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Female Leadership in Agricultural Uganda

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Executive Summary

This study focuses gender equality and women empowerment in Uganda, as it is important for the country's economic development. More specifically, it concentrates on female leadership. The awareness about the advantages of women empowerment have increased within the last years and positive progress on women empowerment has been made in Uganda. However, women are still underrepresented in higher position. The research therefore aims to answer the research question on what barriers women still face in attaining a leadership position. During a three-week qualitative research in Uganda, several interviews were conducted to collect necessary data. These interviews revealed barriers on a micro- and a macro-level, which impede female leadership. Thus, the micro-level factors consist of women's intrinsic motivation and their lack of confidence. Due to several reasons, women are not motivated or confident enough to engage in those positions. Additionally, the macro-level factors that complicate this process are the normative as well as the economic environment, which include societal norms, or the challenges female leaders face in organizations. The developed model, which is based on the findings, suggests that it is important to focus on the macro-level factors when working towards female leadership in order to ensure a long-term success, as the micro-level factors are reinforced by the macro-level factors. Additionally, it is also necessary to view the micro-level factors individually and to examine the underlying reasons for women's lack of motivation or confidence.

Introduction:

...investing in women is not only the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do. I am deeply convinced that, in women, the world has at its disposal, the most significant and yet largely untapped potential for development and peace.

Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General
(United Nations, 2008)

Gender equality and women empowerment have become increasingly important topics worldwide. This quote and especially the connection mentioned between 'the right thing to do' and 'the smart thing to do' elaborates on the reasons for gender equality. Empowering women does not only help to comply with international standards or regulations, but can also benefit developing countries and especially women.

Existing literature supports this quote by arguing that a decrease of the gender inequalities will foster economic growth. Studies have shown that gender equality contributes to sustainable economic growth, especially in developing countries (Alkire et al., 2013; Duflo, 2012; Ellis, Manuel, & Blackden, 2006). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that gender equality does not only increase productivity but can also reduce hunger and poverty, thereby benefitting the local economy (Quisumbing et al., 2014, p. 3). The right to control their own assets increases the women's self-esteem and motivation, which positively affects their productivity (Quisumbing et al., 2014, p. 7). Furthermore, equal access to resources can increase yields, which can, in turn increase the output. This more positive and fruitful outcome increases the worker's income and therefore reduces poverty and hunger (FAO, 2011). Additional literature states that women empowerment improves efficiency and is necessary to reach other governmental goals concerning economic growth or sustainability (Duflo, 2012; United Nations, 2015). Blackden and Bhanu (1999) provide evidence for a GDP growth regression in Sub-Saharan Africa and justify it

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by limited employment opportunities for women. The authors therefore underline the important contribution of women empowerment to economic growth.

However, not only academic literature emphasizes the advantages of gender equality, but also higher institutions like The United Nations, who included Gender Equality into their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The SDGs consist of several goals that can be adopted by institutions or businesses worldwide to measure and ensure sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). The goal on gender equality aims to empower all women and girls and improve women's representation in economic decision-making processes (United Nations, 2017). To reach this goal, they additionally developed the Women Empowerment Principles. One of these principles is to 'Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality' (United Nations, 2018). Therefore, a necessary step in empowering women is to increase their representation in leadership positions. Additional scholars on gender equality have also explicitly emphasized to include more women in these positions, as this diversity makes companies more effective due to an increased productivity and the lower likelihood of fraud (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Joshi, Neely, Emrich, Griffiths, & George, 2015; United Nations, 2018).

Especially developing countries are dependent on a sustainable development as the economy can profit from the goal of gender equality due to the mentioned advantages. One country where this applies is Uganda. The country's population is growing fast and is expected to count more than 100 Million citizens in 2050, which would be twice the size of the current population (Bachmann, Kersting, & Kiguli, 2017). Although this growing demand can be a great opportunity for the country and for organizations in Uganda it has to be tackled in a sustainable way in order to satisfy this demand and at the same time profit from it. Thus, the mentioned advantages of gender

equality and female leadership are necessary for Uganda's future economic development.

In general, positive progress on women empowerment has been made in Uganda. In education, for example, the number of girls attaining school is increasingly steadily and the attendance of girls and boys is now evenly distributed. (WorldBank, 2011). Furthermore, girls receive additional points on their grade, which facilitates their access to higher education and consequently to jobs (Kagoda, 2011). Additionally, women's participation in politics increased and a growing number of women take on power positions in the government (WorldBank, 2011).

Unfortunately, however, women are still less likely to be in leadership positions and the gender roles are still distributed unequally. The economy is seen as dependent on men, although women's contribution to the country's economy is very high. This is, for example, reflected in the labour distribution within the agricultural sector, where women provide 70% of the labour, (Nyanzi, Nyanzi, Wolff, & Whitworth, 2005), but can also be found in other sectors (Ellis et al., 2006, p. 22). According to the Uganda National Household Survey (2013) the Labour Force Participation Rate is lower for men than for women. Comparing this to the status of employment, women's participation in leadership positions is lower than those of men's. Therefore, women contribute more to the labour force in Uganda than men, but they often have a lower status rather than power (Ellis et al., 2006, p. 23).

To conclude, despite this positive improvement, studies show that women's job opportunities are still comparatively low, and that they are less likely to be in power positions (Nyanzi et al., 2005).

Overall, existing literature highlights the importance of gender equality and how it can foster economic growth in Uganda. However, a clear gap between the positive development in this country and the low number of women in

leadership positions can be found. There is a lack of understanding concerning the factors that might still prevent women to attain leadership positions. Therefore, challenges that women in the context of Uganda experience when aiming to obtain leadership positions need to be explored further. Furthermore, the mentioned studies have been conducted in similar, though different contexts. Therefore, it has to be explored if the findings of existing literature can be transferred to a men-dominated and culturally patriarchal society like Uganda, as the cultural context can vary even within one country (Peterman, Quisumbing, Behrman, & Nkonya, 2011). Additionally, the findings of the mentioned studies can rapidly change over time, especially in developing countries. Conducting a local research on this topic allows to explain the current demand for future improvement and helps to develop an applicable action plan based on this demand and the possibilities of the local women. Therefore, to fully address the development of gender equality and women empowerment, a local research on obstacles of female leadership in Uganda has to be conducted.

