

**A discourse analysis of media representation of women political leaders in  
Uganda**

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to:

My immediate family, Mr Sidney and Zion Muhangi and my new-born twins Leonie and Liam Muhangi. You endured difficult times when I was busy with my studies. Your support made this possible.

To my extended family; my father, mother and siblings, for always tasking me to aim higher and achieve my goals.

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## **Abstract**

This study is a qualitative desktop research project. The study employed a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse and unpack the discursive ways in which female politicians are discussed and talked about in Ugandan online media. This study was a response to the realisation that online media portrayals of female politicians in Uganda remain largely unexplored. Additionally, the study discovered that the *Daily Monitor* and *The Observer*, the two newspapers that this thesis researched, often employ gender stereotypes and sexist coverage of female politicians in Uganda using personalisation, trivialisation and demonisation frames. The study illustrates that these misogynistic frames are intended to diminish women's importance in the political sphere. Moreover, women who do not conform to the gender stereotypes are portrayed as social deviants. This work concludes that one of the challenges faced by women politicians in Uganda, and in Africa as a whole, is how to exploit online media's productive capacity while, at the same time, resisting its use as an instrument that undermines them. Given the limited scope of the study using only two media organisations, future studies on media representation of female politicians could expand the range to include print and visual sources to provide generalisable results.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ACME	African Centre for Media Excellence
FCDA	Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
MP	Members of Parliament
NRM	National Resistance Movement
UCW	Uganda inheritance/property Council of Women
UMWA	Uganda Media Women's Association
UN	United Nations
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UWMA	Uganda Women in Media Association

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

This thesis aimed to investigate the media portrayal of Ugandan female politicians within the larger cultural context of African politics. Although this study primarily focused on Uganda, it provided a much broader understanding of contextual challenges that may apply to African women politicians on the continent as a whole. Therefore, the proposed solutions may apply to other African countries.

An example would be Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was democratically elected to be the president of Liberia in 2006. She became the first female head of state in Africa, and ever since she stepped down from that role in 2018, no other modern state in Africa has democratically elected a female head of government (Jones, 2015). This is even though over the past three to four decades, the discourse on women's empowerment has gained traction on the continent and in international debates on human development.

To make the debate on women's empowerment a lived reality, several international treaties and frameworks have been implemented to enforce the principles of equal rights and non-discrimination (United Nations Women, 2014). These initiatives have been spearheaded or sponsored and endorsed by international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and other regional bodies such as the African Union (Adjei, 2015). Among international treaties for women's empowerment and against women's discrimination includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which were adopted in 1948 and 1979, respectively (Adjei, 2015). The CEDAW provides a framework for women's empowerment regarding access to social, economic and political opportunities available in society (Adjei, 2015).

Other international efforts that advocate for political and economic empowerment include policy frameworks such as the sustainable development goals (SDG-5) for ending all discrimination against women and girls and the 1995 Beijing declaration and platform for action (UN Women, 2014). For instance, declaration 24 of the Beijing framework states that members must "take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against

women and the girl child and remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women” (p. 10).

Specific to women in leadership, Strategic Objective B.4, action 83 (h) of the same declaration states that member countries must “develop leadership training and opportunities for all women to encourage them to take leadership roles both as students and as adults in civil society” (p. 50). Following the Beijing declaration and other treaties before it, there has been steady progress on gender parity which has seen women’s representation in leadership globally, especially in national legislatures (Njoh & Akiwumi, 2012).

In Africa, the Pan-African Union’s strategy for gender equality and women’s empowerment suggests that countries should include women in leadership who influence policy if the continent is to achieve its long-term 2063 development agenda (African Union, 2018). Aspiration 6 of the African Union’s gender equality and women’s empowerment states that the African Union intends to create “an Africa where development is people-driven, relying upon the potential offered by people, especially its women and youth and caring for children”, which is consistent with sustainable development goal five (5) which aims to achieve equality for women and girls (African Union, 2018, p. 14). In 2010, the African Union launched the African Women Decade from 2010 to 2020, which further amplified women’s voices and gave momentum to women’s participation in several African government sectors (Pikramenou & Mahajan, 2019). The African Union has, in addition to the African Women Decade, suggested to its member states to have women occupying at least 50% of their cabinets and legislatures (Yoon, 2011). These efforts have inspired individual women activists and organisations such as the Make Every Woman Count to advocate for African women’s leadership in influential sectors of politics, the judiciary and the private sector (Pikramenou & Mahajan, 2019).

