

## Gender equality and development in Uganda

Godfrey Ssekabira <sup>1</sup>, Specioza Asiimwe <sup>2,\*</sup>, Judith AtwongireTushabe <sup>3</sup> and Pamba Shatson Fasco <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Business Management, College of Economics and Management, Kampala International University-Uganda.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Foundations, Open, Distance and E-Learning, College of Education, Kampala International University-Uganda.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Development studies, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kampala International University-Uganda.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Computer Science, School of Mathematics and Computing, Kampala International University-Uganda.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 23(02), 2226–2232

Publication history: Received on 11 July 2024; revised on 20 August 2024; accepted on 22 August 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.2.2539>

### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to review the concept of gender equality in all aspects. Despite all the platforms that have been signed by nations, Uganda in particular, that can give men and women equal opportunities in education, employment, political leadership at all levels, financial empowerment, and equal access to assets, getting training skills for all have not been a reality and this has retarded development in Nations. There are still gaps and challenges that need to be investigated. The study used qualitative methods. The findings showed that women have not been given enough opportunities in building the nation in core development aspects and that has not elevated them to the same level with men ie getting equal opportunities, remuneration and human rights was that the government of Uganda should put training of women on computer, business, entrepreneurship, saving and involvement in most activities for more exposure.

**Keywords:** Education; Empowerment; Culture; Employment; Development

### 1. Introduction

Gender equality is a powerful catalyst for reducing poverty and driving sustainable development, by ensuring equal access to opportunities and decision-making for all societies that can create a healthier and just economy. Improving women and girls' access to productive assets like land and capital creates multifaceted opportunities in terms of gender equity and women empowerment, assets along with necessary skill, development, and leadership that can improve women's access to empowerment in formal and informal sectors. Financial solvency on one hand can ensure financial well-being (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024). This is considered a woman's responsibility along with other household needs in different cultures. Gender equality and Development is the third eight-millennium development goals aspect. This is an instrumental goal valued as an end in itself rather than an instrument for achieving other goals important as education and transition of this goal into the target of eliminating gender disparities at all levels within a given time. However, there are some indicators to monitor progress in achieving the goal and are wide, ranging;

- Closing the gap in education at all times
- Access to affordable quality education .to both girls and boys
- Increasing women share of wage employment in nonagricultural sectors
- Improvement in the health sector

\* Corresponding author: Specioza Asiimwe

- Increasing the number of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments.
- Improve on the affirmative opportunities
- Access to land by women, being (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024).

All of the above are very prudent in the achievement of gender equality.

Each of the resources certainly has the potential to bring about positive changes in women's lives, but in each case, it is the social relationships that govern access to the resource in question that will determine the extent to which this potential is realized. Hence, in each case, there is both positive and negative evidence about the impact of women's access to these resources on their lives. There are lessons to be learned from both. This article also looks at some of the resources that have been overlooked by the MDGs but could be considered equally important for the goals in question (Whye, Asiimwe & Asiimwe, 2024).

---

## 2. Material and methods

The study adopted a literature review methodology as a method, and tool for collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting information obtained from secondary sources. The information was obtained from journal articles, text books, discussion papers, opinion papers, and some university websites. The essence of adopting this approach was to obtain a deeper understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of adult learning across contexts and time in a short time span, but in a systematic manner. Through this methodology, the researchers synthesized and evaluated relevant literature on adult learning to sift out, discuss, and explain the various views about the research phenomenon. From this exposition, the researchers suggest effective ways through which educators could facilitate gender and equality in Uganda.

---

## 3. Education

Increased participation in quality education for women has proven to be able to provide many benefits for improving women's quality of life, education can increase confidence in taking on public roles, and increase women's participation in the labour sector and access to health services (Rodrigues –Kiino, 2018; Wehye & Asiimwe, 2024; Wehye & Asiimwe, 2024). Education can also improve skills especially to keep pace with the rapid technological and digital transformation that can affect employment. It is critical to the health and well-being of women and girls as well as income-generating opportunities and participation in the formal labour market. Increasing educational attainment has accounted for about 50 percent of economic growth in many countries for over 50 years (U.N.2020). A study conducted by Hill and King (2010) entitled "Women Education and Economic Wellbeing", states that education increases labour market productivity and income growth for all, but educating women will contribute to better family health, child survival, and investment in quality of human capital, being (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024).