Based on this, the research question is as follows: *What barriers do women in Uganda face in attaining a leadership position?* Thus, in this study, the goal of Gender Equality will be investigated, more specifically women empowerment as experienced in the number of women in leadership positions. The local research will be carried out as part of the Agri-Quest Project.

Answering this research question and therefore examining the mentioned research gap is necessary to foster female leadership and consequently empower women in Uganda. In addition to this, sustainability is not only about improving current processes, but about ensuring a long-term development. Female leadership and therefore gender equality has the potential to ensure a long-term sustainable development in Uganda.

In the following chapters, I will first elaborate on the current literature on women empowerment and the underlying theories that explain why women have difficulties in attaining a leadership position. Then I will explain the chosen research method and the approach of this research. Following, the findings of the analysed data will be explained in-depth. In the last chapters, the findings and their contribution to current theory as well as suggestions for managerial implications will be discussed.

Theoretical Background

Many scholars have researched gender equality and its challenges, opportunities or impacts. Especially since the declaration that gender equality is a basic human right, researchers have put a lot of attention on this topic (Joshi et al., 2015; United Nations, 2017). The main focus of gender equality, however, is often women empowerment (Alkire et al., 2013), whereas this research deepens it by focusing on female leadership. The following section aims to provide an overview of the main literature this research will be based on. Firstly, the definitions and differences between gender equality and women empowerment are reviewed. Secondly, the connection between women empowerment with leadership is explained, together with the different theories underlying these topics.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

The principle of gender equality is easy to understand and is often defined in very similar ways. For example, the United Nations refer the equality between women and men “to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. (Hannan, 2001)” They emphasize that this equality aims to offer the same chances for both genders, “whether they are born male or female (Hannan, 2001)”. Following this, the SDG of the United Nations on Gender equality promotes this topic by including the empowerment of women (United Nations,

2017). Although the term ‘women empowerment’ is quite broad, there is often no clear distinction made between gender equality and women empowerment and those terms are often used interchangeably (Alkire et al., 2013). The most common definitions include the possibility to make decisions and the ability to act on them (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Kabeer, 1999). Kabeer (1999), for example, views the right and the possibility to make choices as a criterion of empowerment. Alsop (2006) defines empowerment in a similar way by also emphasizing the “capacity to make effective choices, [...] and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Alsop et al., 2006, p. 10) Women empowerment is therefore more specific than gender equality. Whereas gender equality focuses on creating the same rights for both genders, women empowerment additionally aims to increase the access to power and authority for women and therefore their participation in decision-making processes. Within this paper, the term women empowerment is in line with the definitions of the ability to make choices and decisions and to act on them.

The connection between Women Empowerment and Leadership and its theories

The possibility to gain more power as well as the right to make choices and act upon them is often reflected in a leadership position. Thus, the representation of women in leadership has been a common attribute on the measurement of women empowerment throughout the literature (Duflo, 2012; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015; United Nations, 2018). Despite the progress on women empowerment, leadership roles are still occupied by men, also in Uganda. There are several reasons for the small number of female leaders and many theories have been established to explain this phenomenon. The most important theories that can provide a framework for this study are the Gender Role Theory together with the Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly,

Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Eagly & Wood, 1991), which are confirmed and supported by additional research (Duflo, 2012; Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015).

The advantage of women empowerment and the obstacles they still face on gaining a leadership position have been discussed throughout the literature within the last decades. One concept researchers often rely on is the Gender Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 1991). It argues that certain consensual expectations about gender-specific characteristics can represent serious obstacles for women within a corporate context. Thus, it explains that the difference between men and women exists due to beliefs about what kind of behaviour is appropriate for their gender as well as prejudices about their specific skills (Eagly & Wood, 1991). Being a leader is usually not an appropriate position for women and their skills are not suitable for these tasks. Interestingly, this association of genders with certain behaviours and skills has to be treated as a social norm rather than only an expectation, because those stereotypes are nowadays deeply embedded in our society (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). Thus, the expectations are passed on from one generation to the next. This argument is further supported by the concept of the ‘stereotype threat’. It explains that women have accepted the stereotypes associated with their gender role and follow them accordingly (Duflo, 2012). As women in Uganda always followed those expectations, they accepted, for example, that they are suitable for family care but not for leadership. In general, these theories explain in two ways how female leadership is impeded. First, because overcoming those societal norms is difficult and requires a long process, especially because those norms have existed for a very long time (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Second, the “stereotype threat” amplifies this norm, as women have accepted and internalized the stereotypes against them, which has a negative effect on the development of female leaders. (Duflo, 2012). Those obstacles are

additionally governed by the fact that gender is an obvious attribute, which facilitates the categorization and judgement of a person and consequently lowers women's chances for a leadership position (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Another theory, which builds on the Gender Role Theory is the Role Congruity Theory, (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Although the first theory is already a popular study to explain why leadership is still male-dominated (Joshi et al., 2015), the latter theory deepens it by including the congruity between the gender roles with other roles – for example, leadership roles. The study provided evidence that women are disadvantaged compare to men concerning the access to leadership due to several prejudices (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This is further enhanced by a study on the evaluation of leaders, which proves that these prejudices are still prominent at a higher position and affect female leaders' evaluation negatively (Eagly et al., 1992).

