

## ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine the effect of affirmative action for women's political participation on change in gender relations and status of women in the political space and local community in Uganda. Specifically, the study examined the level of awareness of affirmative action policies for women's political participation in Uganda, analysed the perception towards the effect of affirmative action for women's political participation on changes in gender relations and the status of women in the local community. It also explored the structural barriers limit women from achieving gender equality in politics. The study employed a mixed method research design using largely qualitative data collection approaches. 400 respondents were sampled from four regions each region represented by one district with 100 respondents. Mukono for the central, Arua for the north, Kasese for the west and Jinja for the east.

Key Informants' interviews, comprising of 38 Members of Parliament, 80 District Councillors, and technocrats with knowledge on subject matter selected purposively were conducted. The Second data collection methods comprised of document reviews like journals, and policy documents and legal frameworks such as Parliamentary Hansards, Constitution, newspaper articles and Ministerial reports.

The study established that local community and politicians were not aware of the various affirmative action policies that promote women's participation in politics. It was also established that the local community was willing to vote for a woman on the open seat instead of a man, for as long as she measured up as a competent politician on the same terms as men. On the other side, men in the political space were unwilling to support a policy of equal representation of men and women in politics. It was also established that women's political achievements are accepted as long as they did not lose their femininity described by gender roles or did not challenge the male inherent leadership position as family and cultural or religious leaders.

The study thus, concludes that while some patriarchal cultural norms have changed to accept women as leaders, social transformation is yet to occur with women leaders having to shoulder both their feminine and male gender roles. Arising from the stagnation in growth of numbers of women in politics, affirmative action in its current design will take long to deliver the transformation of gender relations that will guarantee gender equality in society. The adopted quotas design in Uganda don't meet nor mean equitable distribution of power and resources between men and women. This study to eliminate the structural barriers that women from achieving gender equality in politics, therefore, recommends continuous sensitization of the masses about affirmative action policies. I there for conclude that placement of women in the special interest group was one way the policy sustains the perception of women as vulnerable. The study recommends review of quotas for women from 30% to equal representation of one man-one woman for every elective position in politics at all levels to conclude the struggle of unequal gender representation.