Whether related to the above or not, there has been a significant increase in women’s representation in several African countries, particularly in politics and other influential positions. This indicates a shift that has seen women get to the forefront of legislating for democratisation and favouring their issues to catalyse women’s development and empowerment and advance other interests (Bauer & Britton, 2006; Yoon, 2001). Marshment (1997) considers the representation of women a political issue. She states that women can only define their interests and participate in decisions if they have power. Otherwise, men will likely produce decisions and definitions that serve their interests, not women’s.

Specific to Uganda, besides ratifying international and pan-African treaties on women's empowerment, its constitution provides for gender equality and advancing gender-friendly policies in line with these treaties. Specific to women's leadership and politics, article 33 (4) of the Ugandan Constitution stipulates that "women shall have the right to equal treatment with men, and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities" (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, p. 13). In retrospect, Uganda has been leading the way since 1989 with its first post-conflict election for a National Resistance Council that brought 17.6% of women to parliament (Bauer, 2012). Although the constitution provides for this, it does not necessarily mean that it is implemented as written.

Other African countries, such as Rwanda, have also progressed in advancing women's empowerment. For instance, in Rwanda, the number of women in the legislature significantly increased following the 2008 election (Burnet, 2011). Additionally, women in Rwanda obtained over 56% of seats in the national parliament (Bauer, 2012). By 2012, about eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa had joined 30 countries globally with over 30% of women in the single or lower house of parliament (Bauer, 2012).

According to Njoh and Akiwumi (2012), in some African countries, women still face empowerment and political representation bottlenecks emerging from some patriarchal societies which still uphold repressive gender norms and traditions. There are various reasons why women face many obstacles in Africa when intending to join political leadership. According to Poltera (2019), within and across African countries, multifarious socio-cultural, ethnic, political and historical norms shape power relations and inform how women lead in formal and informal situations. Be that as it may, African women face distinct leadership challenges associated with a colonial legacy, poverty, political violence, gender inequality, oppression, corruption and public health challenges such as HIV/AIDs and maternal mortality (Poltera, 2019). Arguably, the most common theme that emerges from all African countries is gender inequality.

Brown et al. (2019, p. 1) state that,

gender inequality is the most serious and pervasive form of discrimination in Africa and globally – almost universal across cultures and countries. It is a key driver of poverty for women and girls in Africa – as elsewhere – and represents a fundamental denial of women’s rights.

In addition to navigating these traditional and patriarchal stereotypes, African women leaders must contend with African media that often portrays African female political leaders in a negative light. For instance, African female political leaders are routinely portrayed as emotional, irrational, incompetent and “lacking leadership qualities” (Jones, 2015, p. 315). For example, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former president of Liberia and the first democratically elected female head of state in modern Africa, had to “strategically” perform “multiple discursive identities, appealing to both male and female constituents” in order to win political support (Jones, 2015, p. 315). Jones’ (2015, p. 315) research demonstrated that media portrayal of Sirleaf ranged “from that of a ‘grandmother’ to the ‘Iron Lady’ to ‘Ma Ellen,’ mother of a country”. Be that as it may, Sirleaf recognised the need to mobilise Liberian women as a political vehicle for institutional change, and thus, “Sirleaf made women’s rights a dominant theme in her discourse, and she touted her roles as a woman and a mother to make strong arguments for her presidential candidacy” (Jones, 2015, p. 316). Although the media made no references to Sirleaf’s appearance, the constant use of “iron lady” when referring to her was strategically deployed to demonise her for challenging the patriarchal status of men in society (Adams, 2016).

Ette (2017) highlights that Nigeria’s media continues to minimise women’s political participation. Ette’s (2017) analysis shows that despite decades of advocacy for gender equality in Nigeria, women remain marginalised in political news and occupy a limited space in the news media. Ette (2017, p. 1480) also argues that this marginalisation of women by the news media illustrates how the media maintains and reinforces a “patriarchal understanding of politics and consequently highlights the manifest and latent obstacles that women encounter in the political arena”. In Nigeria, women’s relative absence in the media is characteristic of how the public perceives women’s political status (Ette, 2017).

