Men's perceptions of how gender equality affects gender relations at household levels in rural Uganda

- A case study conducted in two villages in Isingiro district in South-West Uganda

Authors: Josefine Sjöberg and Sandra Österlund
Tutor: Jonas Ewald
Examiner: Ludwig Gelot
Semester: Fall 2015
Course code: 2FU32E
Seminar: 2016-01-20
Abstract

In Uganda, the constitution provide protection for women’s rights. However, progress is still slow and the situation on household levels are largely unknown. Many focus on the challenges for women when it comes to gender equality, but as there is now a general recognition of the importance to include men in this work, this study aims to focus on men's perceptions and thoughts regarding gender equality, women empowerment, gender roles and social change, to contribute valuable information on this matter. Previous studies have shown signs of male resistance towards gender equality. To best understand the underlying reasons for this resistance, the theory of Hegemonic Masculinities by Connell and Messerschmidt was chosen to analyse the findings. This theory suggests that hierarchies between men, and notions of male ideals, can have an impact on men’s behaviour. A field study was conducted in rural Uganda which used the methods of individual interviews and focus group discussions, targeting men in different ages and socio-economic backgrounds. The questions asked regarded the roles for men and women, how the roles are changing, their perception of gender equality and the impact of women empowerment on gender relations, all with a focus on house hold level. These answers were complemented by key respondents on both local and national level. The main results of this study shows that there seems to be a general change in the role for women, but the male ideal is still tied to being the provider and leader in the family. Gender equality was in somewhat contradictory viewed as something good that could lead to development, as long as the men could remain higher in status than women. Lastly, many men seemed worried about women empowerment leading to disrespect, arguments and divorce, even though some benefits also were recognized. These findings indicate that “universal ideas” of gender equality have a wide range of local interpretations that needs to be taken into consideration when promoting gender equality in a development context.

Key words

Hegemonic Masculinities, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Gender Relations, Uganda
Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to express our gratitude first and foremost to the Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency (SIDA), for granting us a stipend and training us which enabled this field study in Uganda.

It is with gratitude that we recognize the support from Dr. Viola N. Nyakato, who stood as our contact person in Uganda and aided us in the formalities of conducting research in Uganda. A special thank you is also dedicated to our tutor Dr. Jonas Ewald, for all of his valuable input, constant support and making sure we stay on the right track.

We would like to dedicate special thanks to Marian Noppert for all of your support from the very beginning of applying for the stipend and for introducing us to the place and the people where this study was conducted. We are also grateful to the research assistant Blair, the second translator Mariam and Winnie who hosted us during the time we spent in the rural areas.

A warm thank you is also dedicated to Muwanga Susan Nassuna at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and Sarah Jessica Agwang at Uganda Women’s Network for taking the time out of your busy schedules to sit for interviews with us.

There is also a need to thank reverend Moses Ahimsibwe and head teacher Francis Behanganu for their time and cooperation in connection to our study.

Lastly, our greatest appreciation goes to all of the respondents on the grassroots in Isingiro district who showed us great hospitality and warmth during our time there. Thank you for inviting us into your homes, for sharing your food with us, and letting us interview you. Without you, this paper would not exist.
List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWONET</td>
<td>Uganda Women´s Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1  
Research Problem ................................................................................................................ 1  
Analytical framework ......................................................................................................... 2  
Literature review .................................................................................................................. 2  
Relevance ............................................................................................................................. 3  
Objective ............................................................................................................................... 4  
Research questions .............................................................................................................. 4  
Methodological Frame .......................................................................................................... 4  
Limitations and Delimitations ............................................................................................. 4  
Ethical considerations .......................................................................................................... 5  
Analytical framework .......................................................................................................... 6  
  Hegemonic masculinities .................................................................................................... 6  
    Gender Hierarchy .............................................................................................................. 6  
    Geography of Masculinities ............................................................................................. 7  
    Social Embodiment .......................................................................................................... 7  
    Dynamics of Masculinity ................................................................................................. 7  
Literature review .................................................................................................................. 8  
Methodological framework .................................................................................................. 11  
  Methods for data collection ............................................................................................... 11  
  Critical analysis of the sources ......................................................................................... 12  
  Validation strategies ........................................................................................................... 12  
    Limitations and consequences ....................................................................................... 13  
Findings ................................................................................................................................. 15  
  Background on Gender Equality in Uganda ...................................................................... 15  
  Male and female ideals ...................................................................................................... 16  
    The Focus Groups .......................................................................................................... 16  
    The Individual Interviews ............................................................................................... 19  
    Local Key Respondents .................................................................................................. 19  
    National Key Respondents ............................................................................................ 20  
  Perceptions of Gender Equality ......................................................................................... 21  
    The Focus Groups .......................................................................................................... 21  
    Individual Interviews ..................................................................................................... 22
Gender relations in the household ................................................................. 24
The Focus Groups ........................................................................................ 24
The Individual Interviews ......................................................................... 24
Local Key Respondents ............................................................................. 26
National Key Respondents ....................................................................... 27
Analysis ........................................................................................................ 28
Hegemonic masculinities in rural Uganda ............................................... 28
Gender Hierarchy ......................................................................................... 28
The geography of masculinities ............................................................... 30
The process of social embodiment ............................................................ 32
The dynamics of masculinity ...................................................................... 33
The current study in relation to previous research ................................... 34
Utility of the theory ....................................................................................... 36
Conclusions .................................................................................................. 38
References .................................................................................................... 40
Appendix 1: Respondent key ....................................................................... 42
Introduction

The discussion of gender equality has long been on the agenda on an international level, and with the launch of United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015, where gender equality could be found as the fifth goal, this topic can be regarded as highly relevant. The SDG’s intend to be universal, but one could question how well they adapt to local conditions in some of the least developed countries? And how well do they fit in both urban and rural areas? The work to achieve gender equality has many challenges, and therefore it is needed to seek better understanding of the difficulties that are connected to this goal. In order to do so, we have chosen to do a case study on the topic in rural Uganda, one of the least developed countries in the world.

Research Problem

In Uganda, there have been many efforts to promote gender equality through legislations and by implementing women empowerment-policies. This have had some positive effect on, for instance, political participation and education for women (UNDP, 2014), but less on household levels and overall gender relations (Ahikire, et al., 2015). For example, Ahikire et. al, (2015) point out that even with the progressive policies in place to ensure female participation in the public spheres, the status of the woman remain significantly lower than that of a man in all aspects of the society. In fact, they go as far as to suggest that it is still a norm in the country to have gender based violence, feminised poverty and lack of respect for female rights. Further, in the discourse on gender equality in Uganda, many studies (Josefsson, 2014; Khadiagala, 2001; Mujuzi, 2014; etc.) look into difficulties faced by women or on how women may be empowered. However, there seems to be a lack of focus in previous research in East Africa on male opinions or perceptions of gender equality or women empowerment (Silberschmidt, 2001; Wyrod, 2008). This has left a research gap in the discourse of gender equality regarding how patriarchal structures may influence men's perceptions of the concept. Unless this topic is thoroughly examined, progress in regards to gender equality might continue to be limited. Especially important to study is the situation on household levels, as family issues are often not considered in the national statistics (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2015). This research gap will be further elaborated in below sections as it is closely connected to previous research and the choice of theory.
For this research, the UN definition of gender equality as "the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys" is used, as this is the one which is applied in the Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which has been undertaken by Uganda (United Nations, 2016). Further, "women empowerment" here refers to the efforts aimed specifically at women in order to reach gender equality.

Analytical framework

The chosen theory will be briefly summarized here and then further elaborated in the chapter dedicated to the analytical framework.

The theory that will be applied to this study is developed by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and is labelled Hegemonic Masculinities. The main argument in this theory is that there is a hierarchy of masculinities in-between men which influence how men choose to behave. These ideals are also constantly changing (ibid).

This lens will provide an opportunity to outline how masculine identities and ideas of the "ideal man" may impact notions of gender equality. By sorting out what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour for the men in our study, it might be possible to understand the underlying reasons for why men may react negatively in regards to gender equality, as previous research has indicated. Examples of such negative consequences of gender equality will be outlined further in the literature review (ibid).

Literature review

This is a short summary of the existing literature on the topic. It will be complemented by another more extensive literature review in the analytical framework-chapter.