Education as a key indicator in measuring equality has an impact on employment, economic growth, and development because, with no education, it will continue affecting employment and quality of work for women and less economic growth in the nation hinders development. This indicates that the more equal the education level of men and women will increase the equality of employment in this case wages to increase. Azcona and Bhatt, (2020), emphasized gender equality as a concern of European Union governments. But this has not been realized in education or business, politics, and social life of undesirable resources, be it energy, ideas, or population this has failed to work in totality. As a nation, we must be able to take advantage of the diversity that we have. The most prevalent discrimination is gender equality. It is not a localized issue and is limited to only certain spheres of life but is prevalent across the globe. Even in progressive societies and top organizations, many examples of gender equality end in bias. Gender equality can only be achieved when both male and female individuals get similar equal treatment. But discrimination is a total menace that creates division. This social stigma has been creeping into society for many centuries. This is witnessed in gender-based cases. Hence, gender inequality should be considered a thing of the past as both men and women can realize it as history.

According to the World Bank report, February 23, 2021 " Countries are inching toward greater gender equality, but women around the world continue to face laws and regulations that restrict their economic opportunity, with the COVID-19 pandemic creating new challenges to their health, safety, and economic security. A nation that needs progress in all aspects, has to look at every gender equally to prosper all at the right time. A society attains better development in all similar opportunities. Equal rights in decision-making, politics, infrastructure, profession, and health among others will advance our society to a new level (Wehye & Asiimwe, 2024).

The social stigma of women inside the house and particularly the kitchen should change. Nowadays girls are equally competing with boys in schools. The girls are also creating a landmark development in their respective professions.

Women are now seeking economic independence before they get married. This gives them more confidence to stand against oppression and any form of manipulation. They can make better decisions for themselves.

The old age of social structure dictated that women needed to stay inside homes taking care of all while men went out to earn bread and butter for the family. But this has been practised for ages when the world out there was still in the dark. Now women can step forward and get educated. This makes them pursue their passion bring economic balance to their families and share the weight of the family with men. This is the only cumulative way that will make countries' economies progress and move faster (Wehye & Asiimwe, 2024).

Education is a key factor in empowerment of women in all society's world over. The role of culture cannot be denied namely powerful patriarchal norms can hold back women's empowerment plans. In some cultures where they practice patriarchy as a cultural norm even if the women are highly educated and getting better incomes, they have to bring salary to husbands to be planned for hence educated women much as the un educated are deprived of their rights. They can't be involved in decision making in households and in society therefore in this case social norms determine the level of women's empowerment. To remove such social norms, both male and female in such societies do not only need to be educated but also sensitised about the need to detach or change from such practices and norms (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024).

---

#### 4. Empowerment

Marquet, Budst, and de Geest (2004) state that many factors affect women's quality of life, one of which is income and work. Women empowerment is looked at as a variable because women who work as professionals, managers, administrative and technical personnel, cannot mediate the effects of employment equality as a variable on women's quality of life. This happens because the achievement of women as professionals is still lower than that of men. There are indications that this is due to inequality in women's rights in employment which is the end in empowering women. Women cannot get empowered without getting their rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees all rights and freedoms regardless of sex. All governments are legally obliged to honour the rights of women by convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW). This is a global agenda for women's empowerment (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024).

Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union but it has failed to be a reality in business, politics, education, and society as a whole. We can fully reach our potential if we use all our talents and diversity. Hence using half of the population who are men, half of their ideas, or half of their energy is not enough. (Azcona and Bhatt 2020). Widiastuty (2019) also found that education and economic aspects provide space and access for women to increase people's life expectancy. In addition, according to a study conducted by (Damayanti 2021), Education is the main determining factor in the status of working women, in this case, education is one of the keys for women to be able to contribute to the national development. Women can be strategic actors in development not only development in villages, but also national development that can change their lives for better and prosperity (Kemenko 2019; (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024).

Adry and Nelonda (2016) also show that investment in girls' education has a very significant multiplier effect, it will reduce birth rates, infant and child mortality, maternal mortality, and increased labour force participation rates and income. Besides that, mothers or women will also be the first source of knowledge for children before entering the social life of the community. In this case, the mother's role is very important in shaping the quality, personality, and perspective of children, besides that improving the quality of women will increase women's potential to contribute to development. Susanto (2017) states that when women are limited in their rights to improve their quality of life in this case being uneducated will be hindering women from working, voicing their aspirations and ideas is one of the causes of delays in the success of national development. Women's economic empowerment is very important to realize women's rights and gender equality.