Similarly, Donkor's (2016) research into how news media in Ghana frame women candidates and elected female representatives suggests that restrictions that seem to mediate women's successful participation in politics and their access to the media are, on the one hand, a result of notions around their unsuitability to politics because of gender stereotypes, and on the other, media's propensity to overlook them as equally important sources as men.

Donkor's (2016) research on the media coverage of male candidates focused on their professional attributes. On the contrary, the media coverage of women's personal attributes such as familial relationships and their novelty not their political expertise. In other words, the coverage was gendered "and prejudicial against women, especially in terms of their character traits, familial relationship and professional (expertise) attributes" (Donkor, 2016, p. iii). Donkor's (2016, p. iii) interviews with research participants reveal that "women were covered more negatively in sexualised and familial frames, compared to their male colleagues".

It is against this discursive backdrop that this study investigated how Ugandan media portrays women in politics. Studies that have been conducted on the media representation of women politicians in Uganda include research by the Uganda Media Women's Association [UMWA] (2014) and Nsaba (2019). These research projects studied the demographics of journalists in Uganda's media, whereas Nassanga (1997) researched mass media's coverage of women in Uganda. Other studies about women and media have generally covered topics such as violence against women (Green et al., 2018) and women's knowledge and use of contraceptives (Bessinger et al., 2004). No study was found to have explored the media representation of women politicians in Uganda exclusively. Given the lack of research in this area, this study aimed to explore how women political leaders are represented in the media.

This thesis chose to focus on the media as the object of study mainly because the media helps people to understand the world in which people live. Stories and images that appear in the news articles often are constructed with an ideological objective which paints images of people and events in a different way when portrayed in the media (Chari, 2010; Lippmann, 1922; Webb, 2009). With the above in mind, this study aimed to investigate the portrayal of female politicians in two Ugandan newspapers: *The Daily Monitor* and *The Observer*. This study's analysis focused on the written text in the news articles to analyse the meaning of the language used in the texts to represent the women in politics in Uganda. This study aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on women's participation in politics in Uganda.

## **1.2 Study Limitations**

This study was limited in scope because it researched only two Ugandan newspapers, the *Daily Monitor* and *The Observer*. Given space constraints, it was impossible to add more newspapers to research in this study. Similarly, the articles sampled from the selected newspapers were published online between 2016 and 2022. Due to space constraints, it would not have been viable to expand the scope of the investigation. Because this was a desktop study, this work analysed articles that were only published online. The Covid-19 travel restrictions in the past two years also meant that I could not travel to Uganda to access hard copies of the newspapers under investigation in this thesis. In addition, although the sampling comprehensively identified news articles that represented female politicians in various ways, the analysis of the discourse focused on representations that could fit in the established framework developed by Lind and Salo (2002) which is comprehensively discussed in the methodology chapter.

## **1.3 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter one was the introductory chapter that provided the study's aim, background and rationale. The literature review is Chapter Two, and it provides some of the literature that has been conducted on the subject area. Chapter three is the theory and methodology employed in this study and the methods used. This section describes the feminist theory and the critical discourse analysis method used in analysing the media portrayal of female politicians in Uganda. Chapters four and five are the analysis chapters of this study, each covering one of the selected two online newspapers in Uganda – the *Daily Monitor* and *The Observer*, respectively. Chapter Six is the conclusion and last chapter of this thesis. This chapter summarises the findings and provides the implications in the broader sense of media coverage of female politicians in Uganda.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is a review of relevant literature on women participation in politics in Uganda. The chapter begins with a background broadly highlighting women participation in politics and media coverage from a global perspective and includes examples from other African contexts. The chapter narrows to Uganda and provides a summary of Uganda's political system and a history of women's participation in Uganda's politics from independence to date. Major developments in Uganda's politics such as liberalisation of politics and women's efforts to gain visibility and participation in Uganda's politics are also reviewed in this chapter. The chapter ends with a review of how the media portrays female politicians in Uganda.

### **2.1 Background**

Globally, the media acts as an intermediary between political actors and the citizenry. The position of the media in this regard gives it the power to shape public opinion through agenda-setting, information dissemination and narrative framing (Tresch, 2009).