Previous research in Eastern Africa have shed some light on women empowerment from a male perspective. In a study conducted in urban Tanzania and rural Kenya, Silberschmidt (2001), suggests that the socio-economic change which has increasingly led to women taking on more responsibilities has also led to men being disempowered. This have caused several negative consequences for women in terms of increasing domestic violence, and for men in terms of alcoholism and loss of self-esteem. According to Silberschmidt, this is due to a male-identity
crisis as women empowerment clashes with traditional values and norms. She found that the loss of self-esteem led to men increasingly resorting to domestic violence and infidelity in order to reclaim their status as "real men" (ibid).

In the case of Uganda, a more recent study conducted in urban Kampala (Wyrod, 2008), have found similar patterns. In this study it became evident that the heavy focus put on women empowerment from the authorities had left some men feeling discriminated against, and few were positive towards gender equality (ibid). Another study has touched upon gender relations in rural Uganda, and found that gender equality is often perceived as an individual project which separates men and women and destroy marriages (Mullinax, et al., 2013). According to this research, there were also concerns that gender equality could lead to domestic violence, infidelity and abandonment (ibid).

In Wyrod's study (2008), the concept of hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) was applied to an urban area in Uganda. However, even though there are many studies (Jackson, 2013; Mullinax, et al., 2013; Vorhölt, 2012; etc.) done on rural levels in Uganda which to some extent take gender relations into consideration, none apply the concept of hegemonic masculinities in their analysis. This has left a gap in the discourse of gender equality in rural Uganda. In an effort to fill this gap, this study will apply the concept of hegemonic masculinities by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) in a rural Ugandan context. There will be a focus on gender relations in a household due to the findings from this previous research which implies that there are heavy backlashes to gender equality on interpersonal levels.

Relevance

This study is of high relevance as previous research have indicated that efforts to reach gender equality have caused backlashes regarding gender relations in the household. Some of these backlashes seem to be a direct result of negative attitudes towards gender equality from men. There is therefore a great need to more fully map out men’s opinions toward gender equality, and what consequences this might have on gender relations in the household. Understanding what negative consequences might arise connected to women empowerment, and the reason behind them is crucial in order to prevent them. By identifying male perceptions of gender equality, and by understanding where their attitudes come from, future policies may be able to enhance the positive effects of the concept and diminish the negative consequences.
Objective

The objective of this research is to contribute valuable information to the discourse on gender equality by focusing on men's perceptions and thoughts regarding gender equality, women empowerment, gender roles and social change. The hope is to broaden the understanding of how gender equality is perceived by men in rural Uganda. In addition to this, the objective is to find out what changes, if any, have been brought about by women empowerment, and in that case how such changes are perceived by men to be affecting gender relations on household levels in Uganda.

Research questions

- What are the perceived roles for men and women in rural Uganda and how are they currently changing?
- What are the rural men’s perceptions and thoughts regarding Gender Equality in Uganda?
- In what way can Women Empowerment influence gender relations in a household?

Methodological Frame

Due to the lack of previous research of the topic and the need for a deeper knowledge of the subject, a qualitative method was considered to be most appropriate (Cresswell, 2014, p. 20). The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how gender equality is perceived by men in rural areas, and a field study was therefore conducted in South-Western Uganda in Nyaratungi parish. Semi-structured interviews with male respondents from this area have produced the majority of the data, and hence the study relies on primary sources. Moreover, four key respondents with different positions and influence in terms of gender equality and women empowerment were identified and interviewed. The study consists of both focus group discussions and individual interviews.

Limitations and Delimitations

An important limitation of this study was the researchers' lack of knowledge of the local language. The study was therefore completely reliant on local translators in most cases when
the data was collected. In order to reduce the impact of this limitation, two translators were hired. The first translator aided in conducting the interviews and the second listened to the recordings of the interviews after the completion of the data-collection and gave an additional translation, complementing the first one.

The first delimitation was the choice to only interview men in the rural setting. Admittedly, women’s opinions could offer an important extra dimension to the analysis. However, the main objective of this research was to improve the consideration of men’s perceptions in the discourse on gender equality. Therefore, the female perspective will not be included in this study. Another delimitation was to focus on relations on household level rather than also including public levels such as political representation, job market or education. This is due to the already existing quantitative information about gender equality in public spheres (USAID, 2010; UNDP, 2014). Household levels are also where previous studies have pointed at negative consequences that could be related to efforts to empower women as explained above.

**Ethical considerations**

Conducting a field study may include the rise of many ethical dilemmas (Cresswell, 2014, pp. 92-95), which needs to be taken into account before going into the field. First, regarding the participants' anonymity there could be an issue of confidentiality. This was easier to handle in the individual interviews where the researchers had more control over the received information. In the focus group discussions, however, it was not possible to guarantee the confidentiality of the respondents due to the involvement of other respondents. For this paper however, the participants on the grassroots have been coded into the same reference in order to protect their anonymity. The key respondents however, have given their permission for this paper to use their name and position in regards to their interviews.

Before the interviews on the grassroots begun, the purpose and potential impact of the study on the respondents was presented and clarified to the respondents. It was also deemed crucial to show respect and gratitude for the time the participants spent on assisting the research. Therefore, a farewell lunch before leaving the village was arranged for those who were interested, where the importance of their contribution was again clarified and an opportunity was given for raising questions or concerns.
Analytical framework

This chapter will begin with a more detailed description of the chosen theory of hegemonic masculinities by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). The study will use this theory as a lens to interpret the findings from the data-collection. Moreover, an overview of the existing literature on the subject will follow the description of the theory in order to give a better picture of the context in which the current study will fit in.

Hegemonic masculinities

The core idea of this theory is that a plurality of masculinities exists and also a hierarchy in-between them (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). One is labelled "hegemonic", and this refers to the most socially admired features of a man, in other words explained as the “ideal man”. The features of the hegemonic masculinity thus vary depending on the context. This socially dominant masculinity is upheld by a pattern of hegemonies which deeply relies on cultural consent and the de-legitimization of alternative ways of being. It should not be seen as the most common pattern of behaviour, but rather a guiding one that not many will be able to live up to. The theory suggests that this perception of the ideal masculinity guides the actions of men in that setting. For example, if the hegemonic masculinity puts emphasis on women's subordination to men, male actions to support that notion will follow. The theory further argues that what characterises gender relations in a certain setting can change over time, and may thus redefine the socially admired masculinity (ibid). The below sections describe the main features of the theory.

Gender Hierarchy

The theory suggests a complex hierarchal order both in-between the different masculinities as well as between the genders. When a new type of ideal confronts the traditional hegemonic masculinity they call this a protest masculinity, which is one of the ways in which the hegemonic masculinity can change. Further, when examining the nature of the hegemonic masculinity and how it can change, it is also important to include notions of femininity since the perception of gender always is relational. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) put it: “Patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (real or imaginary) of
The authors emphasise the need to pay close attention to the practices of women and the interplay between femininities and masculinities (ibid).

**Geography of Masculinities**

Hegemonic masculinities are analysed on three different geographical levels: Local, regional and global (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 849). On a local level the construction takes place face to face within families, communities and organisations. On a regional level the construction of ideals is analysed from a cultural or national perspective. On the global level, analysing is done from the perspective of world politics and transnational businesses. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 849) argue that the way in which these levels are linked is of great importance for gender politics, therefore they advise researchers to distinguish between these levels when analysing hegemonic masculinities in order to recognize both the importance of location and the fact that these levels influence each other. They stress that the world is not made up by independent entities (ibid). In the current study, the biggest focus will be on a local level, by focusing on family relations, but also the connection to the regional level will be touched upon when opinions from the grassroots are compared to those of national ministries and NGO’s. The role of donors in this context will further provide some space for the global level to be taken into consideration.

**Social Embodiment**

The theory further suggests that masculinity is strongly connected to bodily practices, such as sports and physical labour. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 851) argue that bodies play an important part of social processes, and therefore the embodiment of masculinity should be more thoroughly examined. They go as far as claiming that “the body is a participant in generating social practice”, indicating that physical attributes will influence the gender roles (ibid).

**Dynamics of Masculinity**

Lastly, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 852) point out the often complicated and contradictory nature of masculinities. They describe hegemonic masculinities as often being characterised by “internal division and emotional conflict”. For example, changing gender roles might be perceived to have both positive and negative consequences, causing ambivalence,
which could lead to that the same men being both acceptant and reluctant towards that change (ibid).

Literature review

This chapter will outline the existing literature on the topic. It will begin with a brief discussion on social change and continue with East African examples of male perspectives on gender equality.

