1992. These quotas are electoral law quotas for local authority councils. First, these gender quotas entail that in any election of a local authority council with 10 or less members, party lists must include at least 3 female candidates. Second, in any election of a municipal council or town council with 11 or more members, party lists must include 5 female candidates (International Institute for Democracy 2021)

Due to the fact that the gender quotas in Namibia have been in place essentially since Namibia's independence and the writing of their constitution, it is difficult to track how gender quotas specifically have affected the percentage of women in office. However, what can be said is that gender quotas in Namibia have had a place in supporting women's political representation. Even if they have not ensured that the percentage of women in certain offices has increased, they have ensured that women will be represented in some way. What can also be said about these gender quotas in Namibia is that they are popularly supported by the people. In fact, more than two-thirds of Namibian respondents to a survey said that all political parties should have to adopt gender quotas which would ensure that fifty percent of a party list is of each gender (Shejvali 2018).

### Political Parties in Namibia

Within Namibia, there are twenty registered political parties (Electoral Commission of Namibia 2020). The current ruling party with 63 seats in the National Assembly is the South West African People's Organization, which has been in power since Namibia became independent (Freedom House 2021). As of the 2019 elections, those other relatively major parties who are currently in the National Assembly are the Popular Democratic Movement with

16 seats and the Landless People's Movement with 4 seats. Those who are minor are the National Unity Democratic Organization, the All People's Party, the United Democratic Front, the Republican Party, and the Namibian Economic Freedom Fighters, all with 2 seats. With even less seats are the Rally for Democracy and Progress, the Christian Democratic Voice, and the South West African National Union as all have a single seat (Iikela 2019).

The beliefs of Namibia's political parties are varied but due to how the majority of the seats are taken by the South West African People's Organization, not many political beliefs are represented. The South West African People's Organization is primarily on the left with aspects of socialism in its beliefs. The party with the second highest number of seats, the Popular Democratic Movement, is conservative. The party with the third highest number of seats is the Landless People's Movement who are socialist with an emphasis on agrarian reform and environmentalism. The eight remaining parties with only a few seats range from far-right, the Christian Democratic Voice, to being almost solely for a certain ethnic groups rights, the United Democratic Front (Boer et al. 2005).

Political parties have important effects on women's political representation. Women's involvement in parties, women's leadership in parties, and the policies that these parties set have impacts on the amount of representation women have in many political offices. In Namibia, the most successful political party, the South West African's People's Organization, fully supports women's equality in politics and has gone so far as to implement a quota system that ensures women get equal representation to men. If other parties follow their lead and every party submits a list with fifty percent women, soon Namibia will achieve full equality in political representation.

### Women and their Economic Role in Namibia

In Namibia, women are poorer, less likely to be employed, and when employed, earning less than men. These are the results of a survey of the Namibian labour force by the National Household Survey Program conducted both in 2014 and in 2016. This survey first found that women account for 52 percent of the labour force, which is Namibians over the age of 15, and that 50.3 percent of those economically active in 2016 were women. Furthermore, 38 percent of women in Namibia were unemployed in 2016 compared to 30 percent of men with this gap continually widening. In 2014, the average monthly wage for women was 6164 Namibian dollars while men's average monthly wage was 6965 Namibian dollars (Legal Assistance Centre for the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia 2017). Women are not as equal to men economically as they are politically, however, there has been much recent legislation to amend this.

There have been many pieces of legislation passed whose purpose is to amend the economic gap between women and men in Namibia. Even the Namibian constitution recognizes women's economic struggles. In 1998, the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29 was passed. This act established the Employment Equity Commission and provided affirmative action measures to help provide equal opportunities for employment for women as well as for other minority groups. The Labour Act 11 of 2007 was put in effect to prohibit discrimination in hiring decisions based on gender, marital status, familial responsibility, or pregnancy, all issues which directly affect women's employment eligibility. This act also gave women 12 weeks maternity leave. Additionally, a new minimum wage was introduced in April 2016 of 1353.20 Namibian dollars per month, helping low income women (Legal Assistance Centre for the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia 2017). These legislative acts above are only a few of the

measures that have been implemented in Namibia to try and improve women's economic status. There have been many more that have assisted women in fighting for their legal economic rights. However, there is still inequality between the genders in Namibia, meaning that these legislative measures have not gone far enough.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis of the Similarities and Differences Between the Country Cases**

### An Overview of the Fundamental Differences Between Norway and Namibia

Norway and Namibia are vastly different countries. This is evidenced by the fact that they have such different human development indexes, GDPs, and GDPs per capita. Norway ranks number one in the world for human development while Namibia ranks 130th (Human Development Reports 2021). Norway has a GDP of 403.336 billion, nearly 33 times Namibia's. Norway additionally has a GDP per capita that is 15 times higher than Namibia's (World Bank 2021).

