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Research paper No. 17: **Why are policies promoting gender equality in Uganda not achieving their intended objectives?**

Authors: Marie ; Marie Ptáčníková, David Katamba, Andrew Seruma & Catherine Tindiwensi

For more AGRI-QUEST details, contact:

David Katamba,
AGRI-QUEST Lead Researcher
Website: www.agriquestuganda.com
Email: info@agriquestuganda.com
Tel: +256 774972532; +256 752794612

Executive Summary

Gender equality remains a great concern even in the 21st century, especially in developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It is believed to be linked to economic growth, therefore, this study aims to understand reasons for persisting gender inequality and bring rich evidence in order to improve position of women and achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality.

This study focuses on Uganda, because it ranks among the countries with the highest gender inequality and poverty levels. We use theory of decoupling as an analytical lens to investigate gender inequality in a specific context of a developing country of Uganda and aim to answer the following research question: *Why are policies promoting gender equality in Uganda not achieving their intended objectives?*

Based on the results of a three-week qualitative data collection in a country of origin where eighteen semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, our study identifies five possible reasons for persisting gender inequality. The collected data was analysed using open coding and resulted into a model containing discovered concepts. Our findings suggest that (1) cultural and societal setting, (2) lack of resources, (3) lack of political will, (4) fear of empowerment, and (5) lack of awareness may lead to gender inequality and, in turn, were identified as the potential antecedents of means-ends decoupling in gender policies in the developing country of Uganda.

This research extends evidence from local context and contributes to scarce literature of (means-ends) decoupling, especially in understanding why gender policies are not achieving their desired objectives. Outcomes of our paper imply that practitioners should take into account those five aforementioned factors in order to achieve SDG Goal 5 and gender equality in Uganda.

Keywords: Gender equality, gender policies, achievement of SDG 5, Uganda, decoupling theory, developing countries

Introduction

Even in the 21st century, people all over the world face major social challenges. Especially in sub-Saharan Africa, gender inequalities are of an issue. According to the Gender Inequality Index (GII) (Human Development Reports, 2016), disparities between men and women are truly considerable in developing countries. Relevance of gender equality is high, not only because it is a basic human right (UNDP SDG, 2016b), but also because research shows its link to economic growth and poverty alleviation (UNDP SDG, 2016b, Cuberes & Teignier 2014; UNDP Uganda 2016). This paper focuses on a developing country of Uganda, because it ranks among countries with the highest gender inequality levels and poverty levels (World Bank, 2017) and because, despite various efforts to reduce gender inequality, differences are still present (World Bank, 2012). The GII index of Uganda improved from 0.650 in 1995 to 0.552 in 2015. However, comparing the values to the Netherlands, that exhibited 0.113 and 0.044, clearly, gender inequalities in sub-Saharan Africa are more vulnerable and remains a great concern.

To achieve gender equality, one solution can be an introduction of policies to improve current situation (World Bank, 1995; UNDP 2016c). Formally stated policies are widely used by both governments and organizations (World Bank, 1995), their role is intertwined and a position of non-governmental organizations is rising, because of their ability to push governments to consider public opinions (Mathews, 1997), especially in developing countries with weaker institutions (Krasner, 1999).

One of the organizations that uses policies as a key tool to address societal issues is the world- wide known organization United Nations Development Program (UNDP). They are aware of the importance of gender equality and therefore, it was identified as one their 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030 (UNDP SDG, 2016b) as an improved continuum of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended by 2015 (UNDP SDG, 2016a). Furthermore, the UN aims to transform gender stereotypes (UNDP, 2016) and serves as an umbrella organization for many other initiatives (e.g. UN Women, UNDP Uganda or UNDP Gender Equality Seal program). Besides, they convinced the Government of Uganda to accept the SDGs including the Goal 5 in 2015 and implement it into their legal framework (UNDP Uganda, 2016).

However, the implementation of policies might be problematic. Some studies indicate that policies are less likely to be implemented in developing countries (Drori, Meyer, Ramirez & Schofer, 2003; Swiss, 2009), "are rarely a strong predictor of daily activities (Bromley & Powell, 2012, p. 7)" and hence, may lack impact (Graafland & Smid, 2016). Looking at the situation and position of women in Uganda, despite evident efforts to reduce gender inequality and presence of numerous initiatives and for example, recent adoption of the Gender Equality Seal (UNDP Uganda, 2016) which "provides a concrete tool for the private sector to contribute to the achievement the SDGs by reducing gender gaps through promoting women's economic empowerment as well as bringing equality in the workplace", various sources point out persisting gender inequalities (Tamale, 1993; Ellis et al., 2006; World Bank, 2012). Evidence suggests a gap between policy and practice in areas of property rights (Ellis et al., 2006; FIDH, 2012), access to opportunities (Ellis et al., 2006), as well as other sources indicates unequal treatment of women in parliament (Goetz, 1998; Swiss, 2009), a 39%-wage gap in

private sphere in 2015 (UNDP Uganda, 2017), or highly discriminatory division of workload towards women in agricultural sector that accounts for 40% of Uganda's GDP (Ellis et al., 2006).

Such gap between policy and actual practice is called decoupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Bromley & Powell, 2012) and current literature (Bromley & Powell, 2012) distinguish between two types, namely policy-practice and means-ends decoupling. The policy-practice decoupling (Bromley & Powell, 2012) describes a situation when formal policies and rules are unimplemented, routinely violated or purely symbolic and can be called symbolic adoption (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Bromley & Powell (2012) add means-ends decoupling defined as a situation when "policies are implemented but the link between formal policies and the intended outcome is opaque (p. 27)" which can be understood as symbolic implementation. They suggest the latter one to be more prevalent in the contemporary world because of rising societal pressures, where the first type can be seen as a failure. Literature suggests that decoupling is common in (non-profit) organizations with societal goals and is not unique to employment law and human right practices (Edelman, 1992; Cole, 2005; Swiss, 2009; Bromley & Powell, 2012).

Although research on decoupling is rising, Bromley & Powell (2012) call for research on "when and why some policies remain symbolic while others become implemented (p. 35)" and are in need for research that goes beyond the first type of decoupling which was highly neglected by previous literature (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Moreover, understanding antecedents of means- ends decoupling was rather under-researched by previous studies (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Drori et al., 2003; Cole, 2005; Swiss, 2009; Bromley & Powell, 2012) and such studies were in different contexts and for different types of policies. Even though the literature on decoupling is nascent, one could identify few studies that analysed implementation of policies on human

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rights suggesting lack of resources (Weick 1976; Meyer et al., 1997; Drori et al., 2003) and lack (political) of will (Cole, 2005; Krasner, 1999) as reasons for the gap between policies and practices. However, Uganda is a completely different setting and therefore, same reasons for decoupling cannot be assumed. Furthermore, from gender equality perspective, various studies call for further research to understand the context and causes of persistent gender inequalities more deeply in order to improve position of women and increase potential success of policies and actions (World Bank 1995; Swiss, 2009; UNDP 2016c).