In the ongoing fight against various forms of injustices, it is widely accepted that the power of the media makes it indispensable in the battle for gender parity. However, in most cases, media is patriarchal, and what is often produced only entrenches the deep-rooted marginalisation and stereotypes against women (Action for Development [ACFODE], 2016).

As Maractho (2017) states, women's participation, representation and engagement in Ugandan media is low, and media representation of women in Uganda is biased against them and portrays them negatively. Despite the potentially transformative role of the media, this situation is frustrating and does not advance women's participation in public affairs in Uganda. Women's participation in Uganda's politics has largely been influenced by the country's political system which has undergone major forms of transformation since independence in 1962.

### **2.2. Uganda's Political system**

Uganda's political system is a conventional parliamentary system that was modelled after the British system when Uganda got independence in 1962 to usher in a peaceful transition of

power (Apter, 1995). Although this system was put in place, Uganda remained up until now, an heir to every form of separatism and cleavage politics that predate the British hegemony. Apter (1995) points out that Uganda's politics rotates around three major aspects that include ethnicity and tribalism, religion, and economic and social disparities. Political divides between religious groups existed between the protestants and Catholics, and Muslims (Apter (199)). Along ethnic lines, the major ethnic political disparities were the one between the Nilotics in the North and Bantu in the south. The Bantu Ethnic group in the South especially Baganda were the most political and economically prosperous than the other tribes although key figures in Uganda's political history such as Idi Amin (Nubi tribe) and Milton Obote (Langi tribe) came from the Nilotics (Apter, 1995). When Milton Obote inherited power at independence, the Baganda were disgusted and opposed his government at every turn. Later Obote was toppled by Amin in 1971 military coup and became known globally for his dictatorial regime. Other regimes after Obote did not last long and succumbed to Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1986 (Pankhurst, 2002; Apter, 1995).

Pankhurst (2002, 120) states that the NRM liberation war was based on an ideology which led to an "understanding of political representation and democracy and precluded the existence of political parties". After assuming power, a decentralisation political system of governance was introduced, making local representation at national parliament. In a decentralised system of governance under multiparty system in Uganda, the electoral process is managed by an independent body, the Uganda Electoral Commission (Perrot, Makara and Lafargue, 2014). The population exercises its voting right to elect their leaders right from the president to local council level.

This decentralised system was further entrenched after the 1995 constitutional reform and later expressed through a referendum in 2000 (Pankhurst, 2002). However, the consultation process that led to the referendum in 2000 was to bring back the multi-party system that the NRM government had precluded (Makara, Rakner and Svåsand, 2009). It is this multi-party system political that exists in Uganda to date under the NRM government which various scholars including Pankhurst (2002) credit for incorporating affirmative action that has put women at the centre of Uganda's political system.

### **2.3 A Brief History of Women's Participation in Ugandan Politics**

Women's political situation in Uganda inspired the formation of women's movements and the Uganda inheritance/property Council of Women (UCW) in 1947 (Bennett et al., 2006). The UCW advocated for women's rights and challenged domestic violence in Uganda (Muzee & Endeley, 2019). The UCW also served as the political vehicle for women's political agenda. Consequently, the organisation's efforts led to the increase in women's representation in national politics. This was led by educated women who were inspired by early missionary women such as Alice Burnet, who encouraged women in the early 1950s to take up education and leadership of societal organisations and to get involved in interracial women clubs which ushered numerous Ugandan women into politics (Tripp, 2004.). For instance, it was partly because of the UCW's efforts that Pumla Kisosonkole became the first woman to be elected to the colonial Legislative Council (Muzee & Endeley, 2019). Pumla Kisosonkole paved the way for other political women leaders in Uganda to emerge such as Joyce Masembe, Sarah Nyendwoha, Francis Akello and Eseza Makumbi (Muzee & Endeley, 2019). Subsequently, the number of women who became involved in Ugandan politics grew to the extent that women's political presence influenced political decision-making regarding women's issues.