Ibhawoh (Ibhawoh, 2000), has examined the relationship between culture and the presumed universalism of human rights in Africa. He suggests a shift in focus from identifying cultural barriers, to instead have a more solution-oriented approach which does not undermine the local context. He promotes greater integration between cultural traditions and national legislation, and also stress that cultural attitudes are changing, and hence can be utilized in the promotion of human rights (Ibhawoh, 2000, p. 856).

Vorhölter (2012) is also looking at the process of social change, with a focus on northern Uganda. Her study aims to map out the opinions of “ordinary people” since these often differs from development actors or African elites and scholars, and should therefore not be neglected in the discourse (Vorhölter, 2012, p. 305). She finds, in line with Ibhawoh’s (2000) argumentation, that the respondents often have a pragmatic mind-set towards “western concepts”, and neither blindly adopt what is being introduced to them, nor principally refuse suggestions of change (Vorhölter, 2012, p. 304).

One study regarding the social construction of male and female identities has been conducted by Silberschmidt (2001) in urban Tanzania and rural Kenya. The connection between social value and gender relations is central in her study. She describes a situation in Kenya and Tanzania where the socio-economic changes have left many families in economic hardship. Men carry the expectation of being the provider, yet more and more men are failing to live up to these expectations, leaving them with a feeling of disempowerment. This has led to an extension of the female role, where they to some extent take over some of the tasks that originally were expected to be done by the men. Silberschmidt (2001) explain that many have highlighted the struggle of women in these situations and the double burden that is now put on
them, but in her study, focus is placed on the male disempowerment. What she finds is that men seldom seem to appreciate the help from women, instead many feel threatened in their masculine identity and tend to protect their self-esteem with destructive methods such as alcoholism or domestic violence (ibid).

Further, Wyrod (2008) has conducted a study in urban Uganda regarding gender equality and human rights, especially women’s rights, from a masculinity approach. He argues that gender relations in urban Uganda are going through a change that seems to be more inclusive of women’s rights while still holding on to the idea of male authority. Through the lens of hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), he assesses the local attitudes regarding women’s rights and gender equality. In his findings, three types of responses became visible: the reactionary, the mainstream and the transgressive. In the reactionary responses he draws the connection to the already established hegemonic masculinity, and a resistance towards change (Wyrod, 2008, p. 809). These are typically referring to the “natural” division between men and women, and also to the responsibilities of the man that puts him higher (ibid). Wyrod (2008, p. 809) finds that these respondents also express a sense of disempowerment derived from the focus the government has put on empowering women. The mainstream responses incorporate some notions of women’s rights together with the male ideal of the provider. They typically see men and women as equal only in some aspects. For example, the man is fundamentally higher, but they are now doing the same jobs, and that could be good for development. They recognize the intellectual mind of a woman and see capacity in her. Transgressive responses “challenge the hegemonic masculinity” by reflecting a view that men’s roles are changing in a way which to a further extent allows for gender equality (ibid). Wyrod (2008) found very few who stated that men and women are and should be equal. In this category he placed opinions that men doing typical female tasks could be acceptable, something very few agreed with (Wyrod, 2008, p. 816). His findings further suggest that gender equity has been progressive in Uganda when it comes to political participation, but very limited within the home (Wyrod, 2008, p. 819). He concludes with suggesting that the urban setting might have played an important part to his findings (ibid).

Mullinax et al. (2013) did a recent study in rural south-west Uganda where they asked men and women how they understood equality. They found that most answers were connected to the changing roles and division of household labour. Most men supported clear division of roles. Both men and women suggested that gender equality leads to arguments over responsibilities
and loss of respect between the spouses, when both seek to be independent from each other. The possibility of discussion and cooperation on equal terms was not mentioned. Further, many participants expressed concerns that gender equality ultimately would lead to infidelity and abandonment (ibid).

To conclude, in this research the analytical frame will be grounded in Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) understanding of hegemonic masculinities. Wyrod’s (2008) urban findings regarding changing masculinities in Uganda will be compared to the rural findings of this study since they have been analysed with the same theory. Silberschmidt’s (2001) argument of negative consequences of women empowerment will be taken into consideration when formulating themes for discussion, as well as Mullinax et al’s (2013) findings of local perceptions of gender equality. With regards to the above overlook of previous research on gender equality in East Africa and the theory of hegemonic masculinities, this study will fill the gap of a male perspective on gender equality and its consequences on a household level in a rural setting.
Methodological framework

This chapter will outline the methodological approach of the study and explain in detail how the data collection was conducted, followed by a critical analysis of the sources.

Methods for data collection

This study is of an abductive type (Danermark, et al., 2003, pp. 181-190) as the data produced throughout the interviews have been analysed through the concept of hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The methods used for data collection have been focus group discussions and individual interviews. The idea behind focus groups is to let respondents similar to each other discuss a certain topic under guidance of the interviewer (Esaiasson, et al., 2012, p. 318). This diminish the influence of the interviewers upon the respondents. Furthermore, focus groups can offer a situation where the respondents encourage each other to speak about certain topics which might have been difficult for an individual to talk about alone in an interview (Esaiasson, et al., 2012, pp. 319-320). Individual interviews, on the other hand, have the advantage of providing a situation for the respondent to speak without influence from other respondents, as may not be the case when interviews are conducted in groups (Esaiasson, et al., 2012, p. 254). The focus group discussions were conducted first, in order to map out common opinions and letting those responses guide the design of the individual interview questions. In order to best achieve in-depth understanding of the respondents’ perceptions in both types of interviews, the interviews followed a semi-structure and consisted mainly of open-ended questions.

When selecting participants, the thrive was to have a diversity regarding economic status, marital status and age. The selection process was done with help of a local research assistant with good knowledge of the people living in the area. The respondents were from two villages in Nyaratungi parish in south-west Uganda. Most people in this area were Protestant Christians, and hence, so was the majority of the respondents. In total, three focus group discussions were carried out with 13 participants. Individual interviews were conducted with 12 of the focus group members and four men who had not participated in the focus groups.
In addition to this, four suitable key respondents were identified. First, since many of the respondents were Protestant Christians and some of their statements were justified from a religious point of view, the church overseer of the parish was interviewed to give the perspective of the local churches. One of his duties is to consult families in the village. Second, in order to see more of what values the future generations are exposed to in regards to these concepts, the head teacher at Nyaratungi Primary School was interviewed, as he stands in close contact to many children in the village as well as their families. Third, an interview was conducted with the Principal Gender Officer at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Affairs (from now on referred to as “Ministry of Gender”), to gain insight on how the government work with these concepts. The final key informant, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), was chosen because of their network affiliation with other NGO's around Uganda with a focus on gender equality-concerns, and one of their program coordinators was interviewed. All in all, 20 individual interviews were conducted as well as three focus group discussions, making a total of 23 interviews.

Critical analysis of the sources

This section will go through the strategies used to validate the information acquired in the study, followed by limitations caused by language barriers and different cultural understandings.

Validation strategies

According to Creswell (2013, pp. 249-253) multiple validation strategies strengthens the reliability and accuracy of the findings. The first strategy used in this study is prolonged engagement and persistent observation. It concerns the researchers' behaviour in the field, for example by building trust with the participants of the study, learning the culture and verifying the information from the respondents to avoid misinterpretations (ibid). This strategy was taken into consideration already in the beginning of the field work when the researchers spent much time in the rural area interacting with the chosen respondents and also learnt some of their local language as well as local customs. Moreover, the choice to have the same participants in both types of interview was also considered to benefit the study in this sense as potential confusions regarding former replies or opinions could be clarified or further explained.

A second strategy called triangulation (Creswell, 2013, pp. 249-253), was also applied to the study where the aim is to have different types of sources confirming a finding in order to
increase the validity. Hence, two local key respondents were chosen in order to see how some influential characters of the village positioned themselves regarding these topics. Furthermore, to put these findings into a wider perspective, two key informants on national level were interviewed.

**Limitations and consequences**

This section will outline the perceived limitations which arose during the conduct of the study. First, an important limitation in this study was the researchers’ lack of the local language. This led to a dependency of a translator when interacting with people and conducting interviews in the rural area where most people spoke very little English or none at all. The research assistant chosen for this matter was deemed suitable due to of his great knowledge of, and social network in, that area. A second translator, with more advanced English skills, was later hired in order to reduce the dependency on the research assistant. The second translator listened to the recorded interviews and translated them again.