In this paper, we use theory of decoupling as an analytical lens to investigate gender inequality in a specific context of a developing country of Uganda. Looking at the problem from unique perspective will bring new insights on gender inequality and extend evidence from local context. Moreover, this research contributes to scarce literature of decoupling and to the gap on why policies promoting gender equality are not achieving their intended outcomes (Bromley & Powell, 2012) that was highly neglected in previous studies. We identified five potential antecedents of means-ends decoupling in gender policies in the developing country of Uganda: (1) cultural and societal setting, (2) lack of resources, (3) lack of political will, (4) fear of empowerment, and (5) lack of awareness. Outcomes of this study can be of a use to practitioners to improve the situation and a position of women in Uganda as well as to an achievement of SDG Goal 5, and future studies can test our five propositions. Therefore, this research aims to answer the following question: *Why are policies promoting gender equality in Uganda not achieving their intended objectives?*

The paper will address the research question by a use of qualitative research by interviewing local women and is structured as follows. Firstly, current literature on decoupling and gender policies in Uganda are discussed. Secondly, explanation of research methods and data analysis are presented. In the next sections, findings are presented and propositions are developed, followed by discussion section.

Literature review

Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) and gender policies in Uganda

Gender equality and women's disempowerment persist most pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa in spite of various initiatives and improvements (World Bank, 2012). Because of high relevance of gender equality for society and its connection to economic growth (UNDP SDG, 2016b, Cuberes & Teignier 2014; UNDP Uganda 2016), it was defined as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by UNDP as a continuum of the MDGs (UNDP SDG, 2016a). Uganda is one of the countries with the highest gender inequality levels; it scored on 120th position out of 160 countries in 2015 in the Gender Inequality Ranking (GII) (Human Development Reports, 2016) and on 163rd place in the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking classified among low development countries (UNDP, 2016b). Therefore, Uganda became one of the target countries of Agenda 2030 (UNDP, 2016) and SDG5. In 2015, the Government of Uganda committed to the SDG5 (UNDP Uganda, 2016).

SDG5's objective is to "end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" (UNDP SDG, 2016c) and it includes 8 targets to achieve the following objectives:

- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development* and the *Beijing Platform for Action* and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Clearly, SDG5 touches various societal issues including equal rights and economic resources, women's access to education, health services, opportunities in work, public and private life, elimination of violence, household division of work as well as importance of policies and legislation.

Apart from international organizations such as UNDP, UN Women or Amnesty International, there are innumerable local organizations in Uganda, e.g. Action for Rural Women's Empowerment, Action for Development, Uganda Women's Network, National Association of Women's Organizations in

Uganda (NAWOU). For instance, NAWOU is one of the oldest initiatives spreading throughout Uganda linking women's groups. Their mission is to "to promote the growth of a strong women's movement in Uganda that advocates for the rights of women and enhances their social, cultural, economic and political status" and they are committed to SDG5 (NAWOU, 2016). The organization provides various trainings, micro-financing or programs on economic independence, self-confidence and participation in leadership or decision making, as well as focuses on peace and security in families and communities and access to justice. In 2016, two projects were implemented. First, a support of women's handcraft groups to identify markets for their products in order to promote financial independency and stronger voice in families, and second, helping 10 women groups with finances to rent land and grow fruits. This example illustrates particular programs and outcomes of a formally stated policy aiming to improve status of women.

On the top of the formally stated policies by organizations, women's equal rights with men, access to opportunities or land ownership are clearly stated and granted by the Uganda's Constitution (*Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*, 1995). See Appendix 4.

Position of women in Uganda despite existing policies

Policies are a key instrument to address societal issues such as gender equality (World Bank, 1995; UNDP 2016c). Formally stated policies can be seen as an achievement itself (Graafland & Smid, 2016) and a first step in the process of implementation and elimination of inconsistencies between formal policies and the desired state. However, despite external pressures that positively influence such process (Haack, Schoeneborn & Wickert, 2012), formally stated policies may not necessarily lead to changed behavior (Scott, 2008; Graafland & Smid, 2016). Literature suggests that policies are less likely to be

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implemented in developing countries (Drori et al., 2003; Swiss, 2009) and hardly predict daily activities (Bromley & Powell, 2012)". Such problem can be observed in Uganda, where "even though women and men are equal under Ugandan law, women often are denied their rights in practice (ICRW, 2010, p. 2)".

Despite presence of numerous NGOs and initiatives including the commitment to SGD5, gender inequalities remain pronounced in Uganda (Tamale, 1993; Kabeer, 2005; Ellis et al., 2006; World Bank, 2012) and full implementation and enforcement of gender policies is often hampered (UNDP Uganda, 2017; Nakayima, 2016), particularly in the sub-Saharan context (UNDP, 2016c), which causes that policies are not reaching the desired outcomes. Women's inequality is most visible in areas of property rights and access to opportunities (Ellis et al., 2006; FIDH, 2012), remuneration (UNDP Uganda, 2017), household, childcare and agricultural work where the burden remains to be bore by women (Ellis et al., 2006; World Bank, 2012), or unequal treatment in workplace in parliament (Goetz, 1998; Swiss, 2009).

In terms of the United Nations Goals, Kabeer (2005) focused on outcomes of MDG5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. His results suggest complexity of the problematics, with a link to institutions. On the top of that, literature and reports by United Nations (UNDP 2016c) and World Bank (1995) urge for future research to better and more deeply understand the context and causes of inequality in order to make the policies and actions more successful and leading to gender equality. Plus, limited empowerment of women today can undermine the potential of future generations and contributes to persevering gender inequalities across generations (World Bank, 2012). Therefore, cooperation of all actors within society is necessary to make sure that gender equality will be achieved (World Bank, 1995).

Theory of decoupling

The gap between policy and practice is called decoupling. Current studies expect decoupling to be present in the complex globalized world where loosely coupled organizations are present, environment is uncertain, regulatory commitments are limited and monitoring mechanism are often absent (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Bromley & Powell, 2012) Literature suggests that decoupling is common in various areas including (non-profit) organizations with societal goals, employment law and human right practices (Edelman, 1992; Cole, 2005; Swiss, 2009; Bromley & Powell, 2012). On the top of that, scholars argue that policies are less likely to be implemented in developing countries (Drori et al., 2003).

Current literature distinguishes decoupling at two levels (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Bromley & Powell, 2012), policy-practice and means-ends. *Policy-practice* decoupling is described as a situation when rules or formal policies are unimplemented or routinely violated or purely symbolic, and can be understood as symbolic adoption (Bromley & Powell, 2012). It is more likely to occur when adoption of policies is motivated by legitimacy rather than demands or the policies are in conflict or not central to the interests of internal parties, they are in early adoption process, there is *weak capacity* to implement the policies or a *lack of legal enforcement* (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Furthermore, policy-practice decoupling can be seen as a natural reaction to rising external societal pressures on organizations to align their policies with practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Bromley & Powell (2012) provided a review of existing research and looked at decoupling in the contemporary world. They argue that the first type of decoupling obscures a rise of the more prevalent type of decoupling nowadays, *means-ends decoupling*, because of rising societal emphasis on transparency and accountability where policy-practice decoupling is likely and easily seen as a failure.