According to the research on role congruity, there are two forms of prejudices that provide obstacles for women to access a leadership position, which explain the development of the role allocation between the genders within the society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). One bias conducted within the research on the role congruity theory describes that people have the prejudice that men are more suitable as leaders than women due to expectations about their gender-specific behaviour, which is in line with the Gender Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 1991). This implicit bias makes it difficult for women to attain a leadership position, as it persuades them that men are better for this position (Duflo, 2012). As women in Uganda are expected to engage in roles that are in line with beliefs about their gender, for example having caring and communal skills, they are assigned to roles that require those characteristics. As leadership is often associated with analytical or negotiation skills, which are represented by men, it explains the anticipated incongruity between women and leadership (Eagly & Wood, 1991). This

argument has also been confirmed and extended by Lanaj and Hollenbeck (2015). Although their study focused on the emergence of leadership in self-managing teams, their theory and some of their findings can be generalized and applied to the overall leadership roles in business, as the different behaviour and processes involved in leadership-emergence can be similar to the emergence of a leader in general organization contexts. Thus, they ascertained that mainly men emerged as leaders, which was caused by the team member's assumption that men are more suitable as leaders due to their gender-specific skills (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). This confirms the arguments of both the Gender Role and the Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 1991).

Additionally, Eagly et al. (Eagly et al., 1992) argue that these prejudices still exist after women attained a leadership position and therefore affect the evaluation of female leaders (Eagly et al., 1992). Following this study (Eagly et al., 1992)(1992), women are perceived as less successful than their male counterparts, without any evidence for this. This is caused by the fact that their gender expectations are not in line with the expectations of a leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002). When comparing the actions of female leaders to those of male leaders, women are often evaluated as less efficient or their decisions are categorized as wrong or not helpful, even if the outcome is equal to those of their male counterparts. Consequently, this gender stereotyping can be held responsible for a lack of women in leadership positions, as the negative evaluation supports the prejudices against women and might affect women's self-confidence. It therefore acts not only as a barrier for women to attain such positions, but also as a challenge after they climbed the latter to the top, as the mentioned biases lead to wrong assumptions about women's skills. Together with the role congruity theory, they explain why women's access to leadership positions is still impeded.

Another aspect that influences this stereotype is culture (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Different cultures might put a greater emphasis on the importance of traditional gender roles and is therefore responsible for the incongruity of women in leadership positions. It can be assumed, that in a patriarchal community like in Uganda, the importance of traditional gender roles is stronger, despite women's work force (Ellis et al., 2006, 65f.). The cultural importance of gender roles further amplifies the prejudice held against women.

Overall, those prejudices impede women empowerment. Primarily, requirements of leadership held by the society are misleading and disadvantage women, whereas the negative evaluation of female leaders further hinders women from attaining this position. Secondly, cultural norms create an additional barrier for women, as they are expected to follow their traditional roles, which do not include a managerial position. Lastly, the 'stereotype threat' further reinforces the prejudices against women and female leaders and therefore increases the barriers.

The gender-specific stereotypes supported by the influencing moderators build a framework for this research. Although these theories can be used as a groundwork, they are mainly conducted in western societies. It can be expected that the differences between men and women or the existing stereotypes are similar, but they can still be influenced by the local environment and therefore differ. Additionally, these theories provide suggestions on how to overcome these barriers in order to facilitate female leadership. However, due to a lot of investment of organizations and NGOs, it can be observed that many of those interventions are already in place. Thus, progress on women empowerment is improving in Uganda, whereas women's low representation in leadership is still surprisingly low. Studying the underlying theory therefore in-depth within the Ugandan context can help to identify the reasons for women's low representation in

power positions and the barriers they still face when trying to attain a leadership position. Based on the findings, initiatives can be taken, which can help to increase the number of women in leadership positions and consequently improve Uganda's economy (Ellis et al., 2006).

Research Methodology

The following section first clarifies the reasons for and procedures of the chosen qualitative research design and its context. Afterwards, the collection of the necessary data is explained, followed by the process of the data analysis.

Research Design

To build theory on the topic, an inductive, qualitative research design has been chosen. As research on this topic has mainly been conducted in western societies or within a general context in developing countries, for example sub-Saharan Africa, the local research in Uganda is in a nascent state. Thus, this research requires to gain rich insights into the local processes and to examine people's behaviour. Furthermore, to answer the research question, insider information on the barriers that hinder local women on attaining a leadership position are necessary. Due to these requirements, a qualitative research design was chosen (Myers, 2013). Precisely, this qualitative research consisted of interviews, which enabled the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the context (Creswell, 2009). This was especially helpful because the local culture differs to the researcher's culture. Additionally, the interviews enabled to get closer to the local people and therefore allowed the researcher to gain information about their impressions, mindsets or cognitions (Myers, 2013).

Furthermore, the interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the researcher to ensure a better understanding and to change

the structure of the questions once a certain pattern emerged (Rowley, 2012). Apart from the nascent state of the current theory on this topic, the qualitative research and its interviews were more appropriate than for example, questionnaires within a quantitative research. As the researcher was travelling through the country, where the time was limited, and the people's illiteracy level was high, conducting surveys would not have been possible (Creswell, 2009).

To measure dependability of the interviews, it has to be ensured that the interviewee's answer is not influenced by a certain structure of the question and that the researcher's interpretation is not biased. Therefore, the data and findings are made more transparent by providing the interview protocol as well as a table which indicates the original quotes (Flick, 2008, p. 16).

Research Context

This research was conducted in collaboration with AgriQuest Uganda in April 2018, which focuses on sustainable agriculture within Uganda. Agriculture is a very important sector in Uganda and dependent on a sustainable development (Bachmann et al., 2017; WorldBank, 2018). As gender equality is an important facilitator of sustainable growth, this research contributes to the AgriQuest project by focusing on this topic (Ellis et al., 2006). More specifically, it focuses on female leadership and the reasons for the low number of women in leadership positions, which can facilitate women empowerment and therefore gender equality (Duflo, 2012).

Additionally, female leadership is as important for farming businesses as it is for large and small business within other sectors. Therefore, this research was also conducted within other sectors in addition to agriculture, which also increases the transferability of the findings (Creswell, 2009, pp. 202–204). Furthermore, the team members of the AgriQuest team are also active at the Makerere University in

Kampala, which enabled to include students into the research. To conclude, this research included participants from the agricultural sector in Uganda's rural areas, in particular in Bugiri and Oyam. Additionally, participants from other sectors as well as students were interviewed in Kampala.

