

WOMEN SERVED WITH POLITICAL DILEMMA'S AS LEADERSHIP TREAT

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ABSTRACT

The recurrent challenges women political leaders continue to face as they lead form ethical dilemmas that require deliberation, review and prescription in terms of remedies for the quota system and affirmative action initiatives to meet their targets. The paper presents results from a study on the *ethical implications of women's participation in political leadership; the case of the Uganda parliament* with a world view of ethical challenges that have been identified by scholars and yet again found to still build up in a system that has been executed for over 20 years in Uganda with minimal transformative impact. Opines emerging out of the existing literature are discussed against the identified challenges from the field findings and some remedial agenda is sketched in the paper leaving a latent task that demands for study to be conducted into remedies for the challenges in order to attain more effective women political leadership.

KEYWORDS: Ethical, Challenges, Women, Political, Leadership, Quota, Dilemma

INTRODUCTION

The journey of most women today in political leadership begins with the opportunity the quota system has to offer. On a female ticket a woman rides to her leadership platform seconded by her promoters who often are men with an agenda to achieve. The illusion of women in political leadership is well phased and framed by the quota system that it almost seems true; that the women under recruitment are leadership material, able to maneuver the political landscape and assume the leadership roles as soon as their seated in the leading seats. But this is being proven not to be the case. In this paper based on the results of the *study conducted on the Ethical Implications of Women in Political Leadership: the Case of the Parliament of Uganda*, the reality is of women in political leadership is tested on a number of opines that are deliberated.

Background

The Western Culture has alluded to the Greek philosophy of leadership, which holds men more superior to women. In particular Aristotle's total allocation of power to men unlike Plato in the Republic who chooses to focus on the soul thus admit women as weak vessels but seeing their potential to lead.

However in the Africa sense most African pre-colonial cases indicate women of influence able to affect decision making. According to Taiwo (2010) traditional African society attached no importance to gender issues because every individual had a role to play both in the family as well as in the larger society. Each gender had its traditional role in the development of the society. In other words, the position of women was complimentary to that of men. There was the non-existent of gender inequality. Each role, regardless of who performed it was considered equally important because it contributed to the fundamental goal of community survival.

In Buganda Kingdom the rule through the mother line always gave the Queen prominence and this remained intact until the arrival of the colonialists. Meanwhile down in South Africa the profound effect the famous Shaka king of the Zulu's mother had on him is a good indicator of how a woman's influence would wield strength. It is noted that in his settlements each settlement where both male and female warriors resided was headed by a formidable woman usually Shaka's Aunt. In his absence the female rulers of the settlement and the Indunas who were the King's favorite wielded administrative authority jointly.¹

In Africa women leading men into battles as part of the leadership agenda was part of the ploy. In Uganda the Nyabingi rebellion in Kigezi had the Abagirwa women warriors led by Muhumuza against the colonialist.² In Ghana, Nana Yaa Asantewaa of Ejusu led the Ashanti Kingdom to war against the British in 1900.³ Dona Beatrice who led a rebellion against pre-Portuguese Congo leadership, Queen Amina of Zaria who was a prominent warrior, and the women in Eastern Nigeria who led the Aba revolt against British colonialists for inhuman taxation in the 1920s (Saje and Abubakar, 1997 : 22).⁴

Objectives

The paper aims to

- Examine the political dilemma women in political leadership face
- Critique the quota system
- Expose a latent area for further study

SITUATION ASSESSMENT

Women's circumstances globally varying regarding the cultural heritage they hold. In Europe⁵ to date women still earn less than their male counterparts in professional jobs. In some Asian states women have even reached the helm of Presidency. In Africa where before colonial intervention there was a taste of what it was to have active women leadership, not just having women with leadership titles, women have made entry into political leadership. However it is noted that in the administering of women's affirmative action in particular the quota system, a radical feminist stand drawn from the western experience hence disregarding the vantage points of different geographical settings is undertaken. This stand may affect the prospects of how women participation in leadership is upgraded in different regions and may make the quota system a disadvantage rather than a benefit. Hence placing women recruited to leadership in political dilemma rather than political power.