Moreover, in terms of the researchers' communication with the research assistant, there are some differences in how English words were used which clearly marked the cultural differences. These were later clarified by the second translator. For example, the term “domestic violence” seemed to be mentioned quite frequently by the respondents. This was first interpreted as some kind of physical abuse. However, when translating words from the local language, the research assistant also included arguments, quarrelling and disturbing in the home into that translation. The second translator was able to explain where the different words had been used to avoid an overuse of the term domestic violence. Another word with an additional meaning was the term “prostitution”, meaning not only someone selling sex but also applied to adultery or generally seeing other men or women if you are married. Further, the expression of “mutual respect” may sound quite equal. In this context however, it became clear that the woman shows the man respect by recognizing that he is higher, and the man shows the woman respect in turn by listening and discussing with her. These dynamics were important to understand in order to conduct a valid analysis.

In addition to these limitations, the interview questions were on two occasions incorrectly translated to the respondents due to language barriers with the research assistant. In one case he misinterpreted one of the questions to mean "What does the husband think?", when the intended question was "What do people think of the husband?". Since this was not realised until after all
of the interviews had been conducted and the second translator pointed it out, one valuable question was lost. The other instance when this occurred was when the research assistant changed one question regarding the underlying reason for a problem to instead ask for the solutions to that problem. These two incidents somewhat affected the findings, but as a result of other similar questions and probing by the researchers, the analysis could still be conducted as planned.

Finally, when selecting participants, the aim was to have a diversity of the respondents regarding economic status, marital status, age and religion. However, the study was somewhat limited to the fact that most respondents were Protestant Christians. The research would have benefited from a greater diversity regarding religious orientations, as well as having more respondents in general. This would have made it possible to also draw conclusions regarding the respondents’ different backgrounds and characteristics.
Findings

This chapter will consist of four sections. The first section gives a brief background on gender equality in Uganda. The following three sections will present the core findings of the data collection, in connection to the research questions outlined above. These chapters will examine the expectations put on men and women, the participants' view of gender equality and how women empowerment may impact gender relations in the family.

The three sections connected to the research questions are divided into findings from focus group discussions and individual interviews and complemented by views from key respondents. The focus groups offer an insight to general opinions in the village, and the individual interviews are more personalized.

Background on Gender Equality in Uganda

This section aims to give a brief overview of Uganda's efforts to reach gender equality and outline the challenges persisting today. The information is mainly collected from official webpages as well as interviews with the Ministry of Gender and UWONET.

During an interview with a Principal Gender Officer at the Ministry of Gender (KeyRespondent3, 2015), she was asked to explain what the government of Uganda is doing in order to fulfil their commitment to enact CEDAW. In Uganda, there is a broad legislative framework to ensure women’s rights and equal participation, and the Ministry of Gender is assigned to supervise the districts and provide them with guidelines on how to establish gender equality. However, there is a big challenge in terms of funding, and she explains that most of their work is financed by external donors. When asked if not the Government support them as well, her reply was that the government “is committed in words” (KeyRespondent3, 2015).

Further, the Ministry of Gender often make an effort to evaluate the situation regarding gender equality in different sectors. However, she explains that it is difficult to find information regarding gender equality in the families, since most people seem to think that this is a personal issue which should not be discussed outside of the home. Further, she admitted that the Ministry of Gender only have limited knowledge of the opinions on the grassroots, since their main work is on district and national levels (ibid). As indicated from, among others, Ahikire et al. (2015), Uganda still has a long way to go in regards to gender based violence and respect for women’s rights. The Principal Gender Officer suggested that teaching gender awareness at primary level
could solve many problems in the future. The primary school curriculum already includes guidelines in regards to gender equality, but the Ministry have little control over the actual implementation in schools (KeyRespondent3, 2015).

An interview was also conducted with a program coordinator at UWONET (KeyRespondent4, 2015). According to her, there are two main challenges in regards to Uganda reaching gender equality. First, the implementation of policies and laws are not effective, mainly because of government budget constraints. Second, people's attitudes often stand in the way due to how they value women and how the concept of gender equality often is misinterpreted as a power struggle. When asked how they are working to minimize the challenge if the attitudes, she explained that UWONET is working to sensitize people and engage them in dialogues. One approach is to train local leaders in the communities to spread awareness about gender equality issues, since people tend to listen more to their local leaders. She explained that it is much due to the lack of knowledge in this regard which continue to make the man insist on being higher in a household (ibid).

Male and female ideals

The findings from the focus groups and individual interviews will be presented here in order to understand the expectations that are put on men and women in rural Uganda today. Both actual and ideal gender roles have been considered.

The Focus Groups

The focus group discussions started with a discussion about gender roles and the different expectations and responsibilities put on men and women. They also talked about how men and women learn their respective roles, and how these roles are currently changing.

Role of Men

Regarding the role of the man, participants from all focus groups explained that the man should be the leader and the head of the family (FocusGroups, 2015). His main responsibilities are to construct a house, look after and plan for the family, send his children to school and provide for their basic needs such as food, clothes and medical care. In addition to this, Group 2 saw it as the man’s responsibility to have a wife and family. Moreover, he should be able to "get his wife
pregnant". Group 3 also agreed that the man should find wife (or “helper” as they described her), but stated that whether they have children or not is up to God, not the man. Group 3 was also the only group to explicitly talk about the need for the man to be attentive to his wife and make sure she is happy. Group 1 and 2 explained that the man has the right to be respected and not diminished, or questioned, for example, regarding his whereabouts. Group 2 said that the man should be free to come and go as he pleases, and Group 3 also added that he should be free to work with whatever he wants, as long as he provides for the family (ibid).

Group 2 and 3 expressed that it is difficult to finance all the above named responsibilities, and Group 1 pointed out that it is mostly difficult in case you have a low income. The opinions of a man who fails to fulfil his responsibilities varied. In Group 1 they suggested that either he is lazy or he is irresponsible, or he is not aware of his responsibilities because he is ignorant or not educated. They insisted that "if a man has a job and is earning, he will succeed". Group 2 also suggested that it can be because of laziness, but it can also be that he does not have a job, which is a common problem. Group 3 discussed the notion that for some people it does not matter how hard they try, "sometimes things still just doesn't work out" (FocusGroups, 2015).

All three groups agreed that bad behaviour in a man is drinking, and Group 1 and 3 suggested that alcoholism can cause other bad actions. Other examples of misconduct are to disturb, abuse or disrespect the wife (Group 1 and 2), being unfaithful or criminal (Group 2 and 3), and also smoking and gambling (FocusGroups, 2015).

Regarding their opinions about men doing typically female tasks, there were often different opinions within the groups. In Group 1 and 2 some argued that when a man does a female task he is "ridiculous" or "crazy" and "not acting like a man". In Group 1 and 3 some also suggested that this implies that the woman is failing in her task, and hence mistreating the man. Other participants in all three groups also expressed the possibility that he was being helpful, maybe the woman is sick, or they love each other and cooperate. In Group 3, some suggested that when the woman cooks the man can help her fetch the water (FocusGroups, 2015). Another respondent stressed that,

There is no role for women specifically, she is a helper. Hands wash each other, so it's no harm in helping each other. This leads to development. I wouldn’t leave all the work for her, it's not fair to separate without helping (Group 3).
Role of Women

In terms of female ideals, all groups explained that the woman should do the house chores like cooking, washing and cleaning, looking after the children and dig in the garden. Group 2 and 3 also mentioned that she should love her husband, cooperate with him and "make him happy". Additionally, Group 3 emphasised the importance that she is hospitable and welcoming towards guests. Group 1 and 2 agreed that a woman has the right to be respected, “because she is mature enough to make a decision”. Hence, she should be involved in the decision making in the home. She should also be “free to do whatever she wants”. However, when asked if this means she can also come and go as she pleases like the man can, they all strongly disagree (FocusGroups, 2015).

Group 1 and 3 pointed out that the woman has the right to be given what she needs from her husband, for example food and money when he is away, so that she can take care of the home. In case this is not done, they admitted that it can be difficult for a woman to fulfil her role. In their view she would not fail in her task if the man is doing his part. However, Group 1 also said that a woman who does not do what she is supposed to do is “lazy”. Regarding bad behaviour in a woman, all three groups agreed that she should not be drunk. Other bad behaviours mentioned were prostitution, spreading rumours, dressing inappropriately, and failing to respect her husband (FocusGroups, 2015).

