

Experiences of female scientists in research networks in STEM fields in public  
universities in Uganda

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## Abstract

Research networks are inevitable for female scientists in STEM fields where research is carried out in teams in higher education. It was on this basis that this study explored the experiences of female scientists in research networks in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda. This study was guided by three objectives: (1) To explore the experiences of female scientists in research networks in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda. (2) To explore how female scientists were uplifted by research networks in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda and (3) To explore how female scientists accessed resources in research networks in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda. This study was anchored on the existential phenomenology by Martin Heidegger in the interpretive world view. Eight female scientists in research networks in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda were interviewed and they were selected from the hard applied and hard pure disciplines as classified in Becher and Biglan's typology of academic disciplines. Using thematic analysis, four themes such as research collaboration activities, capacity development and positive and negative experiences emerged in this study. This study concludes that those female scientists in research networks had positive and negative experiences such as funding, networking, research skills, career growth, conferences, mentoring, and hectic schedules. This study concludes that research networks are uplifting those female scientists in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda because they were internationally exposed, networked, funded, research skills were strengthened, and progressed in career. This study concludes that it was important for those female scientists to access physical and human resource in their research networks as this increased their research performance and outputs in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda. Those female scientists accessed resources through their institutional account, networks, infrastructure, capacity building, mentorship, and research competencies from research networks in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda. This study therefore recommends to management of public universities in Uganda to establish formal research networks and strengthen the existing informal research networks. To uplift female scientists in research networks in STEM fields in public universities in Uganda, this study recommends to those female scientists in the research networks and senior colleagues to act as ambassadors and mentors to those young female scientists in STEM fields. Finally, this study recommends to Management of public universities in Uganda to establish a Research and Grants Office for STEM fields in Uganda and equip it with skilled human resource to drive the administrative research agenda of their fields in their different Colleges and Faculties.