Means-ends decoupling is defined as when "policies are implemented but the link between formal policies and the intended outcome is opaque (p. 27)" and when goals are obscure or loosely linked to core goals (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Symbolic implementation, as this type can be understood, is common in organizations with social goals, beyond NGOs, in areas of environmental protection, and human rights (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Means-ends decoupling occurs to protect organizational technical core from practices that are imposed by wider institutional demands or to avoid sanctions (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Meaning of means-ends decoupling can be best illustrated on two examples. First, Edelman (1992) studied status of minorities in workplace and effects of an Affirmative Action legislation. His findings suggest that the changes firms needed to make in order to comply with the law, e.g. to meet certain ratio of women in a company, did not necessarily lead to improved status of those minorities, and legal mandates rather emphasized broad procedural adaptations than specific outcomes. Second, means-ends decoupling can be identified in education. Rowan (2006) argues that many new regulations are based on beliefs in the society rather than on inspected measures of effective schooling. Even though the consequences can be real, those new emerged myths can lead to persistent means-ends decoupling. In education, Bromley & Powell (2012) showed that some organizations aimed to improve education in developing countries by providing books, but the organization did not realize that many recipients were not able to read and therefore unable to use the books (www.roomtoread.org).

Studies that used concept of decoupling to study gender inequalities are scarce. An exception is Swiss's (2009) study on the gap between granting women the right to be elected to parliament and the actual election of the first women to the parliament in 92

developing countries between years 1945 and 1990. Author suggests a relationship between a *state weakness* and a level of decoupling that is consistent with previous literature indicating that developing countries have more difficulties to bridge decoupling gaps than developed countries (Drori et al., 2003). Swiss (2009) indicates that adopting polities is important but one should not forget to encourage effective implementation as well. For instance, Meyer et al. (1997) observed that many countries in developing world offer various rights and protections but, unfortunately, do very little to meet these commitments, mainly due to *lack of sufficient resources* and *capacity* that lead only to adoption of the policies but their implementation. However, Swiss (2009) suggest positive influence of presence of international organizations on country's engagement, in her particular case membership in women's international NGOs. Her findings demonstrate complexity of the influencing factors of decoupling that seem to be highly under-researched in previous studies and her paper calls for future research that can assist policy makers and governments world-wide to influence the process of policy adoption and implementation.

Potential reasons for decoupling

The possible reasons of the lack of alignment between policy and practice and why desired objectives of formally stated policies are not achieved vary. Moreover, they were rather under researched in previous literature. Particularly, studies were conducted in different contexts than in Uganda and not specifically on gender policies.

Apart from previously mentioned study by Meyer et al. (1997) who suggested *lack of resources* and *capacity*, Drori et al. (2003) agrees that factors explaining why policies are less likely to be implemented in developing country context is due to *availability of resources* and infrastructure that limit poor nations' ability to follow the policies. The

degree to which policies are implemented depends on resources available to managers in firms, or on *governmental power* over its policy in the country (Krasner, 1999). Other studies also indicate importance of resources and argue that loose coupling exists because formal policies are an "ideal theory" of organizations' actions, but concrete decisions and actions are dependent on *resources* and *specific context*, and it is hard to see the consequences in advance when adopting policies (Weick, 1976). More recently, Cole (2005) examined human rights practices and their ratification in more than 130 countries world-wide and points out two possible reasons leading to decoupling, namely *lack of capacity* and *lack of will*, and argues that initial discrepancy is followed by gradual alignment.

By taking decoupling as an analytical lens to study gender inequalities in the context of Uganda, our study will contribute to current scarce literature on decoupling calling for further research. Also, it will help to deeper the understanding of the context and potential causes of persistent gender inequality in order to achieve gender equality and increase a potential success of policies and their actions (World Bank, 1995; Swiss, 2009; Bromley & Powell, 2012; UNDP, 2016c). Understanding the local context and practices and identification of potential antecedents leading to means-ends decoupling in gender policies in a developing country will help scholars as well as practitioners to formulate and implement policies more effectively which in turn, should lead to gender equality and women empowerment.

Methodology

Research context

The choice of Uganda for this research is due to its high gender inequality rates (Human Development Reports, 2016), where despite various efforts to reduce the inequalities, differences are still not completely diminished in Uganda (Tamale, 1993; Ellis et al., 2006;

World Bank, 2012). As gender inequality is believed to be linked to economic growth (Cuberes & Teignier 2014; UNDP Uganda 2016), such inequality may have substantial societal consequences and hamper alleviation of poverty in one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2017). Research suggests gender inequalities in various areas, for example in land ownership (FIDH, 2012), working hours and remuneration (World Bank, 1995) or access to opportunities (Ellis et al., 2006).

The UNDP Uganda (2017) report about the Gender Journey from 1988 till 2017 shows that in spite of presence of numerous NGOs and initiatives including Uganda's commitment to SDGs (Nakayima, 2016), full implementation and enforcement of the goals is often hampered and policies are not reaching desired outcomes. Therefore, Uganda turned out to be a suitable country to conduct research in and to look at gender problematics through a lens of decoupling. More specifically, this study aims to provide rich evidence from field and identify potential antecedents of means-end decoupling in policies promoting gender equality in a developing- country context, which was highly neglected in extant literature on decoupling. Our study not only contributes to rising literature of decoupling, but it can also help policy makers to understand why the gender policies are not achieving the desired outcomes in order to improve the situation of women in the future.

Research design

In order to answer the research question, the design of this research is a qualitative research method. Qualitative research design was seen as the most appropriate for several reasons. First, because of the nature of the research question. Van de Ven (2007) distinguish between "what" and "how" questions, a process questions. As we strive to understand the process why the policies are not meeting their intended objectives, it is relevant to use the latter question that is essential for

understanding a process and capturing its evolution over time (Van de Ven, 2007). Second, Edmondson & McManus (2007) introduced a contingency framework that relates prior work to the design of the research project. They argue that there is an internal consistency when qualitative research is used to study a nascent theory asking questions "how" and "why" in nature. As research on decoupling in a context of developing countries is scarce, qualitative research design of this study is suitable and necessary to ensure methodological fit. Such type of exploratory research aims to provide answers to the how and why questions, often introducing novel connections among phenomena (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

Despite various limitations of this research design, such as researcher's bias and inclusion of personal impressions (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000), qualitative research will provide us with rich and detailed data (Edmondson & McManus, 2007) and insights on experience of local stakeholders which is what we seek for. Moreover, Rubin & Rubin (1995) claim that qualitative research does not prove principles valid under all conditions, but rather aims to understand how and why events occurs and their context. Taking into account the nature of Uganda where people prefer personal interactions and researcher's flexibility is essential, conducting interviews with local women and stakeholders in Uganda seem as the most relevant method of data collection to gain necessary data and insights and to answer the research question.