All three groups further agreed that it is okay, or at times even admirable, for a woman to do a male task, in case the man for some reason is not present. Some suggest that if a woman does a male task it is a sign that the man has failed or is being irresponsible, but others also mentioned it can be good for family development (FocusGroups, 2015).

Changing Gender Roles

Participants from all focus groups explained that men and women learn their roles as they grow up from, for example, from the parents or the schools. Some also suggested that these roles are a natural consequence of men’s and women’s physique, since" naturally, the woman is feminine and weak and the man is strong. By this creation is the division of labour, simple tasks for women and harder tasks for men” (FocusGroups, 2015).

Despite this “natural” division, all three groups also agreed that the roles for men and women are changing. All groups agreed that the women can now do more than before, for example
make decision, have a job, make bricks, or drive a car. They further agreed that this change is for the better because it reduces the man's load when he does not have to do everything.

The Individual Interviews

This chapter will attempt to outline the situation in the respondents' families.

Most respondents explained that they help each other with the responsibilities in their families. Many women can now help their husbands with most of their tasks. The men mostly help their wives by fetching water or collecting fire wood. Only a few said that they divide their tasks strictly according to their roles, a few others suggested that they could help their wives with domestic chores to some minor extent. Most men did not see helping each other as something new, and many explained that also their parents used to help each other. The majority of the men agreed that the responsibilities put on them are reasonable to fulfil, the most common explanation was that “this is the way it should be” (IndividualInterviews, 2015).

When asked individually about their opinions of a man doing a typically female task, about half suggested that it could be acceptable if there was no woman around. The rest were either positive or negative towards the phenomenon. Considering the information given that women can now do more than before, the respondents were also asked if they thought men would do more tasks in the future as well, for example cooking, cleaning or washing. Many men strongly disagreed and thought that things would not change while others were unsure. Regarding women doing male tasks, many men saw it as something positive, explaining that she is probably helping the man. Some men said it could also be a sign that the man is failing, but others said that it can be acceptable if the man is not around (IndividualInterviews, 2015).

Local Key Respondents

The reverend explained that the division of tasks is something that comes from culture. He states that it is "disturbing" and that they are advising people in the churches to leave such practices. He further explained that even though there has not been much change in the roles of men and women yet, he believes that will change with the coming generation as they have learned to be equal and because the old culture of tribes and male-dominance is waning (KeyRespondent1, 2015).
Also the head teacher stated that men and women are equal, he generally found no female task that cannot also be done by men. In the other direction however, he went on to point out that there are some heavier tasks that women cannot do (KeyRespondent2, 2015). In his words,

In our community for example, women are not the ones to fell down trees. Even digging big latrines, women cannot go deep down there to dig so it is the men’s work. Even lifting heavy objects women are not able to do such work. We know, but the rest of the work, they can do it without problem (ibid). "

He continued with expressing deep concern when discussing women doing male tasks. He drew the conclusion that in those cases the man might be irresponsible and goes to drink instead of providing for his family, leaving the woman to do all chores for the family. He explained that such instances are getting more and more common, and continued to give an example from his school where many children now register their mother instead of their father as she is the one responsible. On the other hand, he pointed out that when he sees a man doing typically female tasks, he views that as cooperation in the family and a man who is being responsible (KeyRespondent2, 2015).

National Key Respondents

Regarding gender roles, and the culture that promotes men being the head of families, the Principal Gender Officer confirmed that these practises are very widespread in Uganda. She explained they have to work carefully in promoting new roles and ideas, and that they prefer being persuasive rather than forcing (KeyRespondent3, 2015). In her words,

Attitudes are attitudes, we just tell them what we think and what to do, that is educate and equip skills, so that they can be independent ... We don't really tell them ‘you are not supposed to do this’. That is not our approach. Only regarding serious things such as FGM (female genital mutilation), because that one has been proved to be dangerous. But this other thing is an attitude which we are working with, together with the culture department, on how to change. Through awareness, not force (ibid).

In addition to that, the program coordinator from UWONET also confirmed that the widespread culture in Uganda is to have the man as the head of the family. She stated however, that this is not a problem as long as there is equality between them. She stressed that men and women should have equally valued voices in terms of discussions and decision making (KeyRespondent4, 2015).
Perceptions of Gender Equality
This chapter will outline the main ideas regarding gender equality in a family context.

The Focus Groups

The participants were asked to explain what gender equality is and where it is coming from. This was done in order to see if the perceptions of gender equality differ from the UN definition of gender equality, and to understand how they position themselves in this regard.

Group 1 and 2 suggested that gender equality could be described as cooperation. Other descriptions were connected to both men and women contributing financially, being considerate, or “when the woman can do whatever a man does” (FocusGroups, 2015). In Group 3, gender equality was viewed more negatively. In their view gender equality is not right, because men are higher in status. This was justified by their different roles and physique (ibid).

When asked where gender equality is coming from, the reply from Group 1 was that it comes from the man and woman sitting together and discussing. Group 2 suggested that gender equality is coming from the government or organizations (FocusGroups, 2015).

In Group 1, all agreed that men and women were equal. In Group 2, most men immediately said no and explained this with thoughts about men's mental and physical superiority over women. In Group 3, all men except one said that men and women are not equal because of "the way we are created" (FocusGroups, 2015). Group 1 and 3 further agreed that there are now some signs of gender equality in their village and in their families. According to group 3, some tasks that were previously male-dominated can now sometimes be done even better by the women. Group 2 however, did not see gender equality in their village or their families. In all groups, gender equality was mostly explained as something good and desirable to have in the village, because it could lead to development and cooperation in the family, even though some people did not agree. In Group 3, for example, it was pointed out that gender equality was only good if the man was not around to do his tasks, in which case the woman must be able to do it (ibid).

After hearing their own explanations of gender equality, the UN's definition (see page) was presented. In group 1 and 2, the respondents were divided in their opinions. For example, some believed that this way it would lead to development and ease the pressure on the man. Others were afraid that the woman would stop respecting the man if they were equal. One man concludes that even though the UN definition is indeed good, they have not managed to bring about enough awareness to the grassroots and he suggested that there is a need for more civic
education to rectify that. In Group 3, the UN definition also seemed to be generally accepted after some contemplation (FocusGroups, 2015). As one man said,

If you think about it, it is true. If you were to realize that many women plan for their homes better than men. For example, in a home, a woman can know what is necessary in the house and what a house need to contain like cups, carpets, furniture and utensils. Men just construct the house but then the issues in the family are mainly addressed by women (ibid).

In Group 1 and 2, most respondents further agreed that men and women should share the same rights. However, everyone in Group 3 disagreed with that statement. One man explained it like this, "No. Because a shoulder and a head can never be equal. The shoulder always has to respect that the head is higher". Further, all respondents saw it as impossible for men and women to share the same status in a household. They explained this by pointing at the man’s position as head of the family and his many responsibilities, as one man put it "it is always up to me to care for the family and provide, and this responsibility makes it impossible for me to be on the same level as the woman". Because of this administrative position of the man, it was also suggested that he must be obeyed by the other members of the household (FocusGroups, 2015).

**Individual Interviews**

During the individual interviews, the respondents were again asked questions about gender equality. Based on the common notion gained from the focus group discussions that "gender equality is good as long as the woman respects that the man is higher", the respondents were asked about their opinion in regards to that statement. All respondents agreed to that statement (IndividualInterviews, 2015). There was heavy emphasis put on the woman respecting the man, and the man also respecting the woman in return. When asking some respondents how they can respect each other, they explained that the man respects the woman by listening to her, and the woman respects the man by acknowledging that he is the head. When the respondents were asked for what reason the man had to be higher, they gave various explanations. Some explanations were religious, others explained it from cultural contexts where the man "is the one to go and pick a wife" to bring to his home and his properties as a part of his household. Some also pointed out that the responsibilities put on the man to provide for his family is what makes him the head of the household (ibid).
When probed further as to how a man and a woman can be equal if the man is higher, about half of the respondents said that it is because of the cooperation within the family. The other respondents were either unsure or replied that men and women are not equal. The respondents were then asked if they believed men and women would share the same status in the future. Most men argued that nothing would change and that the men would always be higher. Some men however, said that men and women might have the same status in the future due to, for example, education of the children (Individual Interviews, 2015).

