Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Political Party Leadership in Uganda

(Case Study of the National Resistance Movement Political Party, Kampala)

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Abstract: **Political parties are among the most important institutions for nurturing active participation of women in political party leadership due to the enormous political influence they wield. The exclusion of women from decision-making bodies limits the possibilities for entrenching the principles of democracy in a society, thus hindering sustainable development and discouraging the attainment of gender equality. The study determined the factors that influence women's participation in political party leadership. The study adopted a mixed research design which employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. A sample of 113 respondents was selected from a total population of 164 (NEC, Secretariat, Women's league and CEC). Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample population and classified it into strata and random simple sampling to select the sub samples from each stratum. Data was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire, key informant interview and observations. Data was further analyzed using percentiles; descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings established that 73.7% of the respondents acknowledged that women actively participate in political party leadership. Policies, institutional culture and resources received more than 80% rating for influencing women's participation in political party leadership. Policies and existing resources has a strong positive influence at coefficient level of 0.000 (.501[**] and .648[**] respectively), whereas institutional culture (.380[**]) has a moderately positive correlation all accounting for 49% (R Square, 0. 492) of the variation in women's participation in political party leadership at an F value of 29.368. Government, political parties, CSO's, development agencies and the women's movement should design programs that specifically address the leadership capacity, economic, and social protection needs of the women to promote active participation of women in political party leadership.**

Keywords: **Leadership; Women's Participation; Political parties.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy cannot truly deliver for all citizens if half of the populations remain underrepresented in the political and development area. For democratic governments to deliver to their constituents, they must be truly representative, gender responsive and recognize that women be equal partners in the process of governance and development (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995)".

Women's involvement in politics varies throughout the world and their participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance. World over, women still linger on the fringes of political realm and their participation in government structures and the democratic process remains low (Vissandjee et al, 2008). Global statistics reveal that, only 22% of all national parliamentarians were female, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995 (UN Women 2015) and the share of women among Ministers now averages at 17% (Ibid 2015). The strengthening of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourses and hence socio-economic development cannot be fully achieved without the active involvements

of women in the decision making level in all society (Endale 2012). Political participation is understood as a prerequisite for political development hence, by improving women's political participation, given that they constitute over a half of the world's population may help to advance political development and improve the quality of women's lives

1.1. Problem Statement

Women world over are still faced with numerous obstacles in articulating and shaping their political and leadership interests. Over the last two decades, the rate of women's representation in national parliaments world over has only increased from 11.3 per cent in 1995 to 22.1 per cent in 2015 (IPU 2015) which is much less than the 30 per cent international minimum standard set for women's participation in political leadership (UDHR 1948, CEDAW 1979, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action 1995 and the African Charter on election, democracy and governance). The leadership in the political party structure neither reflects the needs of the women; out of 38 registered political parties in 2012/13, 94.7% of the parties in Uganda are headed by men compared to 5.3 per cent headed by women (DGF report 2016). Men dominate the political arena, formulate the rules of the political game and define the standards for evaluation, over 80% of the leadership positions are held by men. Institutional aspects, such as the internal functioning and culture of political parties, serve as further constraints to women's political participation and influence (WDG 2016).

Uganda is signatory to international and regional instruments like the UDHR, the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action (1995), African Charter on election, democracy and governance. Uganda has fairly concrete domestic laws and policies which are supposed to provide a framework to advocate and create spaces for women to actively participate in political leadership; however, a lot is still desired to operationalize these laws to enable women to effectively participate in political party leadership (NDP 2015/16 – 2019/20). Ugandan women further experience obstacles that disable their effective participation in political party leadership; the challenges include among others socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes, biases, limited access and control over resources and negative stereotypes (Adhiambo-Oduol 2003). These obstacles emphasize the superiority of men and the inferiority of women in political party leadership. Political parties are therefore part of the solution when they take a chance on women and place them in winnable positions on their electoral lists (IPU 2015).

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to determine the factors that influence women's participation in political party leadership. The study specifically determined the influence of existing policies, institutional culture and existing resources (human and financial) on women's participation in political party leadership in Uganda.