Data collection

The data collection took place in the country of origin. Together with four other students from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam we travelled to Uganda in period between March 30 and April 20, 2018 to collect first hand data, i.e. to conduct interviews in field. The project was in cooperation with AgriQuest research project implemented by VU Amsterdam and Makerere University in Uganda. Even though AgriQuest

team had received criteria for data sources, my research goals and potential interviewees beforehand, interviews were mainly arranged at the spot within our stay in Uganda. It was largely due to informal nature of local life where network plays important role and where locals are not used to arrange appointments in advance.

Interview sampling

Once we arrived to Kampala, we met with the AgriQuest team. Because we had only three weeks of data collection, we relied on their network to arrange the interviews for us. As my research aims to understand why gender inequalities still persist and why policies on gender are not achieving their intended objectives, my preference was to interview various stakeholders from different layers affected by and participating in creation of the policies, e.g. local women, students, NGOs, government officials and other relevant persons to get as many perspectives as possible. Local team's network proved to be powerful, however, researcher's flexibility was a necessary skill because many meetings were arranged on the same day or were rescheduled without previous notice. Our sampling approach was a combination of an initial snowball method to identify first stakeholders who connected us with other participants, and purposive sampling later on because we selected only potential interviewees for our research from all those stakeholders.

Interview conduction

Data collection took place in three main areas in Uganda. Apart from Kampala, we went to two field trips with the AgriQuest team; to Bugiri District in Eastern Uganda during the first week (April 2 to 5, 2018) and to Oyam in Northern Uganda in the second week of our research (April 8 to 10, 2018). In the meanwhile, we collected data in Kampala. We were a group of 5 students and some of us had similar topics, therefore, even though each

researcher did his or her data collection independently, researchers sometimes cooperated and many interviews were conducted together. Due to limited time of the participants, researchers could sometimes ask only the main questions for their research. However, it turned out not to be a problem to obtain necessary data and surprisingly, some data resulted from the other researchers' questions.

Majority of the interviews were conducted in English with 3 exceptions that needed to be translated by a local person or an AgriQuest member, which might be a barrier to validity of those interviews. On the other hand, local AgriQuest team could explain us the context and mitigate cultural distance for better understanding. In order to gain trust and rich detailed information, all participants were assured that the data will be anonymized and used only for our research. All of the people we approached were willing to participate in our research and very open to help us.

In total, 18 interviews were conducted (14 individual and 4 focus group interviews). For an overview of the interviews, see Appendix 2. To assure reliability and avoid random errors (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008), researchers did their best to record and transcribed all the interviews. But due to local conditions, it was not always possible. In such cases, I did as detailed notes as possible to assure that no information gets lost. However, it cannot be eliminated fully. On the top of that, in order to get additional insights and understand the context, notes were made during all the interviews and a continuous discussion with local team was on during our stay in Uganda.

Interview questions were pre-specified before going to Uganda. Interview protocol was created in a way to answer our research question, with a close connection to the literature review and the questions were thematised. Preliminary interview questions can be found in Appendix 5. However, as the flexibility is needed in qualitative research and

also in Uganda, interviews turned out to be semi-structured. It provided us with necessary flexibility, i.e. we could rephrase some questions in case of not understanding or to ask follow-up questions when the participant talked about something interesting for our research (Rowley, 2012).

Validity and reliability

Research validity was partly achieved in data collection and in the process of data analysis. To assure that data obtained from the interviews are based on reality, we made notes about how participants behaved and consulted it with local team. It turned out that women were often afraid to speak up in presence of men and thus, their answers could be less honest. Therefore, in the next interviews, we tried to speak to women alone.

Moreover, we used data triangulation (Flick, 2007) and compared the interview answers with other data sources, such as literature or the Internet, to verify findings (Gibbert et al., 2008) or interview answers between themselves as we interviewed various layers of the society and some of them talked about the same phenomenon. To further enhance construct validity, data collection section provides detailed description of the process, so that the process can be potentially reconstructed (Gibber at al., 2008).

Data analysis

The qualitative data from the interviews was analysed through open coding, with a use of Gioia's method (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2012). Our data was the starting point of our analysis, i.e. we used inductive approach to ensure the richness of the data is kept, and the process was iterative in nature (Locke, 2001).

According to Gioia et al. (2012), they specify a three-step framework which this study followed. First step was to create first-order concepts. We started by reading the interviews several times to identify main statements and

characteristics, to compare the interviews and to seek for similarities. After their identification, the analysis continued by developing the first order concepts with the use of the quotes. In this process, we remained closely to the original data (informant-centric terms and codes) to assure rigorousness and to easily demonstrate the link between data and new concepts later on (Gioia et al., 2012). This resulted into several concepts, with revision of some data that did not fit into any of the created concepts. Second, those provisional categories were revised, further developed and assigned with labels to create second-order themes. More theoretical categories were formed and our focus shifted from the informant to researcher-centric. At this stage, certain categories needed to be dropped or merged. Finally, the second-order categories were aggregated into the most abstract concepts; aggregate dimensions. Those three-level dimensions serve as a basis for the data structure. The coding process was done with an aid of Excel, which made it easier to overview the codes with corresponding quotes, second order themes and aggregate dimensions.

Findings

In this section, themes that emerged from our data in the process of analysis are presented. In total, five aggregate dimensions were identified as barriers in achieving gender equality in Uganda. Namely (1) cultural and societal setting, (2) lack of resources, (3) lack of political will, (4) fear of empowerment, and (5) lack of awareness. Distinction between categories should be discernible, but naturally, the categories are interrelated to a certain degree.

First aggregate dimension: cultural and societal setting

Based on our data, cultural and societal setting was identified to be the first potential reason of why gender inequality is present. Two categories are part of this dimension: (1)

Culture and traditions, and (2) Patriarchal society. Our data suggest that gender equality is not achieved because of patriarchal setting of the society and local culture. That, for example, women are not culturally allowed to do certain activities or claim their rights.