Economic empowerment among women includes women's ability to participate in existing markets, their access and control over productive resources, access land, decent work, control over their own time, life, and bodies, voice their aspirations, and participation in economic decision-making in the world at all levels from the households to international institutions (U.N 2020; (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024).

In this article, the dimensions that affect women's equality in their lives are mainly education, employment, empowerment, and cultural dimensions. Education is measured by the ratio indicator of the average length of schooling of women compared to men. Based on the achievement of the average length of schooling, the achievement of the male population is always above the achievement of the female population. In dimension of employment equality, is

measured by the indicator of ratio of average wages of workers or employees in the last three years of the calendar year which always shows that the wages of female workers are still below the number of wages received by men. Social norms can restrict women's empowerment directly or indirectly. They may influence the access of women to education and income, example; they may allow women to earn money from their sweat but without any control over it, or gaining any position in society, such as leadership. Hence, men remain the beneficiaries of women's empowerment because of cultural norms (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024).

If women get empowered in households that means that there is a total imbalance in marriage and that can lead to marital problems. The outcome may be completely negative. They have a belief that a woman was simply brought in a home to be a caretaker and be cared for, but not to be empowered in all her life. They say they own nothing in totality that all is for the husbands and women inclusive and owned as property. Despite the strides that Kenya has made in expanding the educational opportunities since independence in 1963, the access of girls to educational opportunities continues to be limited due to various social, economic and political barriers, this asserts that the Country does not invest enough in educating and empowering girls. This is undermining its social economic resilience productivity and competitive potential hence investing in girls' education is investing in development and this should be recognized a high return investment of the nation.

According to Mirazia. Paravin (2012), there are many things that influence women's empowerment some of these are social legislation, women's education, professional opportunities, reservation policies, political leadership, work participation, human rights act and provisions regarding women's healthcare facilities. Government provisions for women and welfare schemes. The human person is considered to be the most important factor in the phenomenon of women's empowerment (Whye & Asiimwe, 2024; Atwongire, Asiimwe, Pamba & Sekabira, 2024). Gender inequality has been a social issue in India for hundreds of years. In many parts of India, the birth of a female child is not welcome and is a known fact that discrimination starts even before the girl child is born sometimes, she is killed as a foetus, and if she manages to ascertain the sunshine of the day, she is killed as an infant, which makes up the highly skewed child sex ration for every 1000 boys in India there are only 908 girls.

It's hard to imagine this state of affairs within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, still exists because women have proved to be strong leaders in every possible field. The planet has been revolutionized by exceptional women leaders in fields that used to be dominated by men. Despite that even today the girl child is discriminated against in most Indian households, the birth of a baby boy is widely known with great pomp but the birth of a girl child is received with dismay. In India, the practice of female foeticide through sex-selective abortion continues to be practised despite the prenatal diagnostic procedure and this discrimination continues in every aspect. But in education, health, protection, or participation, the girl child is usually treated unequally. India's society up-to-date has not been awakened to the importance of empowering a woman. Statistics still show female foeticide, girl-child discrimination and gender bias. In China, individual patrilineal values conflict with the attitude towards gender equality. They say that traditional culture is a potential root of gender inequality. Chinese households have traditionally practised the patrilineal system, giving males precedence in a family. After the success of the socialist revolution in 1949, an egalitarian ideology subverted the patriarchal tradition. Song (2008).

Traditions are not eradicated easily implementing the one-child policy in the late 1970s received the traditional culture of favouring sons. The immediate adverse effect of this policy is the large number of 'missing women' because of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion. (Chen and Zhang, 2019). Infanticide, coerced marriage or domestic violence all show gender discrimination which is rooted in the biased perspective against women. As a woman's rights and how people think about the roles of men and women in society and the family are essential to improving gender equality. (Smith et al, Fonseca et al 2012) say that educated or more affluent wives could share decision-making at will or reluctantly because they are unsure about the husbands' thoughts since women have low bargaining power.

Bao and Huang (2020, 2022a, 2022b) Proposed a mechanism in education and elections to mitigate the outcomes caused by gender inequality. For a developing country like China, where women are threatened by human trafficking and domestic violence with few judicial interventions, a quick and efficient policy to improve gender equality is essential and effective. N Cube and Anyanwu, (2012) state that African governments need to dialogue with large employers in creating employment for women (and men) through strategic skills planning, skills development and skills matching. Addressing the skills match in the short run will require improved training programs and close links between tertiary and vocational institutions on the one hand, and the private sector on the other hand. Training programs should include on the job initiatives targeting the already working as well as graduates who lack specific work skills.