Key Arguments in the Paper

Plato in his book the Republic cautions about;

¹Who is Shaka Zulu? A Short biography on a man with incredible Vision.

² Nyabingi Rebellion, in Murindwa Rutanga Nyabingi Movement 1991

³ Odame (2010) Ghanaian women leadership experiences

⁴Taiwo, pg.234

⁵ Countries like Britain despite once having a female Prime Minister and the Queen still have companies that pay women less than men⁵ a report by Atlantic indicates In the United States, for instance, women earn less than men who work in the same field and have the same academic qualifications, according to a [2013 congressional report](#). In their first year of work after getting a bachelor's degree, women make roughly \$7,600 less per year than men.

“The man who has no self-respect, on the contrary, will imitate anybody and anything; sounds of nature and cries of animals alike; his whole performance will be imitation of gesture and voice.”

Affirmative action and in particular the quota system ought not be a complete imitation of what is perpetuated in the Western world but should have an appreciation of given settings with their distinctive potentials of improving women representation in their national locus.

When it comes to implementing affirmative action in some settings it is not so much about bringing women on board but redeeming society of the nuances of male dominance by rekindling the quality of leadership women have to offer by merit not favour.

Research Findings on Ethical Challenges in Political Leadership: the Case of the Parliament of Uganda

From responses obtained in a research conducted on the *ethical implications on Women participating in political leadership: the case of the parliament of Uganda*, a sample of 77 purposively selected respondents earmarked ethical challenges women face in political leadership.

All the Women (31) Members of Parliament (WMP) interviewed acknowledged facing ethical challenges ranging from rumors people created when one associated with MMPs, being taken advantage of, sexual harassment, domestic vis-à-vis leadership conflicts, lack of funds, marginalization among others. 92% of the WMPs respondents argued that all women MPs had similar ethical challenges, 4% were not sure if other WMPs had similar ethical challenges and 4% declined to respond. Responding to the query on whether these challenges were overcome or coped with 46% of the WMPs said yes citing balancing work and family as well as self-control as coping mechanism. 4% said no noting it is difficult to cope or overcome them, 46% noted it was not applicable and 4% declined to respond.

Majority of the male parliamentarians (89%) agreed WMPs faced ethical challenges pointing out cultural stereotypes, family commitments, intimidation and lack of finances among others. 11% MMPs however did not feel WMP had any ethical challenges citing the affirmative action as one of the initiatives favoring them.

34% of the male parliamentarian asserted that WMPs overcome and cope with these ethical challenges pointing out mechanism including women going back home on time, hiring their husbands as their drivers and personal assistant as well as joining forums that build their capacity like UWOPA. 33% MMPs argued that women are able to overcome the challenges or cope with them partially because it is an ongoing struggle. 11% felt some women were able to cope and overcome ethical challenges they faced while 22% disputed this stating that women found it hard to overcome or cope with the ethical challenges they faced.

75% of the academicians interviewed asserted that WMPs faced ethical challenges noting these women operated in a corrupt environment, society expects a lot from them and Uganda is a patriarchal nation. 9% felt WMPs never had ethical challenges because it was their normal way of life they are used to. 8% gave null responses and 8% no responses.

58% of the academicians argued it was hard for Women Members of Parliament to overcome these challenges or cope with them because of the culture and society they lived in. 25% felt some WMPs had coped with these ethical challenges and 17% gave no response.

All the gender advocates acknowledged women faced ethical challenges in leadership such as society failing to appreciate them as leaders but rather as wives, challenges posed by the political parties they are in, failure to represent women adequately, being forced to support given ideologies, a polluted political environment among others. Regarding whether WMPs are able to overcome these challenges 37% said 'no' stating an unethical environment nurtures these challenges and there is no political will to support the women out of these challenges. 36% said 'yes' pointing out that women's issues at national level were being addressed collectively and there was a lot of advocacy going on regarding these challenges. 27% said 'to some extent'.