Culture and traditions

Preference over a boy

First example of cultural and societal conditions that lead to gender inequality is that families often prefer to send a boy child to school over a girl. Even though gender policies claim equal opportunities in access to education, the situation is that families prefer the boy because there is a belief that the girl can get married when she is not educated. Two female Makerere University students, that both felt privileged to study as girls, explain: *"They are families, for example some of my friends, where it is believed that... a boy should go to study first. And girl should sit and wait... They simply think that the girl can get married."*

Leader of a student association at Makerere University explains that it is because the girl is responsible for the household: *"There are things such as the first thing a boy will do is to go to school but a girl stays in household, helping the mother with house. So she is left out. She will not get and see the opportunities. She cannot even access education."*
Therefore, even though the policies may claim certain rights, cultural traditions enable the real situation to differ. In addition, she notes that it transmits into education and girls might have different courses which further deepen gender inequality: *"The inequality is present even in school. Girls study easier subjects because it is believed that girls are not that smart. There is a stereotype. So girls should do easy easy subjects such as art ...related to household, nutrition, how to cook, home management and ...that boys are towards sciences."*

Upbringing a girl child

Second concept related to cultural and societal setting is upbringing. Since an early age, it is instilled in girls that they are subordinate and not supposed to do certain tasks and activities. Village Agent from rural area in Bugiri explains the way girls are often brought up. She says that upbringing is deeply rooted in the culture which influences women's confidence and mind-set: *"Because of the way they [girls] are brought up. Culture. There are some things that we say to a woman what she should do ... [And then that women] 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."*

Unacceptable to sue a husband

Additionally, our data suggest that gender inequalities are present because certain actions are culturally unacceptable. Even though policies promoting gender equality aim to stop any kind of violence against women, many local people live in accordance with local traditions and cultural norms that influence whether, for example, a woman even considers to claim her rights. Executive Director of an NGO fighting for women's rights in Kampala explains the problem: *"The other issue that is very common across both rural and urban areas is violence against women and girls... If you're being sexually or physically abused, the cultural rules, especially in the rural areas, are that you are actually not supposed to report."*

Customary marriage

Another example of why gender inequalities are present in Uganda is that customary law takes precedence over formal policies and laws. Although the law specifies that women have equal rights regarding to ownership and control over land, in case of customary marriages, which are very common in Uganda, the law does not apply, and divorce does not

apply either (for more details, see Appendix 3). Children's home owner in Jinger explains the problematics: *"You can have a right, if you are a married with a ring. But there is many marriages who are not official. Then there is nothing, no right to the property, no right to inherit. It is mostly for men. This woman has no right. Mostly men."*

Based on our data, various stakeholders agreed that changing the customary law is a complex problem and it needs time. Executive Director from women's organization explains: *"When you are talking about gender equality and women's empowerment, you mainly talk about changes in human's behaviour. About changing people's behaviour, attitudes and perceptions about women's rights and gender equality. Therefore, it is a process. It is a process because you are trying to change the cultural norms and the practices that people are used to use."*

Patriarchal society

Second category identified as a possible reason why equal position of women remains problematic in Uganda is because the country exhibits patterns of patriarchal society. By patriarchal society is meant a social system in which power is primarily in hands of men.

Men are leaders and decision makers

Based on our data, it seems that there is a prevalent belief in the society that leaders are supposed to be men, which was identified as another latent reason why gender inequality is still present. The fact that leaders and decision-makers are men is instilled in the society, in the people themselves, and the society actively promotes such point of view. Such mind-set makes it difficult to improve women's positions as men are in charge of decision making. The problematics was described by Makerere University student who is also leader of association: *"They already know what they should do... They know that men are supposed to be in leadership. They*

know the roles of men and women. And what should be done in politics, at household level or anywhere else. Women have difficulties to change someone's thinking... That is why it is hard to implement policies" and adds: *"the society thinks that men is seen as the intelligent and that he is supposed to be seen as the decision-maker. So even if you might have power, the final decision will be taken by man."*

Society sees men as those who are leaders and make decisions, which in turn, influences real power of women at high positions. As it emerged from our data, women often do not have any real power in such positions, although gender equality policies claims women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for women for leadership at all levels, including politics. A female Legal Officer of a women's NGO helping women to claim their rights through access to justice described the situation: *"Our laws provide affirmative action. If you look at the parliament they created a slot for women that is compulsory. In each district... And of course, they put a woman in position, but she might not be entitled. She cannot pass laws. Like the women who sit in management team but actually cannot decide for the company. She's just there to fulfill the requirement. At the end of the day we are still seeing women in the workforce that cannot actually make a decision."*

On the top of that, the society actively promotes that men are leaders and decision makers and if a girl applies for a position, for instance, as a president of student association, people will discourage her, as explained by the other Makerere University student: *"...people around me, my friends or parents of my friends they would pull me down. Even your friends can still pull you down."*

Men are in key positions

Another concept that was identified in this research is that men hold key positions at various levels in the administration and government. Those positions are undoubtedly important in the achievement of gender equality and in claiming women's rights. The fact that men are in key positions brings additional challenges to women. This problem was described by the Executive Director of women's organization in Kampala as follows: *"But even if they [women] report or are about to report, the structure to reach the report and succeed is delineated. For example, the local council, the police, the magistrate, the clan leaders, majority of them are men. So they would not even support the women in those reports about violence."*

Men as head of household

Another concept that emerged from the data as a part of patriarchal society theme is that men are perceived as the head of households. At family level, he is the one who is in charge of finances, for instance. Then, naturally, he has more decision power within the family. However, it does not necessarily mean that he does more work, but rather because of the setting of the society. Actually, it is a very complex problem because women do majority of workload in agriculture and household but can end up with no money, as female Children's Home Owner captures: *"Women work in garden but it does not generate income. Mostly women are those who work at garden, but men sell it and get the money out of it."*

Based on our data, society sees men as the head of household at family level. Then, when a woman is empowered and gets high position in public sphere, it may create a conflict because both cannot be the head of the family. During a group interview with local farmers in Bugiri, we were explained the situation. They suggested that many of the policies are created at international level and then pushed by external pressures to be adopted by the government which causes issues: *"But when it comes to family level, things go more traditional. At family level, there are traditions*

that beat with the pressure on gender equality from different level such as government or international level. So even if you are a woman who is a president in public life, when you come home, it's the man who is the head of the household. You must respect him... So there is conflict."

Second aggregate dimension: lack of resources

The second aggregate dimension identifies lack of resources as a probable reason for persisting gender inequalities. Based on our data, there are lacking resources at various levels, i.e. in the government to improve the situation of gender equality and implement policies or reach local women, at organizational level where women's NGO are not able to fully implement the policies and improve women's status, and finally, at individual level where women cannot afford to claim their rights.

Lack of financial resources

First concept in this category relates to insufficient financial resources. This is closely intertwined with the fact that gender issues are not prioritized by the government and therefore, insufficient budget is allocated to achieve desired outcomes of gender policies. It causes that funding is lacking at state and organizational level. Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2017) which causes that there are many other societal issues, such as poverty, and money is missing in many areas, but it is far beyond our research. The problem was explained by a female Member of Parliament of Uganda: *"Lack of money is one of biggest limitations to reach all the women in Uganda. Women related issues are not priority number one so the budget is smaller compared to other areas... The government is lacking on money and programs, laws and policies."*

The Executive Director from women's organization describes how the lack of financial resources in her organization impacts gender equality: *"Women organization always get less money. Probably because issues such as gender equality and women's empowerment are not given that much attention. That is the one challenge we have regarding to funding. And then of course, ...most of the government contributors focus on projects. They give money for short time... We need more money to make sure we reach more people and do more interventions and changes... And then of course, if you have little money, you do not reach everyone. This problem is very big."*