2. METHODOLOGY

A mixed research design which employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. A sample of 113 respondents was selected from a total population of 164 (NEC, Secretariat, Women's league and CEC). Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample population and classify it into strata and random simple sampling to select the sub samples from each stratum. Data was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire, key informant interviews and observations. Data was further analyzed using percentiles; descriptive and inferential statistics.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The findings established that 73.7% of the respondents acknowledged that women actively participate in political party leadership.

91.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement that policy framework has a strong influence on women's participation in political party leadership, of the 91.5% of the respondents, 35.8% voted for to some extent, 36.8% voted to a high extent and 18.9% voted to a very high extend.

The respondents stated that most political parties are being guided by the general policies and laws of Uganda like the constitution of Uganda 1995, the gender policy 2007, the parliamentary election Act and the Local Government Act among others which promote active and equal participation of women in leadership position at all levels of development and therefore all the political party policies must fit within these national policies. The findings recognize and agree with the statement made by Ballington. 2009 that political parties also formulate policy and set governance priorities and are therefore strategically placed to address the concerns of women." And the statement fits within the requirement of the

constitution of Uganda Article 33 which provides for equity and equality in terms of gender, at least one third of all positions at all levels of leadership should be women.

93.7% acknowledged that institutional culture has a strong influence on women's participation in political party leadership in Uganda whereas 5.3% acknowledged to a small extend and 1.1% which present one respondent believed that institutional culture has no influence at all. To the respondents, a positive attitude that supports and promotes women's participation encourages women to take up key leadership positions with confidence and perform their roles effectively whereas a negative attitude is a barrier in all aspects, women feel inferior, intimidated, disempowered around negative energies who believe that the place of women is in the kitchen and doing care work and not leadership and decision making at all levels within the party structures.

88% of the respondents acknowledged that existence of resources has a strong influence on women's participation in political party leadership, 40% to a high extend, 29.5% acknowledged to some extent, 18.9% to a small extend while 11.6% believed that much as resources are very key in every development venture, it does not considerably influence women's participation in political party leadership. To them, other factors like institutional culture and education level play a very crucial role in influencing women's active participation in political party leadership. The study findings strongly identify with the findings of Ogbogu 2012 which states that economic power is therefore a critical factor to women's participation in politics and democratic governance

As presented in Figure 1, 49.5% of the study respondents established that to a high extend women actively participate in political party leadership, 24.2% believed that women participate to some extend in political party leadership, 16.8% acknowledged to a small extend that indeed women participate but are faced with a number of challenges if not addressed their presence in the leadership space is meaningless whereas, 9.5% of the study respondents acknowledged that women's participation in political party is not at all there, all leadership decisions are made by men and women have to dance to their tune therefore, women do not effectively participate in any political party leadership. A number of the study respondents who acknowledged that women play a role in political party leadership still recognized that there were a number of challenges faced by these women, some of these challenges ranged from capacity gaps to inadequate resources allocated to these women to run their activities.
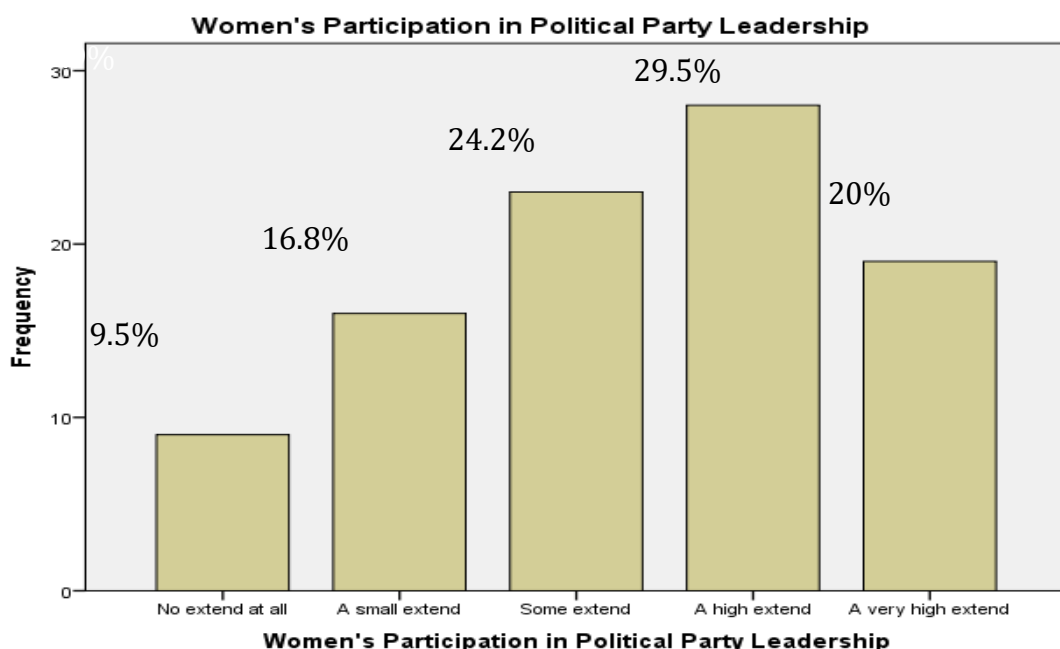