Local Key Respondents

The Reverend explained gender equality as a man and woman consulting each other and sharing ideas in a marriage. In his view, men and women are equal and should share the same rights (Key Respondent 1, 2015). Regarding women empowerment, he says,

...there is no problem with that. We need to even put more effort into it ... God created us so that we are equal. Women can think, women can reason. Women can do all that all that. So we need to teach all people, even my children ... It is not like the boy must dig and the girl must cook. No, they work together. They share together (ibid).

When being questioned as to why some of the respondents referred to the Bible when they argued that the man should have a higher status than a woman, he explained that people are misinterpreting the Bible's words because of the involvement of cultural practices. But according to the Bible, people are equal (Key Respondent 1, 2015).

When the head teacher explained his view of gender equality he stated that the boys and girls are not taught by the school to do different tasks and that they are encouraged to respect each other. He sees men and women as equals, and referred to the Bible to support this claim. To spread awareness of that, he suggested that education is the key, since “the illiterate class” often separate between men and women (Key Respondent 2, 2015).

National Key Respondents

When asked about the concepts of gender equality and women empowerment, the Principal Gender Officer referred to the WID-approach for women empowerment and GAD-approach for gender equality. Women empowerment is seen as a way to reach gender equality (Key Respondent 3, 2015). For UWONET, gender equality means equal opportunities, equal voice and equal participation for women and men (Key Respondent 4, 2015).
Gender relations in the household

The last research question regarded the potential hierarchy of masculinities which influences male behaviour in accordance with the theory by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). The respondents have been asked questions in order to see how they think about different types of behaviours outside of the norm and how that influences the gender relations.

The Focus Groups

The respondents were asked to explain what they thought would happen in the family if women were to be empowered so that they reach the same status as the men. All groups expressed concern that this would lead to fighting, disagreements, confusion and later separation in the family because both the man and the woman would want to make decisions in the home. Some suggested that women empowerment can be good if the man and woman still perform their respective roles, and if a woman still asks for the man's consent before she is about to do something. For example, if the woman would start giving a man orders it would look bad from the outside. It was also suggested that “when a woman becomes disrespectful, the man will respond by acting badly and she will eventually want to leave”. Most agreed that when a woman becomes a widow or after a divorce she can be the head of a household, or sometimes when the man is very sick or away (FocusGroups, 2015).

The respondents were also asked if the man and woman could share the same roles or if they had to be separate. Group 1 and 2 felt that there should be separate roles for men and women. In Group 3, however, it was stated that there should not be division of labour between the man and the woman. One man explains, "A woman and a man should be working together. If it is digging let both of them dig. If it is weeding let them both do it". There was no mention of domestic tasks however (FocusGroups, 2015).

The Individual Interviews

A few questions were asked to the respondents in order to see how they personally felt about decision-making in the home.
When asking specifically if there were any decisions that the man can make on his own, many men clarified again that such a thing would be wrong, and that men should always discuss with their wives. Some men, however, could see that there are decisions a man can make without consulting his wife, for example general rules of the home. Most men told us that the bigger questions like how to develop the family or the children's education are the most important ones to discuss about. When asked if there are any decisions a woman can make on her own, almost all respondents replied that she always had to discuss with the man first.

The respondents were also asked questions regarding who would control what the money is spent on if it is the woman who is earning it. There were three equally common replies. The first reply stated that it would be her decision, the second reply stated that it would be the man's decision and the third suggested that the man and woman would have to discuss together (IndividualInterviews, 2015).

The majority of the respondents agree that adultery, alcoholism, gambling and domestic violence are common problems in the village. Common responses to the reason for these problems were that the man is ignorant, he may abuse his freedom as a man, have a bad personality, come from a bad upbringing or suffer from negative influence from friends. Some also explained further that men may turn to such actions if they are unhappy, perhaps due to family problems or poverty (IndividualInterviews, 2015).

Due to the previously expressed negative opinions of women empowerment, the respondents were also asked to explain what they felt the biggest problem with it was, and how they felt it could be solved. Many respondents had the perception that there would be many arguments in that case, as women would stop respecting their husbands once they are empowered and try to "take over the home" (IndividualInterviews, 2015). One man expressed his concern like this,

If she earns more than me I cannot control her. The woman thinks that 'because I have a lot of money, I'm the one who brings the money to the family and I am on top', which is not in order (ibid).

Other concerns regarded scenarios where the woman would no longer need the man which could lead to separation, or she could report her husband to the authorities after a "violent fight". When discussing solutions, some men pointed out that the men should stop with some bad actions which makes women wanting to leave, like drinking or seeing other women. Others suggested that women should learn to still respect their husbands even after being empowered, so that they do not divorce them (IndividualInterviews, 2015).
Lastly, the respondents were asked to state the most important aspects in a marriage. The most common responses revolved around having enough necessities in the home, being able to put the children in school, to cooperate and discuss, and to have mutual respect (Individual Interviews, 2015).

**Local Key Respondents**

According to the reverend, women empowerment can lead to development in the whole village. However, he agreed that he has seen cases of women empowerment with bad consequences and that he offer council sessions for those cases but divorces are still a common. He explained that it is due to the cultural notion of the man as the head of a family which makes gender equality difficult to accept for some people (KeyRespondent1, 2015).

Similar to the reverend, the head teacher also stated that families are developing when women are empowered. He added that it is also good because the women can then alone provide for the children if necessary. However, in addition to this he admitted to have seen some cases of women empowerment leading to fighting and divorce. He explained that the problems arise when the woman "stop seeing herself as a woman and instead capable like a man". This leads to quarrels over authority in the family. But as long as she remembers her "responsibility as a woman", divorce will be avoided. Such responsibilities include working and caring for the family members, being hospitable towards visitors and not leaving all the work to the man or hired workers. If she is also earning money then that is a good thing (KeyRespondent2, 2015). He concluded that there is no problem for them to share the same status in the household, but only he can be referred to as the head of the household,

Even when we go back to the Bible it says that all of the time the woman will keep knowing that the husband is there as the head of the family. So there is where the woman should not go beyond. She will keep in the same line, but should not go beyond the man. See can be empowered, knowing her responsibilities, respecting her husband, don’t look at him as if he is useless, look at him as the husband. Even if you are being empowered more than him, he is the man (ibid).
National Key Respondents

The program coordinator from UWONET explained how many men see women empowerment as a power struggle and therefore a threat (KeyRespondent4, 2015). She gave an example of one such scenario,

If we empower women economically, they will be able to have money that they have not been having. Then they are not going to continue begging for money from their husbands, they (the men) will see that as a threat already. And it will be another cause for gender based violence in the household setting. So women empowerment is still viewed negatively. We are always accused of spoiling women (ibid).

She explained that negative consequences to women empowerment on the grassroots can be common in places where they had not been engaging with for very long or where the intervention is weak, but the problems are diminishing when men understands the actual meaning of the concepts (KeyRespondent4, 2015).
Analysis

This chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will outline an analysis of the findings guided by the theory of hegemonic masculinities by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). The four main features of the theory will be taken into consideration under four different sub-sections. In addition, there will be an analysis of this study’s similarities and differences in regards to previous research, in order to respond to the research problem formulated in the beginning. Lastly, since the analytical frame has played an important role in this research, a short analysis of its utility will also be conducted.

Due to the intertwining nature of the theory, many aspects of the findings tend to be looked at in different angles.

Hegemonic masculinities in rural Uganda

In this section, the findings from the focus groups, the individual interviews and key informants will be analysed in regards to the four main features of the theory of hegemonic masculinities. First, the hierarchy between men and between the genders will be explored in relation to changing masculinities. This is followed by mapping out the different levels on which masculine ideals are constructed. Third, the social embodiment of masculinities will be explored in relation to the findings. Lastly, there will be analysis of the inner dimensions of the hegemonic masculinities, and what this research found in regards to this.

Gender Hierarchy

According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848), the nature of gender hierarchy is very complex, and heavily influenced by how different types of ideals are interacting with each other. This interaction could be observed in this research, for example when the men discussed changing gender roles. It was further possible to recognize hierarchical masculinities in the light of how the men judged each other according to their behaviour.

For example, most men suggested that if a man fails to perform his role, he must have some negative traits like being ignorant, lazy or irresponsible. One group stressed that as long as the man was working, he would succeed to perform all of his duties. These opinions indicate that a man who does not perform sufficiently in regards to his responsibilities do so because of poor characteristics. This makes him belong to a masculinity which is looked down upon, and
therefore has a low status in the hierarchy of masculinities. Further, the respondents in the focus groups pointed out that it could be difficult for a man to perform this role without help. When asked individually in a direct personal manner however, no man admitted that he had unreasonable demands put on him to accomplish. In a general view, it was easier for the respondents to express difficulties with the role, but not on a personal level. This indicates that such a masculine identity is positioned lower in the hierarchy, since the respondents did not want to identify themselves with it.