Like the previous respondents all the media respondents acknowledged women leaders face ethical challenges including sexual harassment (being easily seduced with support and promotion promises), representing women versus the interest of their parties, political parties that had no ethical interest rather than their own agendas that WMP have to support, lack of finances, acting out of pressure rather than caution, being easily compromised due to external pressures, undermined even when ranking at the top, limited knowledge capacity of leadership tact and their vulnerable to manipulation. 42% of the respondents argued WMPs had not been able to overcome or cope with these ethical challenges citing women had learned the habit that leadership was about winning and had forgotten that it was about improving society, for women leadership was filled with struggle that could not be won in one day, they still fall to the bait that though representing women their positions have been accessed due to the generosity of men whose approval they seek and WMPs are still financially incapacitated as well as rejected by fellow women and society. 25% said some had overcome/cope with the ethical challenges citing Hon. Miria Matembe and Hon. Betty Kanya noting that some women had stood out of these challenges and earned their respect, some women spoke boldly for ethical concerns and some women were exemplary in their leadership. However, 25% of the respondents felt women had overcome these ethical challenges indicating they were now able to assert themselves; WMPs had the support of civil society organisations and were strong to persevere. 8% indicated uncertainty saying 'not sure'.

Regarding the existence and management of ethical challenges for WMPs; the jungle in which a woman in political leadership sets foot in, in this study was defined with majority of respondents acknowledging WMPs faced these challenges and were not about to overcome them at least not single handedly. Though constantly mentioned in the study by respondents, that women leaders stirred clear of scandal and corruption, in this insistence responses indicated the same women lived in a political environment filled with the two plus the patriarchal culture. A number of WMPs would easily fall to them, fall for them or be limited by them from being proactive. Stereotypes were unending yet the capacity of WMPs remained skewed to what their harsh environment was teaching them rather than what responsible leadership entailed. The outcome of these challenges so few women emerge to be envisaged as champions 'equal to men' in performance these comprised mostly of women who stood on a single ticket or women who managed to grasp the reigns of top notch debate, action and leading roles in the political arena/parliament i.e. those who headed committees, are vocal in women groups and the speaker of parliament.

The challenges that are noted from the study are similar to those portrayed in scholarly works prior to the study. This indicate a perennial situation that has not been addressed effectively to ensure women political leadership is not degraded, sabotaged or fruitless. Thus the demand for a study to further identify mechanisms that ought to address these challenges and make women participation in leadership more meaningful

From the study on the ethical implications, mentorship, building women capacity in leadership, women's group coalition for cohesion as well as advocacy and male involvement as gender equity champions emerged as significant intervention points towards alleviating the ethical challenges.

Tasting the Opine

The discourse on women political leadership has been buttressed with some of the views examined below. Which also serve as the sources of women's dilemma while leading.

Quota Recruitment

Dalhrup⁶ put across the idea proponent of the quota system highlight, that the quota system makes a difference. The basis of the argument is numbers count or in the case of this 'a pinch of salt gives better taste than nothing'. However the consideration here is that the quota or the pinch of salt may not give a better taste, though perhaps it would be central to the improving the whole concept of affirmative action. In that, Women have joined political leadership and now people can accept this fact, but this is an old age consolation the quota system has had. Yet the crucial reality aspiring to meritocracy dwells on the results women harvest in representing fellow women. The study conducted on the *ethical implications of having Women in political leadership* uncovers the dilemma of the quota system propped women, placed in parliament. From responses gathered from 31 Women Members of Parliament the glaring record is that pinch of salt is not enough to build female rapport in debating politics, standing up to policy engagement and there is a thought for more women seats than just the quota (30%) being championed. Yet even so what have the 30% achieved to encourage the increase?

In an argument regarding the environment women are thrown into the political arena, Nalumaga et al (2008) point out that the entry point one uses to get into politics determines the course of action noting:

"The political environment mainly determined the mode of entry into mainstream politics. While for men the entry point has largely been through open competition women could access this space at least in numbers, through a special gendered platform."