Data Collection

To collect data, the researcher travelled to Uganda to work together with the local AgriQuest team in April 2018 for three weeks. The team consisted of four members from Uganda and five students from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Within this project, the team travelled to two districts outside of Kampala. One was Bugiri, which is focused on rice farming, and the other one was in Oyam, which is known for its production of cassava. In addition to these rural areas, interviews were also conducted within the urban area of Kampala. Although there is often a distinction made between the urban and rural areas within developing countries, it can be assumed that the obstacles women face in attaining leadership positions are similar.

The respondents were reached by a purposive sampling technique, which strategically focuses on respondents that are necessary to answer the research question (Creswell, 2009, p. 125). Furthermore, due to the local culture and its way of business, snowball sampling was also a helpful method to gain participants, by asking the respondents if they know other people who would be helpful for this research (Creswell, 2009, p. 127). The topic on female leadership required interviews with women in this position, to gain knowledge on their experience. Additionally, to study existing barriers, women who are not in power positions were included.

Furthermore, students were interviewed to examine further barriers, but also to ensure a long- term success as their generation is responsible for a future development. After the first interviews with women, it became

apparent that men are enabler and challenger of women empowerment and had to be included as well. On the one side, to understand their impressions, on the other side to gain independent insights, as they are not biased, compare to women, which increases the confirmability of this research (Creswell, 2009, p. 204).

The qualitative research consisted of 14 individual interviews and 4 focus group interviews. Some of the interviews were conducted individually by the researcher. However, if the questions overlapped, the interviews were conducted together with other team members. The interviews ranged between 30 and 90 minutes, where some questions were very specific, whereas other questions, especially in the beginning, were rather broad. This enabled a story-telling approach, which left the possibility to gather unbiased information without limiting the interviewee to a specific topic, for example “Do you experience progress in women empowerment?” (Czarniawska, 2008, p. 49). Furthermore, as the interviews were semi-structured, most of the detailed questions evolved during the interview to ensure a detailed explanation of a mentioned topic.

Analysis

The data analysis was an inductive approach, which implied to compile the rich data and conclude it into more abstract themes (Creswell, 2009). It therefore followed the Gioia method, where generated codes result in many first-order concepts and are afterwards compiled into more general second-order themes, followed by abstract aggregate dimensions (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). However, before the interviews could be analysed, they first had to be transcribed. As they have been recorded, the files could be used to write down the accurate answers.

Step 1 – First-order concepts: Following this, the first step of the analysis was to code the transcribed interviews. This was performed

through open coding, where the researcher reads through the interview transcription and labels applicable parts with short phrases (Gioia et al., 2013). During this process the researcher had to stay close to the interviewees’ language to decrease the possibility of a misleading interpretation (Gioia et al., 2013). The labelled parts were then developed into the first-order concepts, which facilitated the detection of certain patterns and offered first insights into the development on women empowerment and the barriers of female leadership.

Step 2: Second-order themes: The second step was to find links among the generated first-order themes and to therefore make better sense of the gathered data. Thus, the researcher read through the first-order codes and looked for similarities. Accordingly, the interrelated codes were categorized and emerged into more abstract, second-order themes. These four second-order themes are: Intrinsic motivation, misleading assumptions, normative environment and economic environment.

Step 3: Aggregate dimensions: The last step was to generate aggregate dimensions, which are the most abstract and general terms. Thus, the revealed four second-order themes were further examined, and similar categories were again grouped together. This process helped to assemble the four second-order themes into aggregate dimensions. The two identified aggregate dimensions revealed the influence of micro- and macro-level factors and were labelled accordingly.

Findings

The research revealed a distinction between Micro- and Macro-level factors, which hinder women in Uganda to attain a leadership position. To unpack my findings, I will start with the micro-level factors, which are subdivided into the *Intrinsic Motivation* and *Lack of Confidence* and will be explained in greater detail. Afterwards, the *normative* and *economic*

environment, which are macro-level factors affecting female leadership, will be described.

Micro-level Factors

The first aggregate dimension that became apparent are micro-level factors. The barriers that exist on a micro level are set individually, despite existing opportunities or progress on women empowerment. The themes that are prevailing on this level are *Intrinsic Motivation* and *Lack of Confidence*. Through these two elements women limit themselves from leadership positions.

Intrinsic Motivation

During the interviews, it was often mentioned that women are afraid of leadership or the process of empowerment, because “they tend to fear men and therefore leave power positions to men”.

Due to this “[...] inferior feeling in women, [...] they do not even consider becoming a leader”. This fear explains their reluctant behaviour and its effect on motivations, which is further reinforced by another factor: Some interviewees mentioned that women experience the process of empowerment and leadership as too much work. One female teacher, who had a leadership position in an international school, explained the attitude she experienced from women and girls as the following:

“But I have had students saying ‘I find a rich husband and give up my studies’. They see the odds of empowerment, ‘why should I wake up early, struggle against society?’”.

Many women and girls view this process as too exhausting and therefore prefer to engage in tasks that seem easier, for example getting married instead of continuing to engage in further education. The fact that some women perceive empowerment as a struggle leads them to engage in traditional, more convenient roles. Taken together, these statements

explain that women are not motivated to fight for empowerment, because they are afraid of those positions and because the process is too demanding. It can be assumed that their mindset and their fear have been influenced over the years through negative experiences, the external environment or education. Interestingly, however, this way of thinking also exists in young women or girls and is therefore not necessarily influenced by external factors. A male student described a situation at the university as the following:

“They [girls] tend to speak up less and presentations are mostly done by boys. If there is a question asked by the teacher, they are usually answered by the boys. I think girls are more inferior. “

The fact that they often prefer to let boys speak due to their fear, can be applied to the corporate environment and explain the greater emergence of male leaders compare to female leaders. Thus, the fear that exists among women and girls, is not necessarily influenced by the external environment or negative experiences, but rather deeply embedded in girls’ and women’s mindset. The existing fear together with the rather difficult process of empowerment affects their motivation to engage in the process of attaining a leadership position.