Gender mainstreaming as a gender perspective in the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action; including legislation, policies or programs in all areas and at all levels is a strategy for making women's

as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, and society spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (Osagi 2011). The government of Uganda recognizes the need to expand opportunities for men, women, boys and girls not only as a human right but also as a means for inclusive sustainable development. This is noted from the gender-responsive legal and policy environment aimed at reducing gender inequalities. Some of these platforms include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. (CEDAW) and the recent one is the Sustainable Development Goals agenda by 2030. (SDGs).

Gender inequalities limit the ability of women and girls to fully participate in, and benefit from development programs in Uganda. Formal and Informal institutions, such as patriarchy, religion, family, marriages as well as social and cultural practices play a major role in perpetuating gender inequality in Uganda. The lead in perpetuating these inequalities are the glaring differences in asset ownership and employment opportunities for women and men and the ingrained gender-based violence. Experience of sexual violence shows that the higher the education level, the lower the incidence, especially for more educated men and women. Women with no education or primary level report more experiences of sexual violence. The low levels of sexual violence among men with no education are partly attributed to the strong cultural norms that are engrained in rural areas where most of them are found.

---

## 5. Culture

According to Ahamed et al (2010), Asimwe and Magunda (2017), Asimwe and Magunda (2022), Cultural construction in society has led to gender discrimination, subordination stereotypes, and patriarchy against women. On the other hand, men are culturally required to take the maximum role in the public sphere which is not the case today. In the conditions of men and women at one time women were not supposed to work more than men but it has not worked as expected. Hence the impact of heavy domestication on women reduces women's access to participate not only in public spheres but also in the other fields of importance. This marginalizes women in development spheres. In addition, women's limited access to political or professional positions indicates that the stereotype is labelled against them. This makes women to remain shackled to technical positions with low incomes.

The high prevalence of cultural practices in different societies that are harmful to nurture, such as genital mutilation and early marriages reinforces and compromises the security of women against their will. This happens to girls between 15-19 years in societies where it is practised. 35 per cent have been subjected to genital female mutilation between (2004-2020) by the age of 18 years, and 31 per cent were married by (2005-2020) as child marriages. It is a wide norm but remains a serious violation of human rights. It denies young girls' education as a right and affects their health. This affects their future capital.

Asadullah, Viao, and Yeoh (2018) In their study stated that increasing gender equality and reducing inequality in rural-urban areas will be able to improve the subjective quality of life in China, and better education and health levels are significantly correlated with improving quality of life.

Ahamed et al (2010), Asimwe and Magunda (2017), Asimwe and Magunda (2022), have also investigated the relationship between economic status, education level, and women empowerment status in maternal health services to improve women's equality of life in developing countries. Women empowerment is suggested as a mechanism to improve the quality of women's lives. The empowerment of women is an essential precondition for the elimination of world poverty and the upholding of human rights. The concept is accompanied by freedom, self-determination and power, which is necessary for women worldwide. Empowerment gives rights to women and makes them independent.

---

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Though there have been many platforms designed by governments globally with the aim at bringing equity and gender inclusion in all aspects to bring development and prosperity in nations, this has not come to a reality. There are still gaps and challenges to gender equality in all nations in different aspects like education, employment, health, and politics at all leadership levels that include policy and decision-making, financial economic empowerment and affirmative action for women in all aspects. To achieve equity for men and women in all aspects, governments have to give equal opportunity to men and women to serve their nations equally in all aspects. Where women have been left behind, the government has to provide them with finance as an economic empowerment right from rural to urban areas.

This financial solvency will assist them in joining the formal and informal sector. This will support their social well-being, children's health and education expenses. In many cultures, these are considered as women's expenses or responsibilities along with other household needs yet you can never spend when you don't have them. Shared responsibilities, mutual decision-making, trust and confidence can improve gender equality at household levels, and improve intra-family and social relation cohesion. Financial control prominence over assets and land can have a great impact on gender roles, Social and cultural norms and attitudes in families. This will bring mutual respect and understanding and a positive effect in reducing gender inequality in this country and all nations.