Too far from locals

Another example of lack of resources that lead to gender inequality is that the policies do not reach the rural areas. During our field trips, we noticed that the most inequalities are present in the rural areas. Many policies on gender are present in Uganda but, in fact, do not reach the ground level. This is partly related to previous concept. Moreover, our data suggest that the interaction of those in charge of implementation of the policies with local people is tenuous. This problem was mentioned many times, by different stakeholders in several levels of society, for more examples see Appendix 3. This concept was best described by a Senior Agriculture Officer from Bugiri District: *"There are many policies that exist, it is a fact, but they are not implemented and enforced. The law exists, but is too far from locals. It is not reaching them."*

Lack of capacity

Third concept we identified as a barrier in achievement of gender equality is lacking capacity. The data shows that there are lacking human resources in the administration process which hinders the chance of women to claim their rights. In fact, it might discourage women to even try it. A Community Development Officer in Oyam district described how challenging it is for a woman to claim her rights because of lacking capacity at

the local level: *"Also, to prove that you were beaten or raped, you need a medical report. Doctor needs to examine you. But there is only one doctor so it takes long time. ... Also, there is only one judge so it can take up to a year. The lack of human resources and capacity causes delays."*

Financial inability to claim rights

Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2017) which was noticeable during our field research, especially in rural areas. People were struggling to afford basic things such as food, shelter or mere shoes. Therefore, lacking resources are present also on individual level and were identified as a factor leading to gender inequality. Labor Officer in Bugiri

District was very desperate about the situation. He said that, for example, women do not inherit land because they cannot afford to claim their rights: *"The biggest challenge in rural areas is that women are ignorant about policies, regulations etc. So they do not go to the officer to get the land even though there are legit. As a result, they do not get the land... or they are so poor to go to Kampala or to an office to get the land after a death of their husbands."*

Third aggregate dimension: lack of political will

Third aggregate dimension that was identified as a potential reason for prevailing gender inequalities are political reasons, including (1) no real intention to reach desired outcome, (2) corruption, (3) opposition, and (4) lengthy process of enforcement. Our data suggest that gender inequality is present because government is not really interested in changing the situation, that there is opposition and that corruption hinders any potential improvements in gender equality.

No real intention to reach desired outcome

During our research in Uganda, we noticed that many initiatives, NGOs, laws, and policies are present, but the actual situation looks vastly different than the formally stated policies, especially in rural areas. Many women told us that despite the presence of the policies, a real intention to improve women's position is lacking. They mentioned lack of political will, commitment and desire, or that the focus is more on the process of implementation itself than on the actual result which causes that desired objectives of gender policies are not achieved.

The problem that policy makers do something but actually do not care about the real impact was also noticed by local farmers in Loro District. They received a lot of NGO and governmental help, for example, because women were not sitting on the ground as in some other groups, they were not afraid to speak up in front of men and also their children were allowed to join during the interview. However, they were disappointed by the quality of seeds they were promised to receive as a part of women's empowerment project, which may lead to trust issues towards such projects in the future. The interview was translated: *"He said that there was one government initiative that promised to provide seeds for women in their community and other inputs and cutting tools to empower them and enable to have nutrition food for children but when they received the seeds, the quality was so low that they could not use it."*

Corruption

Based on our data, another example of lack of political will that leads to gender inequality is corruption and bribery. This problem was very apparel in Uganda and it was mentioned by people at numerous levels of society as one of the biggest issues, see Appendix 3. For example, when a woman claims her rights and the men gets arrested, bribery is often used to avoid consequences, thus diminishing the impact of such policies. A Head of Performing Arts in International school describes

seriousness of corruption in general: *"There is massive corruption. Even if there was funding, it has gone somewhere else. Or I will pay you money to go around of this policy and to look the other way... There is corruption in almost every sector in this economy. It is massive. For example, a wife was mistreated by her husband and she wants to report, the men can bribe it and the case will be dismissed and lost. There have been cases with papers lost."*

Opposition

Next concept that emerged from our data is presence of opposition. Many laws that are present to support women's rights and improve the gender inequality are challenged by various parts of the society. Moreover, even when certain laws have been passed, they are often abolished few years later. It does not only cause gender inequalities, but it also contributes to a complex legal framework that makes it hard for women to know their rights and to claim them, especially in a context of a poor developing country. A Legal Officer of a women's organization states: *"So we have so many pending laws in the government that are not passed or have been rejected by the parliament. We have many laws that has been rejected by the Parliament because they are not comfortable with them and don't pass them. ...because there are many men in the parliament but also because of the women. They keep quiet."*

Lengthy process of enforcement

Based on our data, last concept we identified that hinders gender equality is that the process of law enforcement takes long time. During our data collection, we were told that when a woman wants to claim her rights because she was rejected a job due to gender reasons, the process to legally claim her rights is long and the result is uncertain, which discourages her even try and to do so. Such problem arises, for example, when a woman is claiming her land after her husband's death: *"If you want to report because your husband beats you or you*

want to claim your land after his dead, you need to go to police. But the police is relaxed about it. The case takes long to reach the court... The will to implement policies is weak,"* as Community Development Officer in Oyam explained.

Fourth aggregate dimension: fear of empowerment

Another barrier in reaching gender equality that arose from our data is general fear of empowerment in the society. This fear is present on both female and male side. Women in Uganda are afraid of double the workload in case of being empowered, or men are worried that an empowered woman will divorce and embarrass them, which in turn would mean being excluded by the society. Therefore, the fear of empowerment can be seen as a barrier in improvement of the position of women in Uganda.

Women's fear

During our research in Uganda, we noticed that some women were afraid to be empowered. Then, they did not even want to improve their status or, for example, to became leaders. One of the underlying reasons for this fear is that women are afraid of losing their way of life, or of additional workload. This fear was felt not only by women in rural areas where they do majority of work in agriculture and household-related tasks, but it stretches across the whole society. A female Member of Parliament in Uganda explains: *"Then [empowered] women do double the work. There are domestic imbalances, society still tend to think that women are responsible for household tasks. Society have not balanced that yet. Both men and women need to contribute to household. Therefore, women have fear of losing their life as work life is hard, especially in politics."*

Inferiority complex

Another example of fear of empowerment that lead to gender inequality is that women feel inferior. Women think they have no right to own land, that they are afraid they will not succeed, that they no chance to get a position when also men apply for it so that there is no reason to even try to apply for the position, and that they cannot even try to become a leader because they are women. Teacher in International school explains the role of psych (mind-set) and fear: *"In a more developed society, every woman wants to be in a better position than they are. But [in Uganda] 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?"*" A Makerere University student and leader agrees: *"...girls think they cannot succeed."*

Men's fear of divorce

Based on our data, family unit is very important and necessary for gaining respect in Uganda. During our data collection, it was often apparent that men were afraid of women's empowerment. They were afraid that an empowered woman will run away, find an another husband, shame him or will no longer be financially dependent on him which scared them (see Appendix 3). Women often said that it is only fear that is not based on reality. The fear became even more pronounced after a national scandal when a woman that became empowered divorced and ashamed her husband, as local farmers in Bugiri explained: *"...we have a vice president who is a woman. ...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. In order to be respected in work and by friends, your family unit needs to work. The family unit is very important in Uganda. It is a public knowledge. The man was ashamed because they got divorced."* And concludes: *"That is why men are afraid of women*

empowerment. For example, to give women money and let them be independent. That women will forget traditional roles. That she will disrespect you."