These are just some of the major differences between the two countries. There are many other differences that make these two countries incredibly unlike one another. Despite this, they come together on the percentage of women in their parliaments. Therefore, the major gaps between their human development indexes and GDPs does not correlate with a gap between the percentage of women in their respective parliaments. Instead, these two countries are incredibly alike in this aspect, leading to questions of what factors these two countries do have in common that closes this gap.

### Comparison of Histories of Women's Rights in Norway and Namibia

Norway and Namibia have vastly different histories. However, they do share becoming completely independent countries in the 20th century. Norway became independent from Sweden in 1905 while Namibia became independent from South Africa in 1990 (The Royal House of Norway 2007; Britannica 2021). The conditions of their independence and previous rule by these other states have been different than one another and Norway has been independent for

significantly longer than Namibia but they do still share some historical similarities amongst their differences.

There are also many differences in the history of women's political rights and participation in these countries. All women in Norway have been able to vote since 1913 while women in Namibia have only been able to do so since 1990. Furthermore, women have been in Norway's parliament since 1911 while women have been in Namibia's parliament only since 1990 (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud 2007; Namibia 1990). Of course, this is in part due to the fact that Namibia did not even become a country until that same year. Once again, the major gaps between these two countries are highlighted and yet women in these countries have the same amount of participation in parliament. Women in the countries of Norway and Namibia consist of their parliaments at a rate of about 44 percent with both countries making considerable progress in women's rights and parliamentary participation since the first days of their independence (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021).

### Governments and Electoral Systems in Norway and Namibia

Norway and Namibia are different in their systems of government but generally alike in their electoral systems. Norway has the Storting, a unicameral parliament, and a prime minister. Namibia has the National Assembly, the National Council, and a president (Stortinget 2021; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016). In Norway, the majority of the power resides within the parliament and even the prime minister has little power (Stortinget 2021). In Namibia, power resides in both the National Assembly, which is the lower chamber of parliament, and the president with little power being delegated to their upper chamber of parliament, the National Council (My Democracy Tree - Namibia 2021).

The ways in which Norway and Namibia's parliaments are elected both depend on party lists. In Norway, they use a combination of party lists and direct elections for candidates (Stortinget 2021). In Namibia, they solely use party lists to determine who is a member of parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021). In both of these cases, elections for parliament are at least in part determined by multi-member districts or a proportional representation system. As noted in the literature review section, this is one of the topics commonly associated with high numbers of women being represented in parliament. Thus, these cases provide support for previous understandings of this topic.

#### Gender Quotas in Norway and Namibia

Norway and Namibia have multiple types of gender quotas related to politics written into legislation and within their political parties. They both have voluntary party quotas while Namibia specifically has electoral law quotas. Norway's voluntary party quotas, which are quotas that parties inflict upon themselves to ensure women are included in party lists and on ballots, usually ensure that 40 percent of a certain gender is represented in party lists (Teigen 2015). That is, the ballot must consist of at least 40 percent of one gender or no more than 60 percent of one gender. This type of quota is enforced by several different parties in Norway. Voluntary party quotas in Namibia are solely within one political party, the South West African People's Organization. This party's quota requires that 50 percent of the party list they submit is composed of each gender, therefore making exactly half of their candidates women (Gender Links 2019; International Institute for Democracy 2021).

The type of political quota that Namibia has that Norway does not have is electoral law quotas. The electoral law quotas in Namibia require that women are represented at a municipal



level. For local authority councils with 10 or less members, party lists must include at least 3 candidates. For municipal or town council elections with 11 or more members, party lists must include 5 female candidates (International Institute for Democracy 2021). These types of quotas help to ensure that women are not only represented at an international level but at a more local or regional level.

### Political Parties in Norway and Namibia

Norway and Namibia have a multitude of political parties represented within their parliaments. Throughout these parties, there is a vast spectrum of political beliefs. In both countries, these beliefs range from far right to far left with some parties having platforms on specific environmental or religious issues. The difference between these countries is that in Namibia one party has ruled the country since its independence while in Norway, what party rules the country has changed many times. What is similar about the parties in these countries is that they both prioritize women's involvement and many have had female leaders, most likely at least in part resulting in the voluntary party gender quotas they have today. As women have participated in these parties for so long and their participation is encouraged by the quotas, it can be seen that the political parties in Norway and Namibia have influenced the percentages of women in office and legislation benefiting women in some way.