---

## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

---

## References

- [1] Atwongire, J.T. Asimwe, S. Pamba, S.F. Ssekabira, G. (2024), Gender Equality and Development in Uganda, international journal for Multidisciplinary Research, vol, 5, Issue 4, August, 2024
- [2] Asimwe, S., & Magunda, H. (2017). Parents as enablers of academic achievement in secondary schools in Uganda: A Learners' View Point, *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*, 5(2), 215-225.
- [3] Asimwe, S., & Nabitake, R. (2022). The relationship between parents' involvement and student academic performance in Uganda, Lyantonde District, *IJARIE-ISSN (O)- 2395-4396*, 8(6), 1531-1540
- [4] Anyanwu, J. C., & Augustine, D. (2013). Gender equality in employment in Africa: Empirical analysis and policy implications. *African Development Review*, 25(4), 400-420.
- [5] Asadullah, M. N., Xiao, S., & Yeoh, E. (2018). Subjective well-being in China, 2005–2010: The role of relative income, gender, and location. *China Economic Review*, 48, 83-101.
- [6] Azcona, G., & Bhatt, A. (2020). Inequality, gender, and sustainable development: measuring feminist progress. *Gender & Development*, 28(2), 337-355.
- [7] Bao, Z., & Huang, D. (2022). Can artificial intelligence improve gender equality? Evidence from a natural experiment. *Evidence from a Natural Experiment (August 27, 2022)*.
- [8] Beckie, T. M., & Hayduk, L. A. (1997). Measuring quality of life. *Social Indicators Research*, 42, 21-39.
- [9] Brown, S. M. (2018). Intimate partner violence: A narrative analysis of the Jamaican women experience.
- [10] Cruz, A., & Klinger, S. (2016). Gender-based Violence in the World of Work.
- [11] Dasgupta, A., & Sharma, A. (2022). Missing women: A review of underlying causes and policy responses. *Dasgupta, Aparajita, and Anisha Sharma. 'Missing Women: A Review of Underlying Causes and Policy Responses. 'Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Economics and Finance (2022)*.
- [12] Galvani, A. (2013). Italy-China: An Ancient Cultural Heritage and the Challenge for Future Development.
- [13] Guloba, D. M., Katunze, M., Ssewanyana, D. S., Ahikire, P., Musiimenta, D. P., Boonabaana, D. B., & Ssennono, V. (2018). *Gender roles and the care economy in Ugandan households: The case of Kaabong, Kabale and Kampala districts*. Oxfam.
- [14] Hill, M. A., & King, E. (1995). Women's education and economic well-being. *Feminist economics*, 1(2), 21-46.
- [15] Ika, S. P. G., & Ngurah, M. A. A. I. (2022). Analysis of Women's Quality Of Life with Gender Equality Dimensions in Indonesia. *Russian Journal of Agricultural and Socio-Economic Sciences*, 127(7), 50-63.
- [16] Islam, F. B., & Sharma, M. (2022). Socio-economic determinants of women's livelihood time use in rural Bangladesh. *GeoJournal*, 87(Suppl 4), 439-451.
- [17] Klasen, S., & Lamanna, F. (2009). The impact of gender inequality in education and employment on economic growth: new evidence for a panel of countries. *Feminist economics*, 15(3), 91-132.
- [18] Li, J., Zhang, J., Zhang, D., & Ji, Q. (2019). Does gender inequality affect household green consumption behaviour in China? *Energy Policy*, 135, 111071.

- [19] Osagi (2011) “Gender Main Streaming Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality” document.
- [20] Patel, V. A. (2014). Gender equality and human rights. *Available at SSRN 3182315*. Romeboog, L, Spaenjeric (2012) Religious Economic Altitudes and Household Finance
- [21] Razia Parvin, M. (2012). Empowerment of women: Strategies and System for Gender Justice. Ombati. V et al (2012). Gender inequality in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa
- [22] Rodriguez-Kiino, D. (2018). The role of higher education in strengthening women’s participation in the workforce: The lived experiences of females in Japan. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 24(3), 321-341.
- [23] Smith, J. P., McArdle, J. J., & Willis, R. (2010). Financial decision making and cognition in a family context. *The Economic Journal*, 120(548), F363-F380.
- [24] Song, Z. (2008). *Flow into eternity: Patriarchy, marriage and socialism in a north China village*. University of Southern California.
- [25] Wang, Q., Chiang, T. F., & Xiao, J. J. (2024). Attitude toward gender inequality in China. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1-14.
- [26] Wehye, B. & Asimwe, S. (2024). Decoding barriers and failures in Liberia’s educational policy implementation, *World journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 2024, 22 (01), 495 -508.
- [27] Wehye, B. & Asimwe, S. (2024). Examining the access, quality and Relevance Gaps in Liberia’s Educational Policy Environment *international journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, vol, 6, Issue3, May 2024