African men

Another concept that emerged was assigned label African men. According to the society, a man is seen as a real man when he feeds his family, is strong, does certain tasks and his family can be proud of him. This is connected to society's mind-set, traditional roles and a prevailing belief of task division, such as that women belong to the kitchen. Therefore, men are afraid of women's empowerment because, for example, they could be seen as less men, if they needed to take care of the household, which does not feel right to them. A female PhD student and a member of AgriQuest research project mentioned this during a focus group interview in Bugiri and explained what happens in a case when a guy helps in the kitchen and his friends come over: *"They [the men] quickly abandon the task to be the African powerful men they should be... There is this social pressure, even if they think it is right and they are willing to help, if someone saw them helping, they would be seen as less men... Traditional roles of men are important and still very pronounced. Certain tasks are seen by the society as not a task for a man, such as washing plates. It makes the men less men..."* Local men in Bugiri agree and add that they are also afraid that women will take an advantage of it: *"So we as men are afraid that it is the first step in doing more and more in the household. According to traditions, the roles and task division in family are clear."*

Fear of change

Based on our data, men are afraid of change and a loss of their position when women's empowerment will take place. They are afraid of various things that they think gender empowerment may bring. A teacher in International school in Kampala explains: *"Men will lose when women get empowered, that's*

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what they are scared of... So they do not want the change." Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Uganda exhibits patriarchal society patterns with men as decision-makers and leaders. Combined with their fear of change or loss, our data suggests that men can prevent women from accessing information or claiming her rights. She continues: *"because a man can forbid a woman to do certain things, even with voting. So men still have a huge influence... They [men] do not let them [women] to access and have the information. For example, women could form women's organizations. Sometimes men do not let them join the organization. So when a woman ask[s] to attend a meeting on Sunday, her husband says: "No, you cannot go." Because I am threatened by what people might say there. They do not threaten them [the women], they just do not let them go there. They are not confident to ask either."*

Furthermore, women trust their husbands as figures of authority and believe what they are told. Men can often take advantage of their position and instilled in women that she has no right to inherit land or to vote: *"It's the biggest problem. It's a big problem here that women believe what their husbands told them,"* as Legal Officer of women's NGO that helps women access to justice in Kampala told us.

Fifth aggregate dimension: lack of awareness

Last barrier in reaching gender equality we identified is due to lack of awareness and education. During our data collection, we often saw that women, mainly in rural areas, were not aware of their rights. Or often, they lacked necessary qualification to apply for a higher position.

Ignorance of rights

Another reason of persisting gender inequalities is that people, especially women, are not aware of their rights and do not know what they rights are. Ignorance of policies is one of the major challenges. The problem is deeply connected to poor living conditions in Uganda, no infrastructure or electricity, and with nearest will several kilometres away. The chance of exposure to new information is very low. *"They [women] are either ignorant to their rights and are not exposed to their rights. Or because they think that is how it works. They keep living in the same traditions. And another reason is because they are simply not informed. So women do not own land typically. There is a belief that a girl cannot inherit a land in the society. She does not even claim it although she could but she thinks she has no right over it,"* that was explained to us by District Police Commander in Bugiri.

Insufficient education

Next example we identified leading to gender inequality is that women lack necessary education or qualification. This problem was most visible in the area of leadership. When women want to become leaders or apply for a high position, they often cannot achieve it. Their level of education and qualification represents a barrier. The complexity of this problem was explained to us by Chairwomen of Kyebaj in Bugiri District that was very open-minded rural woman compared to other rural women: *"Women who are able to express themselves can own land but most are scared. The low level of education is the problem, they cannot speak out and are feared. ...[it] is one of the factors that lead to low power of women. Illiteracy, that is that you cannot even write or read your name, makes women not want to speak out. Women are challenged by men. It is hard for them to express themselves. Women who can express themselves have more likely land. But still many are scared. ...education is connected to if women want to become leaders."*

Unawareness of benefits

Based on our data, last barrier in achievement of gender equality is that people are not aware of the benefits of the gender policies and women empowerment. Explaining to

communities, families, men and women that gender equality is a basic human right and that it actually brings various benefits is very important in order to make the policies to achieve their intended objectives in Uganda. Programme Officer of United Nations Development Program stated: *"You need to engage the men, so that they become partners. Because if his wife is able to use the land, make decisions on crops, what she should actually grow because she is empowered. Then it means that family income is going to increase, which benefits everybody."*

Discussion

Interpretation of results and propositions

This research aims to answer the following research question: "*Why are policies promoting gender equality in Uganda not achieving their intended objectives?"* This qualitative study looked at the problematics of gender equality through an analytical lens of decoupling theory, in a unique context of a developing country of Uganda. The study's goal was to identify reasons leading to gender inequality, i.e. *why* gender policies are not achieving their desired outcomes. Our findings suggest five barriers in achieving gender equality in Uganda, namely: (1) cultural and societal setting, (2) lack of resources, (3) lack of political will, (4) fear of empowerment, and (5) lack of awareness. In fact, those five aforementioned factors can be identified as potential antecedents that might help to explain decoupling (Bromley & Powell, 2012).

As identified in the literature review, there were few studies on decoupling and even less on reasons leading to decoupling. On the top of that, those studies were conducted in different contexts. Our findings suggest that decoupling is due to *lack of resources* which is partly consistent with previous scarce studies on decoupling (Weick 1976; Meyer et al., 1997; Drori et al., 2003). Similarly, *lack of political will* as an explanation of the presence of

decoupling is to some extent in line with previous literature (Cole, 2005; Krasner 1999). On the top of that, we found that *cultural and societal setting* together with *fear of empowerment*, and *lack of awareness* as potential antecedents of decoupling are unique to decoupling literature. Those three dimensions seem to be highly neglected by previous studies.

With respect to decoupling theory, our results suggest that, indeed, policies are less likely to be implemented in a developing-country context, which is in line with previous research (Drori et al., 2003; Bromley & Powell, 2012). Moreover, our findings from Ugandan context correspond with Bromley & Powell (2012) study indicating that means-ends decoupling is more prevalent than policy-practice nowadays. Our data identified numerous examples when gender policies were implemented but actually, their link to real means was missing or loosely coupled with core objectives, which is how means-ends decoupling is defined (Bromley & Powell, 2012). As an illustrating example can serve our finding that women were guaranteed with affirmative seats but, actually, were not not given real power to make decisions in such positions (Edelman, 1992).