Furthermore, the family plays an important role in Uganda and it is traditionally the woman’s responsibility to take care of the children and engage in domestic tasks. However, these traditions imply that women either do not have a job or that it is not time consuming, which allows them to stay at home and have a lot of time for family care. Certainly, a leadership position reduces the time which is reserved for those domestic tasks. Thus, the time which is left for family care is drastically reduced, as a leadership position is time consuming and comes with great responsibilities. A current female leader described this as the following:

“You can rush and manage it. But there is no time for small things. Such as brushing your shoes, your husband can do it because I have children to take care of, I have a job to take care of. I'm not a machine. You can never do everything.”

The knowledge about this exhausting coordination hinders women's willingness for a leadership position, especially because family has a very high priority in the Ugandan society. Thus, if women have to decide on only one of those duties due to a restricted time burden, they usually decide against a leadership position. This factor can also facilitate the earlier mentioned barrier, that empowerment is too exhausting. Fighting for empowerment, which was described as “struggle against society”, is perceived as very demanding – just as combining work and family. Thus, the confirmation of the threat that a leadership position inclines and the reluctance to engage in this struggle leads to women's discouragement.

Following this, the status of the family and other traditional roles affect women's intrinsic motivation not only due to an extensive time exposure, but also due to the fact that female leaders forget other traditional roles. After one group interview in the rice district Bugiri, where only one woman was present, while the majority of members were men, an informal conversation with the woman was conducted after the official interview. The men often emphasized that female leaders forget their traditional roles. When asked if she can confirm this statement, she replied:

“I want to get higher position, but many women forget their traditional roles and that's a problem. I'm scared that this will happen to me.”

This reveals the assumption that female leaders become arrogant and don't see the importance of traditional roles anymore serves as an intrinsic motivational barrier, because women do not want this to happen. The

difference to the earlier mentioned factor is that the first affects women's motivation due to a time constraint, whereas the latter demotivates them due to the negative effects that leadership has on their priorities, leading to the fact that they won't see the importance of traditional roles anymore.

Lack of Confidence

The second theme on a micro-level which the data analysis revealed is that women's lack of confidence hinders them to attain a leadership position. Compare to the earlier mentioned intrinsic motivation, this point implies that even if women would be motivated to get a higher position, their low self-esteem stops them from trying it. Thus, women are not confident enough to engage in leadership and empowerment due to several reasons. One barrier is that women compare themselves to men and have doubts whether they will be able to compete against them, because “[...] the trend is that women are not seen as good leaders in the society”. This assumption exists within the society and affects women's confidence negatively. This was confirmed by a current female leader, who explained that despite women's motivation, their self-esteem is still low:

“In a more developed society, every woman wants to be in a better position than they are. But it's the stereotype of thinking that I am not going to get it. If there are 10 men and 2 women, what are the chances? So it's not so much the fear as it is the psych. 'We are not going to get in anyway. So why try?' “

Thus, women, are aware of the advantages of female leadership and are motivated to engage in it. However, as soon as they have to compete against a man, they perceive their chances as very low. Consequently, they do not engage in the process of empowerment and give up before even trying it. Unfortunately, the possibility that they have male competitors during the process of empowerment is very high, for example when

applying for a position or when leaders are supposed to emerge in a group or within an organization. This expresses the big influence of women's confidence towards leadership.

Furthermore, a negative association of empowered women decreases the individual's confidence. Many people described female leaders as too aggressive or that women in a power position "are becoming big-headed". One woman, who is a village agent in a community of the cassava district Oyam, metaphorically described it as the following:

"It is like setting a dog free from the chain. If a dog has been tied and chained for a long time and is hungry, when he is set free, he will run away. He will jump and if you try to chain him again, you cannot, he will bite you. Those are the women."

This quote explains the reason to women's aggressiveness, thereby confirming the widespread association of powerful female leaders with negative characteristics. She explains that women were suppressed for a long time, therefore, once they are given power, they exploit it – which explains the aggressive behaviour. The misleading assumption that female leaders are aggressive decreases women's confidence, as they are afraid of becoming aggressive and therefore being described with such characteristics.

Another interesting finding which the interviews revealed, especially in the rural areas,

is the cohesion between corruption and female leadership. Thus, in some areas, leadership does not have the same significance as it does in other districts or countries. As corruption is quite high, especially within informal businesses, money plays an important role and "[...]everyone needs to pay for such position". Interestingly, one woman in Bugiri said, that "[...] women are only put into leadership positions, because they are easier to brief and influence and act more as a decoration than actually fulfilling a position".

This reveals that the expectations of a leadership role differ. Most importantly though, this affects women's confidence, especially in areas where informal businesses dominate. Women think that corrupt reasons are the only motives why they are able to attain power positions, instead of their skills. Therefore, they believe that their skills do either not matter, or are not sufficient enough, as they are only able to get this position due to their weakness. Consequently, they do not believe in themselves and their skills, which decreases their confidence.

Additionally, the widespread belief that empowerment has a negative effect on marriage decreases women's self-confidence as well. This can be applied to early stages – like finding a husband – as well as to later situations during the marriage. Many respondents claimed that "men tend to marry undereducated women". Thus, being educated, which usually facilitates a higher self-esteem, rather appears as the opposite within Uganda. In a more developed stage, it has often been confirmed that women empowerment leads to divorce:

"In Uganda, we have a vice president who is a woman. Actually, she comes from this region. She was female. And the husband did not feel comfortable. The problem is when a woman become rich and have position of authority, she does not do household tasks any longer. They are not role models at the family level because they got divorce. [...] The men blame the women and the women blame the men, so they never agreed on it. The man was ashamed because they got divorced".

Apart from the fact that this quote also repeated the argument that female leaders cannot take care of the domestic chores anymore, it also revealed that the woman's power position intimidated her husband, which led to arguments and discussion and consequently to a divorce. The story of the female vice president and her divorce has often been used as an example of female

leadership and its negative influence on marriage. As marriage has a higher status in those societies than it does in western societies, the risks of not getting married or getting divorced are too high. This negatively affects the confidence needed for empowerment because women prefer to not have a leadership position but to be married instead.