Uganda is said to have adopted an inclusive electoral system that empowered women to take up leadership responsibilities after 1962 independence (Tripp, 2004). However, these efforts were often undermined by the instability of the politics in the country. Nevertheless, after independence, women gained the right to vote and the right to stand for elections (Tripp, 2001). Tripp (2006) states that although women in Uganda gained franchise at this time, their involvement in politics did not change much, even when they could vote and stand for elections at various government levels. Tripp (2006) further claims that career opportunities in politics remained culturally closed to women in this period. Accordingly, from 1962 to 1986, there was little growth in the representation of women as parliamentary politics were significantly biased against women (Tripp, 2006).

What makes the situation worse is that historically, the media in Uganda has not sufficiently supported women's struggles for political representation. According to Nassanga (1997), Uganda's media draws its values from established socially acceptable norms and cultures which are oppressive primarily to women. Although the women's movement in Uganda developed spontaneously from grassroots activism and political advocacy of women's groups

such as UCW, Ugandan women's movements have historically been supported by male Members of Parliament (MPs) sympathetic to women's causes and committed to women's leadership and economic emancipation (Donno & Kreft, 2019). Donno and Kreft (2019) add that although governments' facilitation of women's movements were not significant, most women's movements in Uganda have historically tried to forge a close relationship and cooperation with the government in power due to the volatility of Ugandan politics. In other words, the survival of most women's movements in Uganda has historically depended on the goodwill of the government of the day.

In post-independence Uganda, governments from Milton Obote and Idi Amin were not supportive of women's issues (Muzee & Endeley, 2019). Instead, the women's movement was in many ways suppressed by these regimes, but the women did not relent and survived (Goetz, 2002; Tripp, 2012). The women's movement spearheaded by the National Association of Women's Organisation and the Uganda Association of University Women continued to advocate against systematic marginalisation, subjugation and discrimination against women in post-independence Uganda (Muzee & Endeley, 2019). These organisations provided a platform for women to share ideas for women's liberation in Uganda, and as a result, motivated many women to get involved in the political space. According to Muzee and Endeley (2019), women's political gains have not translated into the fundamental change in women's subordinate status in Ugandan politics as the Ugandan political space remains restricted for women.

It was not until 1986, after the National Resistance Army assumed power (led by current President Museveni), that women started making visible progress in Uganda's political leadership and others achieved positions of influence in other sectors.

Since 1986, President Museveni (of the National Resistance Movement [NRM] party) has been an instrumental figure behind many gender equality policies, and he has achieved this mainly through his NRM party structures (Donno & Kreft, 2019). President Museveni's support for women's rights is hailed as a critical factor explaining women's political gains in Uganda (Muhumuza, 2004). Tamale (1999) states that before Museveni assumed power, when he lived in Tanzania, he developed a relationship with the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique party [FRELIMO] (translated as Liberation Front of Mozambique). This political party included gender as an integral part of the revolution, and as such, it is assumed that the FRELIMO could

have influenced Museveni's pro-women politics. On the other hand, political convenience may also explain Museveni's love for women's emancipation (Goetz, 1995). To this, Tamale (1999, p.1) states, "What better way to show the international community that NRM is committed to democracy than to make women more visible within the arena of decision-making". Still, it is worth mentioning that First Lady Janet Museveni could have influenced her husband to get involved in gender issues. For instance, First Lady Museveni played an instrumental role in founding the Uganda Women's Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO), a non-governmental organisation spearheaded by grassroots women members to advocate for women's empowerment and respond to the needs of the children orphaned by the 1980s civil war and HIV/AIDS (Apter, 2013).

Despite Museveni's passion for women and gender equality, under his government, state institutions have become highly politicised and lack the capacity and autonomy from political influence to promote women's interests, which has affected the enforcement and realisation of gender policy initiatives (Apter, 2013; Goetz, 1995).

Despite some of the weaknesses in state institutions hampering the quick progress of gender equality in Uganda, it is fair to credit the NRM government for restoring peace under which women's advocacy and empowerment have flourished (Apter, 2013). Historically, Uganda has not had a peaceful transfer of power for decades, and as a result, women have not been adequately represented, including in the national parliament (Tamale, 1999). Since the NRM took power in 1986 and restored democratic rule in 1996, it has established an all-inclusive and participatory government system that has improved women's representation in electoral politics and governance (Tamale, 1999).

