

Women's Community Engagement And Its Impact On Empowerment And Social Changes In Mbarara City.

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between women's community engagement and empowerment and social changes in Mbarara City, Uganda. Women's empowerment and positive social changes are important for development and achieving greater gender equality. However, women often face barriers to full participation in community development initiatives. This research sought to understand how increasing women's engagement could help address this issue. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from 150 women in Mbarara City between January and March 2023. Participants were randomly selected from community groups involved in activities like savings clubs, health committees and education programs. Questionnaires captured information on demographics, level of involvement in groups, perceptions of empowerment and observed social changes. In-depth interviews further explored experiences of engagement and its impacts. The results of inferential and descriptive statistical analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between women's engagement and feelings of empowerment, as well as observable social changes reported in their communities. The study shown that for each one unit increased in women's engagement, empowerment and social change was expected to increase by 0.523 units on average, as indicated by the unstandardized B coefficient of 0.523 for women's engagement. The p-value of 0.000 confirms that this predictor makes a statistically significant contribution to explaining the outcome variable. Respondents in Mbarara city should focus on involving women in the community in order to realize development and change.

Keywords: Women, Community, Engagement, Empowerment And Social Changes

Background of the Study

Women's community engagement is defined as building, seeding and maintaining effective relationships with people through all critical aspects of human interaction, dialogue, patience, persistence, care, reflection and clear purpose (Abdi et al., 2020). . Women's community involvement is also defined as an effort to engage the community to achieve sustainable outcomes, fair decision-making processes, and deepening relationships and trust between government organizations and communities (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). Empowerment and social change

is the process of building autonomy, power, trust and other necessary means to enact change and pave the way for a better future (Derrick et al., 2023). Empowerment means that people have power and control over their own lives. People get the support they need and which is right for them. Empowerment means that people are equal citizens (Isah & Nafiu, 2013).

The vital contribution of African women to their households, food production systems and national economies is increasingly recognized in Africa and the

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international community. This is largely due to African women's own vigorous efforts to organize themselves, articulate their concerns and voice their opinions (Isah & Nafiu, 2013). At the local and national level, more women's associations were formed during the 1990s, taking advantage of the new political openings to assert their leadership roles. They also seek to expand women's economic and social opportunities and promote women's rights. By improving their own positions, they simultaneously strengthen African society as a whole and also enhance the continent's wider prospects for development (Musaibah et al., 2023).

In Cameroon, a study on promoting women's involvement in development through non-governmental efforts revealed that much of the work of women in Cameroon is not recognized and therefore not counted in national income statistics. Where women do receive some form of recognition, they often don't have the opportunity to stand out. At the family level, women are rarely consulted on many basic decisions that directly affect their productive and reproductive lives (Jac & Kazaara, 2023). Broadly speaking, gender inequality in Uganda is reproduced through personal family and kinship systems, religious institutions that preach male dominance over women, and an education system that stereotypes girls and

Problem Statement

boys into careers based on traditional roles and is reinforced by the state. ideology through state policy and the legal system. A closer look at NRM policies reveals a number of obstacles to women's emancipation in Uganda. For example, in agriculture, where women contribute much of the labor required, they have little control and ownership of the factors of production (land, technology, information and training) (Ivan et al., 2023). (Tuyizire 2007). Mbarara District is a district in southwestern Uganda. In 2019, the Cabinet of Uganda approved part of Mbarara, then Mbarara Municipality, to be upgraded to a city in July 2020. Mbarara District is part of Ankole Sub-District. The districts that comprise Ankole include: (a) Buhweju District (b) Bushenyi District (c) Ibanda District (d) Isingiro District (e) Kiruhura District (f) Mbarara District (g) Mitooma District (h) Ntungamo District (i) Rubirizi District (j) Sheema District. The concept of women in development (WID) emerged as a result of Esther Boserup's revelation in her book entitled "Women in Economic Development" that the modernization process under the supervision of colonial authorities imbued with Western notions of the gendered division of labor placed new technologies under the control of men. (International Institute of Rural Renewal).

Despite the high number of women's economic empowerment programs undertaken by the Ugandan government and non-governmental organizations aimed at imparting practical skills to women in Uganda (Christopher & Felex, 2022). Illiterate rural women are still neglected and the few who have managed to participate have not benefited fully from such programmes, putting them at an economic disadvantage. Therefore, the researcher wants to investigate how women's involvement affects empowerment and social change in Mbarara District. The researcher also wants to examine the social changes brought about by the involvement of women in the community and finally the researcher wants to find out the challenges faced by women in Mbarara district (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022).