When further elaborating acceptable behaviour for men, it became clear that if a man does typically female tasks some will think he is ridiculous or not acting like a man. When discussing a woman doing a male task, however, it was generally viewed more positive. The contradicting statements of a role that seem to be difficult to perform, and a masculine hierarchy that does not allow men to fail in that role can serve as an incentive for the general approval of women doing male tasks. Since the woman is considered to only be assisting the man when he performs that role, he can accept that help while also avoiding a low status in the hierarchy. As long as the men succeed in their role, their masculine behaviour is viewed favourably.

In relation to this, when the respondents were asked to explain their opinions about a woman who fails in her task, the focus again turned back to the man. This helps to confirm the correlation between masculine hierarchies and female practices, which is outlined in the theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848). First, it is agreed that if a woman is failing to perform her role, it may be due to the man not doing his part in providing for her. Since it is then further elaborated that the woman can be regarded as failing if she disrespects the man by not obeying him, one could draw the conclusion that this also reflects badly on the man. These opinions indicate that the actions of a woman are also regarded in the context of the man rather than just the woman herself, in the context that he is the one responsible for the family. A conclusion can therefore be drawn that there is a hegemonic masculinity which put emphasis on the man being the person responsible for the household, consequently does the actions of his wife reflect back on to him in regards to the status of his masculinity.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) explain that the hierarchy between men and women also can guide the male ideal. In this study for example, most participants agreed that women should respect the men and not underestimate them and all agreed that the man has a natural position above the woman in the hierarchy. This can be connected to a male ideal of being the
leader and in control. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) further argue that the male role is also defined in relation to the female role, and hence, changing female roles can change the male ideals. For example, in this research the respondents mostly pointed out what had changed in the female role when asked about if the male role was changing. This reflects the assumption that female behaviour is having an impact on male behaviour, for example through the explanation that “the fact that women can now do more than before eases the burden for men”. The confusion becomes evident when the change in the female role is acceptable but there is no change in the male role. When this happens the gender relations are affected in a way that is new and unknown to the men. Therefore, since the consequences of such a change are uncertain or considered to be negative, it is mostly considered to be desirable to keep the existing power-relations where the man is higher. In this research, even if there are signs of change which is closing the gap between men and women, few men could imagine a woman being higher in status than a man.

Lastly, it was somewhat difficult do see a clear “protest masculinity” among the respondents. However, the two key respondents in the village portrayed a quite different view of the ideal masculine behaviour compared to the others. For example, they did not see a problem with a man doing domestic work such as cooking or washing, in order to help the woman. Considering the influential character of these two persons, it could be assumed that the current hegemonic masculinity is actually being challenged, and have the possibility to change in the future, even though not many men saw this as likely today. Further, even among the other respondents, there was a general view that some change had already occurred, for example the fact that men are no longer expected to make all decisions by themselves, rather they should discuss with the woman. However, the male ideal of being the leader and provide for his whole family still seem to be much present.

The geography of masculinities
This section will consider the masculine ideal on three levels, local, regional and global. This is in accordance to Connell and Messerschmidt's (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 849) idea of how these levels are linked which they argue is of great importance in gender politics.
Local constructions of masculine ideals

Connell and Messerschmidt (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 849) discuss how the masculine ideals are created in the interactions within the families and the community. For instance, the dynamics between men and women within the household, as in more detail described above, is an example of how male ideals are constructed locally. In short, in this context there seem to be a locally constructed male ideal which emphasises the man being head of household while also respecting the woman and involving her in the decision-making process.

Regional constructions of masculine ideals

Although Uganda can be viewed as a diverse country with a varying culture, there are some characteristics that can be seen as a general pattern. For example, the notion that men should be the head of families was a widespread opinion both seen in the village, and also confirmed by the Ministry of Gender and UWONET to exist nationwide. Few seem to question this statement. Instead, new ideals and patterns are viewed in relation to this, and new concepts are thus adapted to that cultural understanding. For example, when it comes to gender equality, an acceptance of the concept can be combined with holding on to the tradition of seeing men as the head. The answers from The Ministry of Gender and UWONET show that not only are they aware of this phenomenon, but they chose to adapt their approach to this context, even if they do not necessarily agree. Further, some men in the village say they perceive that the current social change to some extent can be a result of the work the government do, what the children are taught in school, different organisations spreading information about human rights as well as developing skills for the women.

Global construction of masculine ideals

On this level the connection between the regional and the global level will be evaluated. As stated above, the traditional culture in Uganda give men a higher position than women as head of their families. Considering the confirmed spread of this culture, the Ugandan constitution promoting gender equality and women’s rights, could be viewed as contradicting the national culture. One explanation to this could be the increasing interactions between countries, for example through international communities like the UN. Since Uganda have signed the CEDAW-convention it could be viewed as an adoption of external values, at least on paper. However, some question the governments’ capacity to spread the knowledge of, and implement,
their new policies (Group 2, 2015; KeyRespondent4, 2015; KeyRespondent3, 2015). Some also question their true dedication. For example, the Ministry of Gender explain that their work is mostly financed by external donors (KeyRespondent3, 2015).

**The process of social embodiment**

This section concerns how the physical attributes of a man may influence the perceptions of the male role. As is pointed out by Connell and Messerschmidt (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 851), bodies are important in social processes. Therefore, the embodiment of masculinity should be examined.

When the men in the focus groups discussed the division of labour between the man and the woman, some referred to it as being specifically due to their different physique. Since "the man is born strong and the woman weak", the division of labour is naturally created. However, all agreed that the women could also do more of the traditionally male tasks today. According to some men, the women are only unable to do the heaviest tasks, like digging a latrine. This has not meant, however, that the man in most cases also help the women with all of their tasks. What seemed to be accepted tasks to help the woman with, was for example fetching water and firewood which are both heavy tasks. In the focus groups, many expressed direct negative views about seeing a man doing simple female task such as domestic work. When asked individually if it would be possible to see men doing domestic work in the future, most said no or were unsure. There were also some discussions about how women's attributes made female tasks impossible for a man to do. For example, some men pointed out that since they are not able to breastfeed, they cannot be the ones to look after the children. In conclusion, it is much less accepted for a man to do "female" tasks which do not clearly require the male attribute of strength, even with a future aspect added into consideration.

The other way around, a woman who does a male task is sometimes referred to as a hero, whereas a man can only be a hero when he does his own tasks. This implies again that the man's tasks are considered to be more difficult and it is therefore impressive when they are accomplished, especially by a woman, but also by a man. The physical attributes of a man are also given as an example as to why men and women cannot be on the same status. The idea is that the man's role is much more difficult than a woman's, and therefore he must be higher. If they had the same roles they could be equal, but that is "impossible" as there as some things men do which women are unable to do.
The dynamics of masculinity
As pointed out by Connell and Messerschmidt (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 852), it is not uncommon to find contradictory masculinities which may cause "internal division and emotional conflict" for the men. In regards to changing gender roles, it is explained that due to ambivalence caused by the both positive and negative consequences of change, men can have conflicting feelings about that change.

A clear sign that these types of internal conflicts were affecting the respondents in the study in terms of changing gender roles, is the widespread attempt to balance new concepts such as gender equality and women empowerment with the established male ideal. It has been concluded in this study that the role for women have changed, and that the men have positioned themselves in regard to that change in order to find a middle-way between the clashing notions of empowered women and male authority. The concept could be good as long as the woman was only empowered to do her female role, and as long as she did not try to become equal to the man. However, the respondents described many scenarios where women empowerment could have poor outcomes for the family, something which seemed to deeply worry the respondents. First, they stressed how it was the source for women to become disrespectful towards their husbands. Second, when the woman is empowered it can lead to her being independent of the man. The respondents expressed concern that should that happen, she can easily decide to leave him. The interview with UWONET also confirmed the feeling of threat men feel when the women become empowered. Further, the respondents also pointed out that as a woman increasingly become empowered she will start demanding to be on a more equal status with the husband. As this goes against the established male ideal, the respondents explained that it would lead to disturbances in the home in terms of quarrelling, violence and perhaps even separation. The respondents replied in a manner which leads to conclude that men do not really know how to respond to these changes while still remaining true to the established masculine ideal. Therefore, the changes of the female role can lead to inner conflicts as suggested by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005).