In the case of the quota system women are thrown into a unique competitive venture that requires preparation.

Political Dilemmas

A dilemma is defined to be difficulty; a mess or tight spot and that is what may become part and parcel of the political life a leader takes when they ascend to the throne without proper consideration that it maybe a thorn of power and not just a throne. When one ascends to the throne its to power and with power comes the challenge of managing it, so as to gain the required targets. But if the ascension is to the thorn not the throne, then it is to the challenges the power wields more than the glory of managing it. Unfortunately this is where most women in quota system politics go, drawing from the Uganda experience. Considering their entry point into politics is at that point when one ascends to challenges rather than ascends to handling the challenge. One such dilemma identified in the study is the choice between representing women or party interests, then altogether remaining dormant rather than being a vibrant woman political leader. Or whether to stand up for the common good which is not in favour with the ruling party's good. Or how to operate with male temperaments of

⁶Dalhrup (ed) Women, Quotas and Politics.

leadership.

Citing Kathlene's (1994) study which entailed studying transcripts from the state legislative hearings; Sears et.al (2003) noted that men actually became more verbally aggressive as the percentage of women increased and as women took positions of power. They further point out that it should not be surprising that even as the women occupy leadership positions women's communication and interaction patterns are regarded different from men and can undercut their leadership and reputation.

Being Male or Female

Leadership for long has been tagged to be a male space in which men thrive better than women. This fallacy has left leadership to be categorized even where it ought not to be in the case of personality. Therefore a woman like Margaret Thatcher would be dubbed as more male than woman, a fallacy hidden in the reality that she played man just as good as her male counterparts did. Leadership and the way one conducts it ought not be gendered to male or female. Psychology has indicated that in every male their female attributes and in every female male attributes. The reality most do not want to note is its human to be aggressive not necessarily male or female, though males than females may predominantly use it. Thus women are as capable as men of good and bad. There is no such act as a male act per say with exception to the biological and the socialised act. Both men and women if put on Thomas Hobbes⁷ egoism scale are potential criminals with similar weaknesses as Janoski et al. (2003) indicates;

“ policies shaped by women reformers may still reflect classist, racist, nationalist and paternalist ideologies.”

Succumbing to the System

The cliché if you cannot be against them then join them; would serve this test better. This is clear in the number of women who rally the National Resistance Movement ticket for elections rather than the multiparty one in Uganda. The security sought in being part of the system rather than against is visible even in parliament debates. When women have their hands tied and may not be able to even pass bills like the domestic bill the glaring reality of being in subordinate even in political leadership becomes clear. Jensen (2008:p.9) argues, that once in political office women become dependent on the male dominated power structure for their success and ability to retain their positions. This affects the calling for women leadership in numbers and demands for merit, in that the recruited women should have the capacity to transform the system and not conform to it.

No Room for Being Woman

To be able to be a woman leader one has to be a woman biologically and then meet a feminine set of norms that warrant she is a woman. But what if there is no room for that woman and the woman in the leader is killed leaving a puppet/loyalist, a politician, and a Machiavellian sly fox. Then its justifiable to consider the cause for the quota system, which is to enhance women representation, is lost. When the qualities women ought to bring into political leadership are compromised then the score for their presence in political leadership goes low. For instance if a woman's capacity to challenge chauvinistic tendencies in the very parliament she serves in fail and she conforms to the sexual harassment. Then she may not be able to challenge the same problem among the woman she is representing. Thus the niche of her

⁷ Thomas Hobbes philosophy on egoism, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/hobmoral/>

representation ceases to be. Solheim (2000) cites the shrinking institution theory, which holds that where women go in, power goes out. Which he explains as the reality of women going into politics but power is transferred elsewhere.