To conclude, women's lack of intrinsic motivation and confidence are an obstacle on the micro-level, which impede female leadership. As they are on a micro-level and therefore set individually, women have the possibility to change them. These factors are necessary to drive female leadership forward, as women themselves are responsible to engage in those positions. Despite suggested interventions provided by external organizations, women need to be motivated and confident to be able to take action.

Macro-level factors

As a second aggregate theme, the analysis revealed macro-level factors, which are, compared to the micro-level factors, not the individual barriers that women set themselves, but those that the external environment sets for women. Those external influences are categorized into the normative and the economic environment. Although some aspects might overlap with the earlier mentioned ones on a micro level, for example family or cultural arguments, the following concern the external environment.

Consequently, women are not able to directly change the factors that exist on a macro-level.

Normative Environment

The normative environment includes several cultural or traditional factors that influence the society, thereby excluding women from leadership positions. One factor that has been mentioned regularly are societal norms, which explain the behaviour of men and women and the division between the genders. An example

of such a social norm that has been adapted and constantly reinforced is the dominance of men, as one interviewee described it:

“In the rural areas women cannot get a leadership position because of the traditions, because a man can forbid a woman to do certain things.”

Thus, a common accepted behaviour is that a man might not allow his wife, his daughter or female employee to attain a leadership position, which, of course, directly impedes them to get into higher positions. This, however, does not only stem from men, but also from women, thereby making empowerment more difficult, which was also described by a female leader:

“When you are a woman, you are not supposed to address people. You should not stand when people talk. That is why you see that most of women still bear that culture. When you talk to us or ask us, but we feel ashamed because our mothers told us not to talk to people you will get ashamed. You will lose dignity when you speak in front of people”

Those norms are inherited throughout the generations and passed on from mothers to their daughters. However, leadership positions usually require these tasks. The belief that women lose dignity when they speak in front of people is deeply embedded in the society, which explains how societal norms impede women empowerment.

Furthermore, the consequence of women empowerment on marriage has been mentioned earlier. However, the importance of family and marriage also exists on a macro-level. Thus, “When a woman gets a responsible position, [the] husband loses respect in the family”. Additionally, “In order to be respected in work and by friends, your family unit needs to work. The family unit is very important in Uganda”. Compare to the earlier mentioned influence of family on women individually, these quotes rather

concern the external level. On the one side, it indicates that the husband is afraid to lose his status in the society. On the other side, if there are problems arising on a family level, the family can lose its face. Thus, family members might therefore – even unintentionally – try to impede women from attaining a leadership position to ensure the family’s status.

Following this argument, the research detected that the influence of men is part of the normative environment, which slows down women empowerment. “They [men] are people that will lose a lot if things change. If all women were made aware of their rights, the men would lose a lot. So they do not want the change.” This statement shows that men are used to having more power than women. Female leadership and consequently women empowerment would imply that men have to give up or share their level of power, which explains the statement that men are not in favour of this change. Thus, they try to stop this progress in order to keep their dominance and higher status.

In addition to this, appointed gender roles are part of the norms that exist in the local society. One female leader explained, that “It is not because they do not see the necessity, but because they do not know. Because of the way they are brought up. Culture. There are some things that we say to a woman what she should do. Once you are born as a woman, there are some things you should not do.” She explained that women are generally aware of the advantages of female leadership and would also be motivated to engage in it, but cultural education prevents them from those higher positions, as these are reserved for men. Therefore, the appointed gender roles exclude women from leadership. Another woman added, that “[...] women are told not to dare to get the positions of men”, emphasizing the external pressure and fear instilled into women.

Economic Environment

The economic environment focuses on external barriers that women often face at the workplace, either in a power or a non-power position. The interviews and following quotes explain how female leadership is impeded within an economic environment.

One problem female leaders and those who strive for these positions face is the lack of respect.

“But this is the typical difference between a man and a woman in business. Men are respected for being men, but a woman has to be something to be respected. She first has to show what she can do.”

This describes that women are often less respected due to their gender. Compare to men, women are required to work hard in order to prove their skills, whereas men have a better reputation without the necessity to confirm their skills. Another female respondent, who has been a leader for a long time, argued that “If you, as a woman, want to excel as a leader, you have to work double the amount that men do.” She therefore confirmed that women’s effort to get the same respect as men needs to be higher, which complicates the process of empowerment, because the expectations towards women are higher than men’s.

Furthermore, once a woman attained a leadership position, her authority is influenced by the gender. On the one side, employees do not follow her instructions, especially male employees, which was confirmed by the faculty leader of an international school: “It is sometimes problematic. I have had two cases where I felt they are being insubordinate because I am a woman”. On the other side, a female leader is questioned more than a male leader, which was explained by the leader of an NGO that focuses on women empowerment, as the following:

“And what had happened is that the questions that are raised to women are different to those

that a man would get asked. They will ask women personal questions, questions that even tackle their personalities, for example: 'how do you manage the political affairs when you are not even married?'"

This statement used the example of a female leader in politics and can be applied to the economic context as well. Whether she is married or not is in no relation to her profession or capability. Thus, it describes that once a woman is in a power position, where she would usually have authority, she is still challenged and treated different compare to a man. The likelihood that a man would get asked personal questions is very low. This proves that women are less respected, because those specific questions aim to be convinced of her leadership skills or to criticise her.

Following this, the interviews revealed that another barrier that women in leadership positions face is the lack of trust. This applies to the attempt of reaching a higher position as well as to the situation of having this position.

"But my friends, even my female friends, tried to discourage me and said I will lose if I compete against a man"

This quote reveals again the comparison to men and the expectations that women cannot compete with men. When this argument was used earlier, it explained that it would affect women's confidence on an individual level. However, in this case, it also affects other people's expectation and is therefore also existing on a macro-level. Thus, even if women have the confidence and motivation for empowerment, other people - men as well as women, do not have faith in them and show their distrust by trying to discourage them. Another female leader confirmed this distrust and added: "But now, that I am successful, they respect me, but not in the beginning." This statement reveals that she had to convince her environment of her capabilities as a leader in

order to be trusted and only her success led to trust from others.

Furthermore, female leaders as well as students, argued that the unequal treatment of men and women is also reflected in situations where they make mistakes.