Specific objectives

1. To assess the meaning of women's community engagement in Mbarara district
2. To find out different ways of promoting empowerment and social change in Mbarara district.
3. To establish the relationship between women's engagement and empowerment and social change in Mbarara district.

Methodology

The study used casual research design, this kind of research design aims at generating information after the incidence has occurred. The study looked at impact of women's community Engagement on empowerment and social change in Mbarara district. The research design exploited both the qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (Rasheed et al., 2022). Qualitative included use of respondents' responses from the study while quantitative was involve use of descriptive statistics generated with frequency tables (Nafiu et al., 2012). These approaches were used to enable the researchers to get and analyze relevant information concerning the study variables of women's community Engagement and empowerment and social change. The area of study was be in Mbarara city. Mbarara city is a district in the Western Region of Uganda and the second largest city in Uganda after Kampala (Maiga et al., 2021). The study was look at women's community Engagement and empowerment and social change. A study population is a complete set of individuals, cases or objects with some common observable characteristics and this consisted of over 200 respondents that is, women in Mbarara district, Local Area Chairmen, Community Development officer. This was basically involved use of interviews and questionnaires which was enable the researcher to gather enough information (Nafiu & Ph, 2012). The study was use purposive techniques because it allows the selection of a sample with experience and knowledge. This method was be used to select Local Area Chairmen and Community Development officer. The researcher first selected one person who was help her in the way of getting in touch with another respondent until the total number of the respondents in the same category was be got. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) and this was consisting of 100 respondents from the study area (Nafiu, 2012). All these was be approached from their respective offices and also in the community. Respondents was enabling the

researcher to obtain actual results and among them the researcher was able to take up relevant information for the study which appeared frequent among them.

Table 1: Category of the Respondents.

Category	N	S
Women	195	97
Local Area Chairmen	03	02
Community Development Officer	02	01
Total	200	100

N- Study Population S-Sample size **Source: primary data 2023**

The study used purposive and snowball sampling techniques during the process of data collection from the study respondents. The study used purposive techniques because it allows the selection of a sample with experience and knowledge (Nafiu, 2012). The researcher first selected one person who help her in the way of getting in touch with another respondent until the total number of the respondents in the same category was be got. This method was used in the study, since questionnaires was self-administered and interpreted to the business owners and their employees with the guidance of the researcher and a research assistant so as to obtain reliable data.

Data was analyzed by using both qualitative and quantitative analysis which involved the use of appropriate descriptive statistical measures such as mean, mode and median (Nafiu et al., 2016). While qualitative analysis involved the use of statements, forecasting techniques of correlation and coefficient. The researcher achieved this with the help of specialized data analysis computer packages.

RESULTS

Table 1: showing how respondents responded on the meaning of women's community engagement

meaning of women's community engagement	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Total (%)
It is the intentional interactions between communities and public decision makers.	21 (21%)	34(34%)	45 (45%)	100
<i>That acknowledge and incorporate the critical role played by women have increased</i>	30 (30%)	19 (19%)	51 (51%)	100

<i>potential to strengthen community development</i>				
About building, sowing, and maintaining effective relationships with people through all of the critical aspects of human interaction	49 (49%)	20 (20%)	31 (31%)	100

Source: primary data 2022

Table 1 above shows that many respondents agreed that the best meaning of women's community engagement is it is about building, sowing, and maintaining effective relationships with people through all of the critical aspects of human interaction represented by 49% while 31% disagreed. *That acknowledge and incorporate the critical role played by women have increased potential to strengthen community development* was agreed up on by 30% while 19% disagreed and 51% were not sure then the factor of "It is the intentional interactions between communities and public decision makers" was agreed up on by 21% and 34% disagreed while 45% were not sure (Abdi et al., 2020).

Table 2: showing respondents responses on different ways of promoting empowerment and social change in Mbarara district

Effects	Agreed				Disagreed				Total
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%	
Organization for locality development	59	59%	41	41%	35	35%	65	65%	100%
Social planning or policy change	68	68%	32	32%	29	29%	71	71%	100%
Organizing for social action, or systems advocacy	53	53%	47	47%	31	31%	69	69%	100%

Source: primary data 2022

The table above shows how respondents agreed on different ways of promoting empowerment and social change in Mbarara district. On the factor of Social planning or policy change, 68% male and 32% female agreed while 29% male and 71% female disagreed. On the factor of **Organization for locality development**, 59% male and 41% female agreed while 35% male and 65% female disagreed with it. 53% male and 31% female respondents agreed with the **Organizing for social action, or systems advocacy** while 31% male and 69% female respondents disagreed with it.