Uganda's political environment and democracy significantly improved under the NRM government compared to previous governments. Apter (1995, p.156) submits as follows:

...the National Resistance Army (NRA) of Yoweri Museveni, the current president of the country [Uganda], has tried to repair the legacy left by these predecessors, whose activities included episodes of mass killing, rape, ethnic pollution and cleansing, prolonged infrastructure destruction, and an inheritance of refugees, displacements, depatrimonializations, and inflamed class, clan, religious (among Catholics and Protestants, and Muslims), linguistic, and other divisions, which, with each succeeding round of violence, became more deeply intertwined with other affiliational affinities.

Although the NRM government precluded party politics after assuming power in 1986 to heal the country that had been deeply divided by religion, and sectarianism, among others fuelled by political parties, multipartyism was reintroduced as a tenet of democracy. During the 1994-5 Constitutional Assembly, the debate for a multi-party system gained momentum to ensure democratic governance (Makara et al., 2009). In 2001, other political parties were allowed to participate in general elections after the 2000 referendum.

In a multiparty system, Pankhurst (2002) states that many opposition groups and figures have emerged to have a slice of the national cake under the patronage of the NRM government. And also, as part of the democratisation process, the political system incorporated affirmative programmes that ensured that women were part of the system.

Nonetheless, the NRM government of President Museveni has also been critiqued for the democracy it claims to have championed. Firstly, Makara et al. (2009) observe that the move to introduce a multi-party system was not about democratising the political system in Uganda but a result of tensions that originated from the 1994 constitutional debates as exposed in 2001 when Col. (Rtd) Kiiza Besigye challenged Museveni. Tripp (2022) also indicates that introducing a multiparty system was a move to further entrench the NRM government in power. Tripp (2002) further states that since then, Museveni's government has ensured controlled political liberalisation to further centralise his authority and interference with the legislature, media, judiciary and civil society organisations that would be checking his executive power.

Considering the past marginalisation of women in the country, the NRM government set a legal framework to allow women who were historically kept out of mainstream politics to attain leadership positions (Goetz, 1995). An excellent example of this is the government spearheading the framing of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda to provide a robust framework that enabled women's development and their participation in the country's politics. For instance, article 33, paragraphs 2 and 5 state:

(2) The State shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realise their full potential and advancement.

(5) Without prejudice to article 32 of this constitution, women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition or custom. (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, p. 13)

The constitution established affirmative action under article 78(b) to increase the representation of women in parliament. Under this article, a female representative seat for every district in the national parliament was reserved. Also, a third of local government councillor positions were reserved for women to create opportunities for them in political leadership and decision-making (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 1995). In the case of women, affirmative action aimed to offset the legacy of discrimination against women, which has perpetrated the underrepresentation of women in different scopes of Ugandan society (Tamale, 1999). Reserving a seat for women parliamentarians at the district level was created under the assumption that the presence of women in the parliament would provide them with an opportunity to articulate their interests so that legislation can create an environment in which women are treated equally with men without subjecting them to any form of discrimination or marginalisation (Tamale, 1999). For this reason, the NRM in Uganda promotes itself as the enabler of women's rights (Donno & Kreft, 2019).

Ahikire (2003) argues that the effective implementation of affirmative action in Uganda under the NRM government was implemented within the decentralisation context under the local government system to have more women represented. However, this has created sharp criticism of the affirmative action policy. Some argue that it is not an approach based primarily on wanting to have more women represented in political leadership to change historical discrimination and marginalisation of women; instead, the NRM government sought to deepen its hegemony (Mamdani, 1998 in Ahikire, 2003). Donno and Kreft (2019, p. 739) argue that this quota system established by the affirmative action policy is a “co-optation tool by the NRM government to gain broad-based support and stifle opposition”. They add that it has “diminished the ability of elected women to advocate independent policy positions” (Donno & Kreft, 2019, p. 739).

Doornbos (1999) explains that decentralisation can reflect the depth of external donor and government involvement in the policy and legislative processes in Third World countries as a political conditionality attached to foreign aid. Therefore, we do not know whether affirmative action was a political strategy for the NRM government, as Mamdani (1998 in Ahikire, 2003) claims, or a foreign aid conditionality, as Doornbos (1999) posits. Ahikire (2003) argues that although affirmative action was implemented under the context of decentralisation, it was not done because of it.