"And you are also easily blamed when making a mistake. If a woman makes a mistake, people say that it is because you are a woman. If a man makes a mistake, it is seen as only one mistake that can happen".

Thus, mistakes made by women are perceived worse by other people and blamed on their gender. On the contrary, the quote suggests that men's failure is rather tolerated. Therefore, women are more challenged by their economic environment than men, which consequently impedes the emergence of female leaders. This differentiation can be reinforced by the earlier mentioned argument that female leaders are less respected or less trusted.

Overall, the normative environment, consisting for example of certain social norms or beliefs women's role in society as well as the economic environment, which affects women especially after attaining a power position, are barriers on a macro-level. Compare to the barriers on the micro-level, these are set by the surrounding environment and not by the women themselves. Thus, women have limited influence on changing or overcoming them.

Discussion

The study aimed to answer the question on what barriers women in Uganda face in attaining leadership positions in Uganda, despite the positive progress on women empowerment. Therefore, this research was motivated to close the gap in the understanding the factors that prevent female leadership in Uganda and additionally explore the current theory on this topic within a local context. A primary contribution of this research is the distinction between micro- and macro-

level factors. Whereas prior literature often held external barriers responsible for the slow development of women into leadership positions, this research contributes to those theories and extends them by adding individual barriers as impediments of female leadership. Therefore, on the micro-level, women exclude themselves from leadership positions due to a lack of intrinsic motivation and confidence. On the other side, the normative as well as the economic environment represent external obstacles for women on a macro-level, which complicate the development of female leadership. Additionally, a difference between the barriers on these levels is that women have a direct influence on the micro-level factors, whereas the macro-level factors require continuous and society-wide improvement. The following section discusses these findings more in-depth and their relation to the current theory. Additionally, managerial implications are mentioned, followed by limitations of this research and possibilities for future research.

Theoretical Implications

The gender role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1991) could be confirmed throughout this research, particularly within the findings on the macro-level. Additionally, the normative environment, consisting of societal norms or the importance of family clearly confirms Eagly and Karau's (2002) argument that culture can be a determinant of female leadership within certain societies. Following this, the belief that women are responsible for the family care or that they are not suitable for a position that is typical for men, both confirms the gender role theory and the role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 1991). The findings are further reinforced by the stereotype threat (Duflo, 2012), and explain how the normative environment hinders female leadership. Additionally, according to Pryck and Termine (2014), labour- markets are often built on or adapted to prevailing social norms and traditions. As societal norms are important in Uganda, the labour-market is built on, for

example, the importance of family and marriage, where the man is usually the 'head of the house', thus, the leader. Therefore, women are not seen as leaders in the society, which provides obstacles for them to engage in powerful positions. Although a normative environment is always existent, the researched one within this society clearly disadvantages women by assigning them roles that oppose leadership positions, which leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 1: A strong normative environment that supports women's traditional roles is negatively related to the emergence of female leaders. This especially appears if those traditional roles oppose the definitions of leadership.

Furthermore, regarding the economic environment, the findings illustrate that female leaders are less respected or less trusted and that their mistakes are perceived worse, compare to male leaders. This was reflected in the arguments of current female leaders, that women, compare to male leaders, are expected to put in more effort in order to prove their skills or that men's mistakes are rather accepted than women's. This finding supports Eagly's (1992) argument that gender influences the evaluation of leaders. Eagly's (1992) study provided evidence that, despite the same behaviour of female and male leaders, women are evaluated more negative by their employees. This can further be explained by Eagly and Wood's (1991) gender role theory, as the general beliefs that the society has about an appropriate behaviour towards the genders can be transferred to the organizational context. This way of thinking is also known as 'gender-role spillover' (Gutek & Morasch, 1982). Thus, if being subject to men is an appropriate and common behaviour of women within the society, it opposes the behaviour of a leader within a business context. Carrying the prejudices held within the society into the workplace creates opposing gender expectations and therefore explains women's less favourably evaluation and their

greater challenges as leaders. This gender discrimination creates barriers for women and therefore impedes female leadership (Eagly et al., 1992). The influence of gender on a leader's evaluation can be summarized in the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Female leaders are evaluated less successful than male leaders. Additionally, the female gender is negatively related to their authority.

Whereas the existing theories together with the earlier mentioned findings suggest that several macro-level factors impede female leadership, the findings also add to existing theory by including individual barriers set by women. Thus, the findings demonstrate that women are motivated to engage in leadership, however, their fear, their personal priority of traditional roles or the exhausting process of empowerment affect their intrinsic motivation. Zooming in, the main triggers of their dilemmas partly stem from the cultural education, thereby proving Eagly and Karau's (2002) argument that culture can challenge women to engage in leadership. The findings additionally add to prior literature by stating that some women are simply not willing to apply for higher positions, as their current situation satisfies their needs. Thus, despite positive progress on women empowerment and increasing opportunities for women, their intrinsic motivation can be low. The fact that many women are not motivated to engage in leadership results in a small number of female leaders in Uganda, as they do not make use of the opportunities provided for them. However, intrinsic motivation is a necessary mediator of leadership (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Therefore, a lack of intrinsic motivation can serve as an individual barrier of women's leadership. This discussion leads to the third proposition:

Proposition 3: The lower women's intrinsic motivation, the greater the possibility of personal exclusion from leadership.

Furthermore, women's comparison to men and the expectation that they will not succeed in this competition decreases their confidence. This is further strengthened by misleading assumptions about female leadership and its negative impact on women's characteristic or status, which affects their confidence negatively. Consequently, it leads to the fact that women do not strive to engage in leadership, thereby excluding themselves from those positions. Prior research suggests, however, that self-confidence is a necessary characteristic of leaders and can be an important enabler to engage in leadership as well as a factor of leadership success (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Therefore, the following proposition has been developed:

Proposition 4: The higher women's confidence, the greater the likelihood of engaging in female leadership.