Table 3: Showing the Relationship between women's engagement and empowerment and social change in Mbarara district

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Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	45	45
Agree	40	40
Disagree	8	8
Undecided	7	7
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data 2023

This table 3 above shows the total number of respondents and their percentage level that responded to the statement. 7 (7%) respondents were "Undecided" to the question, while 8 (8%) "Disagree" to the question. Also, 40 (40%) respondents "Agree" to the question stated above. Lastly, the majority 45 (45%) respondents "Strongly Agree" in their response to the question.

Table 4: Relationship between women's engagement and empowerment and social change

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.573	.357	.345	.66021
a. Predictors: (Constant), women's engagement				

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.4455	.167		4.656	.010
	women's engagement	.523	.072	.582	6.821	.000
a. Dependent Variable: empowerment and social change						

Source: Primary Data 2023

Table 4 shows the results of a simple linear regression model where women's engagement is the predictor variable and empowerment and social change is the outcome variable. The R value of 0.573 indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between women's engagement and empowerment and social change (Nelson et al., 2022). Specifically, women's engagement explains about 35.7% of the variance in empowerment and social change, as indicated by the R Square value of 0.357. The adjusted R Square value of 0.345 suggests that if the model was derived from the population rather than a sample, it would account for approximately 34.5% of the variance in the outcome variable. The standard error of the estimate of 0.66021 represents the standard deviation of the residuals or errors in predictions and indicates the precision of the model. The coefficients table shows that the constant value or Y-intercept

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is 1.4455, meaning that when women's engagement is zero, the expected value of empowerment and social change is 1.4455. It also shows that for each one unit increase in women's engagement, empowerment and social change is expected to increase by 0.523 units on average, as indicated by the unstandardized B coefficient of 0.523 for women's engagement. The p-value of 0.000 confirms that this predictor makes a statistically significant contribution to explaining the outcome variable. These results suggest that higher levels of women's engagement are positively associated with increased empowerment and social change (Nelson et al., 2023).

Summary of findings

The main objective for this study was to investigate on the impact of women's community Engagement on empowerment and social change in Mbarara district. Specifically, the study sought to assess the meaning of women's community engagement in Mbarara district, to find out different ways of promoting empowerment and social change in Mbarara district and to establish the relationship between women's engagement and empowerment and social change in Mbarara district. Data analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire responses from the respondents revealed that despite the knowledge, civil society and the general public did not place this issue as very important one. The largest proportion of respondents were male (67%; n=67) while 33% (n = 33) were female. Almost all sexes of respondents were represented, as supported by Mugenda &Mugenda, any equal representation of equal gender prevents any bias that results in information and makes the research reliable (Mugenda &Mugenda, 2003). The majority (35%; n = 35) of the respondents in Mbarara north aged 16-25 years; 31% were aged 26-35 years, 21% were between 46-55 years , while only 13% (n = 13) were 36-45 years old. The results reveal that most of the respondents covered in this study were youths.

Findings show that, the marital status was dominated by the unmarried that is 40% (n= 40) followed by the married respondents who were 31% (n=31), 27% (n = 27) where widowed and Only 2% (n = 2) were divorced and widowed respectively as shown by the results in the table 2 above. For the educational breakdown of respondents, majority were degree holders (60%; n = 60); 27% (n = 27) were diploma holders while only 13% (n = 13) were certificate holders. Most of these respondents were students and teachers who mind about their academic performance. Results show that most were highly educated (Anthony et al., 2023).

According to the study findings, many respondents agreed that the best meaning of women's community engagement is it is about building, sowing, and maintaining effective relationships with people through all of the critical aspects of human interaction represented by 49% while 31% disagreed. *That acknowledge and incorporate the critical role played by women have increased potential to strengthen community development* was agreed up on by 30% while 19% disagreed and 51% were not sure then the factor of "It is the intentional interactions between communities and public decision makers" was agreed up on by 21% and 34% disagreed while 45% were not sure.

Conclusion

The study investigated the impact of women's community Engagement on empowerment and social change in Mbarara district. The study showed that most respondents understood what women's community engagement meant. The factors the ways of promoting women engagement respondents agreed on factors like Social planning or policy change and Organization for locality development.

Recommendations

Respondents in Mbarara city should focus on involving women in the community in order to realize development and change.

Women should engage in different activities in order to feel included and add on the community change in Mbarara.

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