Information from UWONET, also offer some insights to the way men tend to view these concepts, which support this conclusion. As it is interpreted as a power struggle between men and women, the men regard it as a threat. Instead they seem to try to balance the want for development, which they think can come from the women doing more than before, but at the
same time keeping the original power relations within the family. There is a fear of the gender relations becoming destructive as a result of the woman reaching the same status as a man.

The current study in relation to previous research

The research problem described in the first chapter, maps out the context in which this study has been shaped to fit in to. In order to complete the analysis of the findings, it is important to also put these findings into a wider perspective by comparing them to the previous research stated in the first chapter.

First, even though clashes between cultural norms and women empowerment were found, the strong connection between women's empowerment and domestic violence suggested by Silberschmidt (2001) could not be sufficiently confirmed in this study. Although some people on the grassroots mentioned domestic violence as a result of women empowerment, most put an emphasis on other less severe consequences like quarrelling and separation. However, UWONET did in fact point out that men have been known to turn to domestic violence if they feel disrespected also in Uganda. Also some positive attitudes were found, which gives the picture of diversity. Larger studies including more respondents would have a better possibility to find out what characterize the people who do have a positive view of gender equality.

Further, Wyrod’s (2008) findings of a changing masculinity in urban Uganda could be considered to be in close connection to the findings of this study. Similar to him, this research has found it most common for men to have a mixed view of gender equality with both notions of women's rights and male authority over women. As explained above, Wyrod (Wyrod, 2008, p. 809) divided his responses into three categories. In the reactionary responses he detects a resistance towards change (ibid). This resistance was found in many cases in the current study, especially when considering the future. Further, many men also suggested that nature and the man’s responsibilities put him higher than the woman, which Wyrod (2008, p. 809) also would call a reactionary response. He found that the men felt disempowered by a government focusing too much on women, however, was more difficult to detect in the rural context. This could indicate that the work of the government is not yet reaching on large scales to the grassroots. Also The mainstream responses that Wyrod (2008) identified were common in this research.
From the findings in the current study this category includes common view of men and women as equals in some aspects, for example in doing the same job and discussing with each other. Also the positive connection between gender equality and development belongs here. Even further the views that women should be involved in decision making correlates with Wyrod’s suggestion that the mainstream understanding see mental capacity in the women. He found very few who stated that men and women are and should be equal in the sense that men doing typical female tasks could be acceptable, (Wyrod, 2008, p. 816). In the current study however, more than a few men said that men and women should be considered equal, and also that it could be ok for men to do female tasks. Hence, it was difficult do see a clear division in line with the categories Wyrod (2008) created. On contrary, it was more common to see signs of all three categories in one single person.

Many of the respondents involved in this research have questioned the efficiency and intent of the Ugandan government to actually implement the ambitious legislature concerning women's rights and gender equality. Such opinions could be identified on the national level also in this study. For example, UWONET act in a response to this by dedicating much of their work to put pressure on the government to allocate funds to implement their own policies and laws. The Ministry of Gender also pointed out that the commitment of the government to enact gender equality seemed to be more in terms of words rather than action.

Lastly, the importance of a cultural integration of international concepts which was pointed out by Ibwaho (2000), has proved to carry some weight still today if applied to this context. Both findings on local and national levels have confirmed the need and ambition to have such an approach. The respondents on the grassroots portrayed a cultural interpretation of gender equality which they could feel positive about, it was still profoundly important for them however, to keep the status as the head of household. On the national level, this has been observed and the practices in place tend to take this into regard when promoting gender equality. Both UWONET and the Ministry of Gender explained that they do not work to counteract the notion of the man as head of household, they tend to work with it and perhaps transform the meaning of it. Based on the information from the respondents, it is appropriate to consider that gender equality would have a larger and more sustainable impact on gender relations in Uganda if old cultural practises would be taken into more consideration during the implementations. However, it is important to note one exception to this view found in this study. The parish church overseer stated that those statements of men being the head of the household
belonged to cultural practices. He believed that these should and would be transformed in the near future. He was strongly convinced that cultural practices were an obstacle in terms of promoting gender equality, and that those views should be discarded. With these statements, it became clear that his approach was not as accommodating to traditional views as the other key informants. The aspects of taking cultural practices into considerations has thus been acknowledged to some extent in Uganda, however sufficient evidence are lacking to support its superior utility.

Utility of the theory

The theory of Hegemonic Masculinities has been involved in every phase of this study. First, it enabled research questions to be asked which searched for why men in rural Uganda may act and feel in certain ways. Second, it aided the creation of appropriate questions to ask the respondents on the grassroots. It furthermore guided the selection of results to be included in the paper, and the deeper analysis of those findings. Under the guidance of this theory, deeper knowledge of the context in which the respondents on the grassroots live and operate within could be gained. It thus aided in the attempt to try and see the moral and social compasses established in that particular rural setting, and how these compasses may guide the perceptions of concepts such as gender equality and women empowerment.

A limitation of the theory was its quite complex nature, and the wide room for interpretations it offered. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 840) explains that over the 20 years that has passed since they first introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinities, it has been used in many studies, and is often based on different interpretations, hence they decided to reformulate it. However, there is still a slight confusion when trying to properly examine its main arguments because of the authors many discussions on the theory. The solution for this study was to focus on their reformulated version in Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). Still, the formulations were sometimes of a quite unclear character, which makes it impossible to guarantee that the way the theory was used in this study completely reflected the intention of its founders.

Overall, the theory has proven to be an appropriate methodological framework for this study. In addition to filling a research gap, it has also shown great applicability to study why men feel they should remain in control over women in a rural context in Uganda. Moreover, it also
provided an opportunity to find, identify and analyse contradictory masculine behaviour which added more depth to the research.
Conclusions

The first research question regarded the perceived roles for men and women and how these roles have changed. In this context, the male ideal seems to be that he is the leader in the family and is responsible to provide for them. He should also make his wife involved in decisions, discuss with her, listen to her and cooperate. A good man allows his woman to be free, but it is still up to him. Most people state that women can now do more than before, and this leads to development. Also that this eases the load on men, were they do not need to be the only ones who provide for the family. The male tasks seem to be much the same, although they can now do some of the heavier female tasks as well.

The second research question concerned how men in a rural area in Uganda perceived the concept of gender equality, with focus on the household level. Even though the responsibility to provide for the family is increasingly shared, all respondents from the focus groups and the individual interviews agree that men should be the head and the leader in the family. The key respondents were all more in favour to various degrees for an equal status between a husband and a wife.

The final research question regarded how women empowerment could have an impact on gender relations at household levels. Although people tend to admit that women empowerment can be good and lead to development, there is also heavy emphasis on the man remaining the head of the household. There are concerns about how such changes may cause negative consequences for the gender relations in the home such as disrespect, quarrels and divorce.

These findings indicate that “universal ideas” of gender equality, formulated on a global level, indeed have a wide range of local interpretations. These perceptions need to be taken into consideration when promoting gender equality. In the case of Uganda, both the Ministry of gender and some NGO’s seems to be sensitive towards this issue. However, it remains unclear how these perceptions are approached on a global level.

One of the main objectives of this research was to allow for male perspectives to be further examined in an attempt to correct a research gap. Although this study has indeed offered some insight into how men in rural areas view the concepts of gender equality and women empowerment in connection to gender relations, it is still clear that further research is needed in this area. Most importantly should more variables be added in order to see if there are specific diversions in terms of, for example, location or religion. The discourse on gender equality in
Uganda, or other developing countries, could also benefit from studies aiming to map out details regarding different types of protest masculinities, and how these are developing and why.
References


IndividualInterviews, 2015. *Individual Interviews with respondents from Isingiro District, Uganda* [Interview] (24-1 November-December 2015).


## Appendix 1: Respondent key

Individual interviews Buyojwa and Nyamitanga

### Education

- Senior 1 – 3 = Medium
- Primary 2 – 7 = Low
- No education = -

### Land

- 2.5 – 3 hectares = Large
- 4 – 10 acres = Medium
- 0.5 – 2 acres = Small
- No land = -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Land</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>FGD 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>FGD 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>FGD 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>FGD 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>FGD 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>FGD 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>FGD 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>FGD 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>FGD 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>FGD 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>FGD 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>FGD 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not part of FGD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Not part of FGD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Not part of FGD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Not part of FGD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>