Despite these criticisms, Wang (2013) states that the rise of women to positions of influence, especially in the National Assembly, aided women’s influence on legislation that further advocated women-friendly policies. According to Wang (2013), the Domestic Violence Act of 2010 gave women more freedom, including contesting leadership positions, even at the local government level, without fear of reproach from their spouses. In a patriarchal society like Uganda, women would need approval from their husbands to get involved in political affairs. The passing of this Act reduced empowerment and political representation bottlenecks, paving the way for women to participate in political activities (Wang, 2013).

By the late 2000s, Uganda had achieved about 35% of women in the National Assembly, appearing among the 30 countries worldwide with more than 30% of women represented in the single or lower house of parliament (Bauer, 2012) indicated in Table 2.1 below.

**Table 2.1: Shows the percentage of women members in the House of Parliament in Uganda before and after political transitions**

Uganda				
<i>Pre-transition election</i>	<i>Mid-1990s election</i>	<i>1999/00 election</i>	<i>Mid-2000s election</i>	<i>Late-2000s election</i>
1980 June	1996 June	2001 Feb	2006	Feb 2011
1/126	50/276	73/305	99/332	131/375
0.7%	18.1%	24.6%	29.8%	35.0%

Source: Adapted from Bauer (2012)

Other scholars have stated that the pro-women policies of the NRM government have enabled Uganda to depoliticise ethnicity and cultivate broad-based support for women’s organisations (Donno & Kreft, 2019; Tripp, 2000). These policies have helped shape the media landscape in Uganda to be more accommodative of women, including women politicians. For instance, research by Nassanga and Tayebwa (2018) indicates that the media landscape is more accommodating of women. Women associations such as the Uganda Women in Media

Association started the first women's radio station. This helps cover women's issues fairly and gives women politicians coverage without prejudice. Nassanga and Tayebwa (2018) further indicate that the Uganda Communications Commission has enforced professionalism in the media fraternity and that women can equally participate in media programmes. Politically, the NRM government has pursued broad-based support by extending its societal reach across various levels of government, making Uganda a one-party state from 1986 to 1996 when the country transitioned to a multiparty system (Muriaas & Wang, 2012; Tripp, 2001).

Regarding women's representation, Uganda was among the first countries to institute a quota system in 1989 for underrepresented groups including women, youth and people with disabilities (Muriaas & Wang, 2012). Particularly the gender quota boosted women's representation. For almost four decades, the NRM has shown its commitment to gender equality issues spearheaded by President Museveni, who, for example, has appointed women to high political positions (Goetz, 2002). This, however, has not had a significant impact on the media as a platform for democratic discourse or the way the media represents women politicians. According to Nassanga and Tayebwa (2018), the government media houses ignore the interests of opposition politicians. This hinders many women politicians from participating in democratic processes to compete for higher public offices.

However, Peter (2021) argues that affirmative policy in Uganda has encouraged what he terms 'positive discrimination', which violates the law's equal protection Act. He states that in the case of women, the affirmative policy is controversial because it gives preferential treatment to them not because they are more deserving or are more capable, but simply because they have different characteristics from other groups.

Even though the women's movement in Uganda reportedly has more freedom and close ties to the NRM government, Donno and Kraft (2019) state that the party controls women activism and punishes those who dissent from the party norms. For instance, the BBC (2017) reports that women and human rights activist Dr Stella Nyanzi, who in the past has criticised and publicly disagreed with the government, has been vilified in the media. This confirms Tamale's (1999) doubts about the NRM's commitment to women empowerment when she called NRM's pro-women position typical "lip service" (p. 20). Tamale (1999) said this from a perspective of the party's verbally promising women freedom of expression but then jailing those who oppose the policies they perceive as oppressive to women. Tamale (1999) had reservations

about the intentions of male leaders who took power by guerrilla means by incorporating women into political positions and their ideology of women's emancipation (Tamale, 1999).

#### **2.4. Media Portrayal of Ugandan Women**

This imbalance in media coverage of women is not a new development but is longstanding. Uganda's media representation of women has historically been gendered; even before the national independence in 1962, women's emancipation was not seen as a big issue (ACFODE, 2016). The media portrayal of Ugandan female politicians reflects the country's religious and cultural norms as well as the low social position that Ugandan women occupy on the social ladder (Maractho, 2017).