Figure 1: The Status of Women's Participation in Political Party Leadership in Uganda

As shown in table 1, policies and existing resources has a strong positive influence at coefficient level of 0.000 (.501[**] and .648[**] respectively), whereas institutional culture (.380[**]) has a moderately positive correlation all accounting for 49% (R Square, 0. 492) of the variation in women's participation in political party leadership at an F value of 29.368.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation for Model Variables

		Policy Framework	Existing Resources	Institutional Culture
Women's Participation in Political Party Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.501[**]	.648[**]	.380[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	95	95	95

The multiple regression analysis results indicated that an increase in positive policies, institutional culture and existing resources by one unit would lead to an increase in women's participation in political party leadership by .314, .240 and .474 respectively. It is worth noting that all the three independent variables: policies, institutional culture and existing resources were significant predictors of women's participation in political party leadership. The regression model was summarized as; Women's Participation in Political Party Leadership = -.155+.314 (policies) + .240 (institutional culture) + .474 (existing resources)

4. CONCLUSIONS

Policy framework in Uganda to a great extend promotes women's participation in political party leadership at all levels. Political parties have gender responsive policies, however, there are still gaps in the implementation of the existing policies, more still, women to a greater extend have knowledge gap on these policies and deeper understanding of these policies so that they can effectively use them in their leadership activities.

Institutional Culture plays a very crucial role in influencing women's participation in political party leadership, negative institutional cultural practices mostly place women in a more subordinate state to men than freely taking up leadership positions within the political parties. Negative institutional cultural practices are not only promoted by men but women too, women act as custodians of these practices due to negative socialization, women are a big barrier to fellow women when it comes to women contesting for top political party leadership, they believe only men deserve such positions but not fellow women and this makes it hard for women to access top leadership positions and also to jointly advocate for women. Women therefore end up mostly confined in the few affirmative positions.

Economic power is a critical factor to women's participation in politics and democratic governance. Funding for women is very insufficient and or delays to come on time to facilitate women and yet men have other sources of funding besides the political party basket fund. Women in political party have some skills and capabilities however, they need frequent capacity enhancement in different spheres like policy influence, resource mobilization and monitoring and evaluation among many other capacity needs. Political parties have great structures that support women's leadership activities like the women's league but these structures are not fully functional to meet the leadership enhancement needs of women because most times they are not fully funded and there is no frequent capacity enhancement for women in leadership positions.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Political parties should deliberately step up efforts to effectively implement the existing gender responsive national policies, institute and operationalize internal political party policies that promote women's participation in political party leadership at all levels of decision making for sustainable development.

The Government, political parties and Civil society organizations should continuously educate and sensitize the citizenry on the rights of women, good governance principles, women political leadership, this will help create a positive culture within political parties and the general electorate to appreciate women's political leadership and hence create a conducive environment for effective participation; they should further build the capacity of women in leadership positions on existing policies, resource mobilization skills, gender responsive monitoring and evaluation skills

The Government of Uganda, political parties, Civil Society Organizations and development partners should economically empower women in different economic activities at all levels. Access and control over resources is a source of power, a woman who is economically empowered has the power to influence and mobilize others which is a key aspect of political leadership. The political parties should further strengthen the specific structures/ organs like women's league that explicitly handles women specific issues with sufficient resources (financial, human and material).

The general community of women should deliberately build economic, political and social solidarity among themselves to mobilize, empower, support and campaign for women to actively participate in political party leadership.

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