

**TITLE: URBAN MICRO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN IN KAMPALA CENTRAL DIVISION, UGANDA.**

By

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Abstract

This study examined urban low-income women micro entrepreneurs with regard to empowerment in Kampala District's Central Division. The objectives of the study included: to assess critically how women micro entrepreneurs negotiate and use the highly patriarchal urban space in Kampala Central Division for micro enterprises; to analyse urban opportunities that promote women's micro enterprises and to investigate barriers that hinder women's micro enterprises both in starting and growing businesses in urban space; and to examine suggestions to address the urban barriers that hinder women's micro-enterprises.

This study adopted Lefebvre's spatial Triad model of space theory and Sarah Longwe's levels of empowerment: welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control as well as Kabeer's three elements of empowerment that include, resources, agency, and achievement. The study employed a parallel mixed design that allowed the use of the survey methods and case studies with several research methods that included observation, questionnaire interviews, key informant interviews, literature review, and case studies. Key information was collected from five Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) officials and five local council leaders. The quantitative data was obtained from 90 women micro-entrepreneurs that participated in a survey through purposive and snowball sampling.

The findings of the study indicate that Kampala city offers space for women micro-entrepreneurs to sell a variety of trade items despite their weak capital base, but which has, nonetheless, made some improvement in those women's livelihoods in varying ways. The women micro entrepreneurs were found to be resilient and able to withstand men's acts of transgression, while others fell prey to the same acts in a bid to be able to meet their day-to-day family needs. Those acts included: sexual harassment, jealousy, deception, and hurtful communication to women in urban space, that predispose women to psychological depression, low psychological safety, lack of work/life balance, all of which lead to higher rates of turnover of micro entrepreneurship leading to women making poor choices, low growth rates of their businesses and, ultimate, business failure.

The study concludes that, Kampala Central Division offers space for women's micro-entrepreneurship that has brought remarkable decision-making processes, resilience and improved agency, which are aspects of empowerment. The study also discovered flaws and challenges that limited women from accessing the urban space to sell their items and affected the empowerment process. The women cited limited start-up capital that left them no option but to engage in 'sex for survival', high operational dues, stiff competition from other traders, difficulty in accessing the patriarchal urban space, and increase in women's workload which reduced productivity, among other challenges. In light of the above findings, it is therefore recommended that KCCA should address the challenges and flaws in its regulatory frameworks to mitigate the negative impacts in their performance and uptake by the women micro entrepreneurs in Kampala Central Division.