Biology versus Gender

In Africa the term was 'human' what the Bantu speaking people would coin as Ubuntu. There was no female or male aspect only in the sense of biological standards where a girl would be obliged to handle her femininity in discretion of hygiene and beautification than a boy would. But in all, both sexes had a taste of being groomed to take lead in their roles according to their castes and classes. While men stood out in political leadership in some cases women stood out to in the same capacity for example the Kabaka in Buganda kingdom (Uganda) vis-à-vis the Queen mother and princesses. In most cases women were spiritual leaders whom even the Kings revered and thus sought counsel from.

Thus minus the aspect of different biological attributes the respect for gender embeds the equal capacity of men and women carrying out the same tasks with exception of some biological limitations like pregnancy, childbirth, menstruation among others for women.

Misrepresentation

Representation would mean projecting the actual position of another. Or being the mirror of another's circumstance if this is not attained then misrepresentation just happened. When a woman parliamentarian is recruited and in her term limit has not stood up for women, key national development concerns such as finance/security that affect women or arisen to advocate pro-women/child legislation she is a 'misrepresentative'. Foley (2013) explains that in any political system, leaders are assigned roles and perform functions that are invariably related to such vigorous terms as initiative, direction, decision, coordination, intervention, advocacy, strategy, oversight, coherence, control and execution action. When leadership is construed in this light there appears to be a direct and necessary linkage between position and performance.

Knowledge Gaps

If one is placed in an arena of discussion then the individual ought to know what to speak, how to speak, when to speak and why to speak. But being placed on the spot without much of speech causes doubt in the qualification of the person recruited into the premise. The spiral of silence is observed in the parliament of Uganda among women representative for which the media sometimes mock when it portrays members of parliament who said nothing in parliament through the year. When actually the role of a legislator is to debate. Bickerton et al (ed, 2014) state:

"knowledge is an essential resource for political activism if women lack it they remain marginal to political life."

All about the Money

The age old inducement that tempts a reaction and not much action in politics remains the money factor. Naturally it occurs that as human as both men and women can be, both sexes know the value of money and would gladly indulge themselves in siphoning it if given the chance. According to Silent Voices an ACFODE Uganda publication (2011), it was mentioned that if a woman has money her social status changes. She is respected by her community and highly regarded so that when she expresses interest in politics she is welcomed because of her status in that community. Thus without the

financial resource a woman enlisting for leadership or placed into leadership is placed on a highway to hell with an expectant constituency and significant political routines that require money.

Volume without Value

Having enough of nothingness would be the state to define a group of people brought together with a cause but with a hazy vision. The cause in this case that the quota system brings to light is the fact that women need representation. This leaves out the reality that just all human beings cannot measure at an equal standing, the same applies to women. Some are educated than others, more vocal than others, submissive than others. Therefore if representation is talked about, there is difficulty in lowering it to the actually characteristics of being women by sex. For women come in all forms, professionals and paupers, sophisticated and cultural centered among other, therefore the task is to determine how best these women leader recruits may meet the targeted cause for the quota system. How does an elite woman get induced to serve the needs of her pauper constituents, how does a cultural centred woman step out to serve the demands of her domestically challenged constituents. Lwanaga (2008) indicates a critical mishap that should be address pre and post women leadership the fact that;

“ *Relationships between women are often fraught with competitiveness, envy and jealousy.*”

According to Lwanaga until this is dealt with female solidarity will remain distant. Further more as Kittilson et al (2012) explain, in their study on *Gendered Effect of Electoral Institutions* noted that women’s representation played only a small role in explaining gender gaps women’s engagement. Having more women in the legislature led to smaller gender gaps in political discussion. They further argue that gender quotas only matter to serve political interest and actually depress men’s political interest rather than increasing women’s interest in politics.

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the study findings on the ethical implications the challenges that emerge are recurrent and thus may be categorized as chronic. Chronic conditions demand short term and long term remedies to arrest their causes and drivers. Therefore considering the way quotas are introduced, how women are enrolled into leadership, the supporting mechanism, the gender aptness of the existing structures become a routine procedure aiming at achieving quality in a system that is meant for good but may turn out to be no good when not well executed and strengthened.

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