Based on our findings and previous literature, this leads to several propositions about potential antecedents of means-ends decoupling in a developing-country context. First dimension we identified as an antecedent of means-ends decoupling (Bromley & Powell, 2012) is *cultural and societal setting*. Our data indicates that in Uganda, there are pervasive cultural and societal norms that shape women's access to opportunities and influence social and economic life (Ellis et al., 2006). Moreover, the society exhibits patriarchal setting where men are in key position of power which makes it hard to achieve gender equality. Therefore, we propose the following:

P1: "Means-ends decoupling in policies promoting gender equality is more likely to occur in contexts characterized by patriarchal

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structures that are deeply rooted in local cultures and traditions."

Linking our data to the literature, many examples that are presented in the finding section show, in fact, cases of means-ends decoupling (Bromley & Powell, 2012). For example, we were told that girls have different courses in school – related to household – because girls' role is culturally perceived centred around household. Clearly, even though they receive education, the real objective of equality is missing. Second example regards the Affirmative action legislation. Our data shows that many positions were created specifically for women in order to improve their participation in leadership or parliament. However, even though women take part in those positions, they have no real power and cannot make decisions. Therefore, patriarchal setting of the society where men are seen as leaders and decision-makers impacted that such action did not lead to improved position of women in the workplace (Edelman, 1992) and therefore, it is an example of means-ends decoupling (Bromley & Powell, 2012).

Second, our data shows that implementation of policies and achievement of desired results is largely influenced by level and availability of resources. This view is consistent with previous literature on decoupling (Weick 1976; Meyer et al., 1997; Drori et al., 2003) that suggests *lack of resources* as a potential reason for decoupling. However, the context and setting of our study that focused on means-ends decoupling in gender policies in Uganda is unique to precedent studies. During our research in Uganda, which is one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2017), lacking resources were noted at various levels of society, including government, non-governmental organization, and family and individual level. It was identified as an antecedent of implementation issues and enforcement issues as well as women's inability to claim their rights. That leads to second proposition:

P2: "Means-ends decoupling in policies promoting gender equality is more likely to occur in contexts characterized by a lack of financial and human resources and lack of capacity at the state, organizational and family that prohibit achievement of intended objectives of gender policies.

Apart from financial issues, another key finding of our study is that *lack of political will* enable decoupling. Such finding is to great extent consistent with Cole (2005) that indicates lack of will as a possible factor leading to decoupling and Krasner (1999) that mentions state's power to exercise its policy. In a context of Uganda, this dimension includes corruption, opposition as well as lengthy process of enforcement that leads to means-ends decoupling. Therefore, we propose:

P3: "Means-ends decoupling in policies promoting gender equality is more likely to occur in contexts characterized by a lack of political will and strong levels of corruption at the government level."

On the top of that, our data suggest that people are afraid of empowerment. This fear was apparent during our stay in Uganda and mentioned by many stakeholders, both women and men. It was identified as another potential reason of persisting gender inequalities. Our data shows that women were afraid of losing their current way of life or additional workload burden, while men felt fear that empowered women will apply for a divorce, embarrass them or for example, will no longer be financially dependent on them. Such view is consistent with a study by Ellis et al. (2006) stating: "men express the view that [empowered] women will become "uncontrollable", "unmanageable", "unruly," or disrespect men if they gain economic independence. They fear that allowing women to work may lead to family breakup (p. 21)." Hence, it results in the next proposition:

P4: "Means-ends decoupling in policies promoting gender equality is more likely to

occur in contexts characterized by people´s fear of women empowerment and resulting consequences for their personal lives."

Last but not least, many women were not aware of their rights or the policies themselves. Many communities were often not aware of positive outcomes that gender empowerment and women's equality will bring. Also, in many cases, women lacked necessary qualifications to reach high positions or become leaders which was a barrier in achievement of desired outcomes of gender policies. Therefore, we propose the following:

P5: "Means-ends decoupling in policies promoting gender equality is more likely to occur in contexts characterized by a lack of awareness by women of their rights, existing policies and by communities of beneficial outcomes of women's empowerment, and where women lack necessary education."

Theoretical and practical contribution and implications

This research made several contributions to existing literature of decoupling (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Our study provides a unique point of view on gender problematics though an analytical lens of decoupling, in a unique context of a developing country of Uganda.

We contributed to filling in a gap in scarce literature on decoupling that highly neglected understanding of possible factors creating the gap between policies and desired outcomes, i.e. means and ends (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Therefore, this paper helps to understand *why* gender policies are not achieving their intended objectives in a context of developing country and identifies potential antecedents of means-ends decoupling in such context. Based on the literature and collected data, our findings are in line with previous studies that mentioned *lack of resources* and *lack of will* as reasons for decoupling (Weick 1976; Meyer et al., 1997; Krasner 1999; Drori et al., 2003; Cole, 2005), but were conducted in different

settings and not specifically on means-ends decoupling. On the top of that, our study adds (1) *cultural and societal setting*, (2) *fear of empowerment*, and (3) *lack of awareness* aspects as relevant barriers in achieving of gender equality and potential antecedents why gender policies in Uganda are not meeting desired objectives. Therefore, our study contributes to previous literature on decoupling that highly neglected those three aspects. They should be taken into account while trying to understand potential antecedents for means-ends decoupling in developing-country contexts. Moreover, our research implies that adjusting those five aspects can help to reach desired outcomes of gender policies and eliminate second type of decoupling gap in developing countries.

Apart from theoretical contributions, our study has practical relevance for practitioners, government officials, those in charge of gender policies and their implementation, as well as the United Nations who created the SDGs. Our findings provide several insights for them and they can learn from our findings. In order to achieve gender equality, for example, (1) cultural and societal setting should be changed as well as they should be aware of division of power in particular country because our study suggest that it can affect achievement of gender equality. Furthermore, practitioners could (2) make women more aware of the existing policies, their rights and explain communities gender equality benefits for them. Also, they can learn from our findings and (3) eliminate societal fear of empowerment, (4) provide sufficient financial and human resources and capacity, or (5) improve political approach towards gender policies and eliminate factors such as corruption. Therefore, this study is of use to practitioners who can use this information while trying to improve women's position in Uganda and in turn, alleviate poverty (UNDP SDG, 2016b, Cuberes & Teignier 2014) and make gender policies to achieve the intended outcomes.

Limitations and future research

Despite various contributions described above, this paper has several limitations. As most qualitative studies, the limitations are related to the interpretation and limited generalizability (Maxwell, 1992). While this study provides rich insights and 18 interviews were conducted, it remains to be proven whether our findings are applicable in other settings, i.e. for other type than gender policies and in different developing countries. This implies avenues for future research. Another limitation is due to cultural distance between researcher and interviewees where interviewer may misinterpret specific phenomenon and assign them different meanings which can lead to bias. I tried to eliminate this bias by interactions with local team to gain their perspective of thinking, but it cannot be eliminated fully. Moreover, some women seemed to be afraid to talk, especially in negative ways about gender issues with empowered female researchers which might cause that some additional potential reasons for gender inequality were not revealed. Future studies can address these limitations and quantitative streams of research can use our insights and test our five propositions on potential antecedents of means-ends decoupling in gender policies in developing-country contexts.

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