### Women and their Economic Roles in Norway and Namibia

Women have vastly different economic roles in Norway and Namibia. Women in Norway experience much less wage disparity and participate in the economy at a rate only 5 percent lower than men (Hagen 2019). Meanwhile, women in Namibia are less likely to be employed

and earn significantly less than men. Furthermore, women in Namibia are experiencing a trend of unemployment that continues to get worse (Legal Assistance Centre for the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia 2017). While there is a gap between the economic experiences Norwegian women and Namibian have in their countries, they do have some similarities in how they both tend to be employed less than men.

Both Norway and Namibia have enacted legislation in order to try and amend women's economic inequality. Norway has enacted corporate board quotas while Namibia has passed various legislation focusing on discrimination against women. Norway's corporate board quotas require that corporate companies put at least 40 percent of each gender in their corporate boards, which has proven effective as today the percentage of women on corporate boards is significantly higher than it was in 2003 when this law was passed (Hagen 2019). Namibia's laws have implemented affirmative action measures and prohibited hiring discrimination based on gender, marital status, pregnancy, and other factors that affect women's hireability (Legal Assistance Centre for the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia 2017). Despite their legislative attempts at resolving the issue, both countries still have a long way to go in order to fully reach economic equality for women.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### Vital Factors of Norway and Namibia

The three major similarities that the countries of Norway and Namibia have are their electoral systems, their gender quotas, and their political parties. This thesis, therefore, upholds previous literature and emphasizes the importance of electoral systems, gender quotas, and political parties in understanding women's political representation in parliaments. To be precise, Norway and Namibia have party list electoral systems, voluntary party quotas, and political parties that prioritize women's participation in common. As these two countries are so different from one another and yet have these shared factors, it shows the significance of these factors on women's representation in parliament. Consequently, in order to understand why women's political participation in these countries is so highly ranked in the world, one must first understand electoral systems, gender quotas, and political parties.

The differences between Norway and Namibia are numerous and serve to show what factors are not as vital to understanding why these countries are so successful in representing women as well as why the factors that they have in common do matter. In this thesis, the differences noted between the countries of Norway and Namibia were human development, GDP, GDP per capita, history of women's voting rights and participation in politics, and women's role in each country's economy. These differences show how countries can be incredibly different from one another and that these differences, therefore, are not the factors that one needs to look at to better understand women's political participation. Instead, it highlights how those factors that they do have in common are important because if a country can have all of these differences and be similar in only a few areas, these similarities are significant to

understanding the dependent variable being looked at, that is Norway and Namibia's high levels of women in their parliaments.

### Recommendations for Ensuring Women's Equal Participation in Parliaments

The implication of this thesis is that if a country wants their parliaments to more equally include women, party list electoral systems and gender quotas are factors to look into. Norway and Namibia both have electoral systems in which citizen's vote for political parties. These political parties create party lists composed of candidates who will fill party seats in parliament. Women, due to voluntary party quotas, usually make up at least 40 percent of the candidates on these lists. So, with the combination of these party list electoral systems and voluntary party quotas that require a large percentage of a parties' candidates to be women, a state is more likely to have more female members of parliament.

The fact that gender quotas are important to women's elections to parliament and successful in a country, Namibia, that is not financially well-off nor very old is a somewhat surprising finding. Gender quotas are valuable, as is emphasized by the cases of Norway and Namibia. As they maintain a percentage of women in office, they ensure that women are represented in some way, even if it is just a minimum. As these gender quotas are just as effective in Namibia as they are in Norway, the findings of this thesis break free of the idea that gender quotas are only successful in old, economically powerful countries. Instead, gender quotas are effective everywhere and are one of the methods that help women actually be elected in office.

Gender quotas create an institutional impact on women's representation that cultural factors cannot. A culture can want female candidates and could want to vote for female

candidates in elections but due to institutional barriers, women may never be elected. Gender quotas ensure that these institutional barriers are crossed and that women actually get elected to parliaments.

Norway and Namibia are such vastly different countries who come together on only a few aspects. They are countries that very few would think about as having anything in common and yet they are so close in the percentages of women in their parliaments. They rank 14th and 15th in the world for women's representation but would never be considered similar countries. Nevertheless, they do have some similarities that can be used to explain the phenomenon of their close rankings. Party list electoral systems, gender quotas, and political parties who support women's participation in parliaments both occur within these countries and are important factors to consider when one looks to understand why these countries are so successful in the pursuit of women's representational equality in national parliaments. In the future, when states look to increase the representation of women in their parliaments, the cases of Norway and Namibia best lend themselves to recommend party list electoral systems, or at the very least multi-member districts, and party gender quotas that ensure women are able to overcome obstacles and be elected to the parliaments meant to represent their interests.

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