Theoretical Model

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between the micro- and macro-level factors and how the macro-level factors reinforce the micro-level factors. The normative barriers as well as the knowledge about the barriers within the economic environment can influence women's motivation as well as their confidence. On the one side, societal norms or gender roles can be, as suggested by Duflo (2012) viewed as a stereotype threat – as these stereotypes are accepted by women, they view themselves as not suitable for this role, which directly affects their confidence. Furthermore, as the beliefs about gender roles or social norms are misleading and not in line with leadership positions, it demotivates women from engaging in leadership. On the other side, the economic environment has a negative influence on women's confidence and intrinsic motivation as well. It can be assumed that a negative evaluation of female leaders is a widespread knowledge (Eagly et al., 1992; Eagly & Karau, 2002). This amplifies women's comparison to men, whereas the more negative evaluation of female leaders

decreases the individual's confidence. Additionally, as this knowledge is a deeply embedded belief amongst the society, it decreases women's motivation to put in more effort and confirms the assumption that women empowerment is too much work. Thus, the findings on the macro-level amplify the barriers on a micro-level and explain women's detached behaviour.

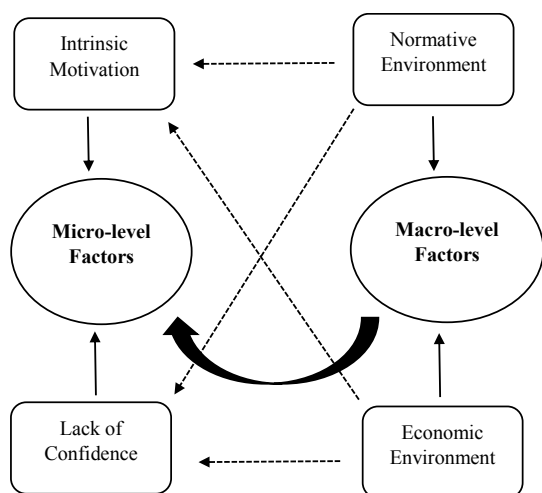


Figure 1: Theoretical Model

Following the theoretical implications, this research suggests the following practical implications based on the findings. First of all, the micro-level factors that impede women empowerment concern the women's intrinsic motivation and their lack of confidence. Thus, it is important that managers and organizations in Uganda accept that the role of family has first priority for the local women and therefore find a way to combine leadership and family, for example by providing day-care at organizations. It is also necessary to work towards women's motivation in general, but it has to be kept in mind that some women simply do not want to engage in female leadership. Managers or NGO workers should therefore find out if the reluctance towards it is their own decision or if their motivation is influenced by external factors. Thus, motivating towards female leadership is necessary, but women should not feel forced to engage in it. Second, women's confidence

as an additional individual barrier can be increased by educating them about misleading assumptions and by working with successful role models, which proves that empowerment does not have a negative influence on marriage or their characteristics. Third, coming back to the model in Figure 1, to ensure long-term success in women's empowerment, it is more important to change the macro-level factors, as they influence the micro-level factors. Whereas it is easier, but also important on a short-term, to change the micro-level barriers, suggestions for the macro-level factors are more difficult, as they mainly concern the external environment and therefore require continuous improvement.

According to Parker & Ogilvie (1996), education has the potential to increase the awareness of biases and at the same time decrease their existence. Reducing the stereotypes held against women is necessary to increase their access to leadership positions. Additionally, the findings illustrated that a lot of this negative influence comes from men, because they often reinforce the gender roles or refuse to follow women's orders. It is therefore suggested to include men's 'depowerment' into the education of women empowerment. Lastly, to ensure a long-term continuous development of women empowerment on a macro-level, these educational interventions should include girls and boys as well, as the future generation has the potential to change embedded social norms. Research on the role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) determined that the stereotypes about gender roles are often carried into the workplace (Joshi et al., 2015). Changing those prejudices therefore requires early interventions. Aiming these early education programs or trainings towards a positive gender diversity can decrease those biases, which will then beneficially be transferred into an organizational climate.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings of this research are based on an extensive study, several limitations have to be considered. First of all, qualitative research, especially the interpretation of the interviews, is largely dependent on the subjectivity of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Although the researcher ensured to stay close to the data during the analysis, an intrinsic bias cannot be fully prevented. Second, as the native language in Uganda is different to the researcher's language, a wrong understanding might have influenced the answers. To prevent this, the researcher repeated the questions if the answer was not clear. Third, the context of this study limits the transferability of the findings. Thus, the findings cannot always be generalized to other contexts and might not be applicable in different settings.

This research also opens up the necessity for future research. Following the limitation of the transferability, the findings have to be explored within other contexts, as the mindsets or the progress on female leadership might differ within other societies, therefore leading to different results. Furthermore, within the same society, research on this topic can be divided by sectors, as it could be possible that different findings emerge within different business sectors. Lastly, the developed propositions have to be tested within a quantitative study in order to provide statistical evidence.

Conclusion

As positive progress on women empowerment has been made within the last years, the low number of women in leadership positions is contradicting. This research therefore aimed to examine the current barriers that women in Uganda still face when attaining a leadership position. Current literature mainly holds external barriers responsible for a slow development of female leadership. The analysis of the conducted interviews, however, revealed that there are factors on a micro- as well as macro-level, which impede female leadership. Whereas the latter factors confirm

existing theories, the micro-level factors further extend current literature. Micro-level factors are individual barriers set by women, such as their *Intrinsic Motivation* as well as a *Lack of Confidence*, whereas the macro-level factors stem from the external environment, more specifically the *Normative and Economic Environment*. Furthermore, women are able to influence the micro-level factors by gaining higher motivation or confidence, but they have no direct power over the macro-level factors. Increasing women's motivation or confidence is therefore a necessary enabler when working towards women empowerment. Additionally, the normative and economic environment requires continuous change, which is a longer lasting process. Furthermore, based on the findings, a theoretical model has been developed. This model states that the macro-level factors influence the micro-level factors. Thus, the external barriers that women face, like societal norms, gender roles or a lack of respect due to their gender, can affect their motivation and their confidence. It is therefore even more important to work on the obstacles at a macro-level, especially when aiming at a long-term development, as they additionally enable positive change on a micro-level.

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