This thesis argues that part of the reason why the Ugandan media is hostile to women politicians is that the media in Uganda is primarily owned and run by men. For example, research conducted by the UMWA (2014) and Nsaba (2019) report that the demographics of journalists in Uganda are primarily male and also that, in general, the media coverage of Ugandan politics tends to focus predominantly on men. The UMWA's (2014) study breaks down its findings, positing that the print media employs only about 20% women journalists, 13% female photographers, and 15% female news anchors (UMWA, 2014). This study argues that the narrative in the media coverage and publications is driven by men who are most of the employees (including in higher positions of influence) and give limited attention to women's interests. In media organisations, women occupy just 30% of the low-ranking jobs in Uganda, and only 3% occupy senior positions (ACFODE, 2016). The 2021 National Journalists Survey Report in Uganda by the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) reiterates this position by stating that only two out of 10 journalists in Uganda are women, a number that is significantly smaller compared to Kenya, where 33% of journalists are women (ACME, 2021). The report states that although there are many women studying journalism at universities and other institutions of learning, the hostile working conditions for journalists in Uganda scare female graduates, and they end up working in corporate organisations (ACME, 2021). In many ways, the insignificant number of women in the media affects how women are portrayed in the news, affecting their participation in public life such as leadership and politics.

Even in public affairs engagement, women in Uganda are still marginalised and underrepresented and are not provided with a level playing field as men. A 2015 study by

Maractho (2017) on four media houses in Uganda (NTV, NBS, WBS and UBC television stations) focusing on women who appear or speak on television revealed some fascinating findings. The study found that of 543 people who participated in public affairs programmes as analysts or guests, only 98 were female and 445 were male (Maractho, 2017). NTV's two weekly programmes the 'Fourth Estate' and 'On the Spot' hosted a total of 99 participants, of which 87 (88%) were men and only 12 (12%) were women (Maractho, 2017). Besides hosting fewer women, the interaction of women in these programmes through calls and texting is also low. A recent report by the ACME reports that 23% of "people quoted in the Ugandan news are women" (p. 39). Observations from the study indicated that women did not engage in the programmes on radio and television, except those who were friends of the guest speakers or had pre-arranged to call in and contribute during the programme. Maractho (2017) states that programme producers interviewed said that some female public figures usually turn down opportunities when invited to participate in such television programmes.

Overall, Maractho (2017) observed that one dominant characteristic of media in Uganda is that it is male dominated which, like most of the literature suggests, is naturalised patriarchy at play. Uganda is a patriarchal society, and since independence in 1962, women have been systematically excluded from public affairs and from holding positions of power. One of the indications of patriarchy is the country's history which barely mentions influential female leaders such as the Queen Nambi of Buganda and Nyangi of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom (Muzee & Endeley, 2019). It is, therefore, not surprising that by the 1960s, there were only two women in the Ugandan legislative assembly, and by 1980 there was one woman out of the 143 members in the house. The media remains one of the most significant factors limiting women from getting involved in Ugandan politics. The Ugandan media representation of female political leaders is often negative and stereotypical and various reports have shown that the media representation of Ugandan women is hostile (Kawamala, 1992 in Nassanga, 1997).

The Ugandan media often depicts women as incompetent and "lacking leadership qualities" (Nassanga, 1992, p. 475). For instance, Nassanga (1997, p. 473) highlights how the media portrayed former vice-President Dr Specioza Wandela Kazibwe as a "boastful know-it-all". The media also portrayed the former Minister of Agriculture, Victoria Ssekitoleko as an arrogant and inefficient dictator who does not get along with other ministry officials.

A 1997 study on influential media houses in Uganda discovered that television and radio provided limited coverage of women's issues in Uganda (Nassanga, 1997). An analytical report of research conducted by Nassanga (1997) in 1994 revealed that Uganda Broadcasting [UBC] Television (formerly Uganda Television) devoted a mere 30 minutes to the women's programme known as 'Women's desk' out of the 42 hours of weekly broadcasting (Nassanga, 1997). Nassanga (1997) further states that in the same year, for a sister radio station (Radio Uganda – currently known as UBC radio), the same programme received only 1.5 hours of broadcasting out of the 126 hours in a week (Nassanga, 1997). Such insignificant time allocations to coverage of women and their issues keep the public uninformed about the contribution of women in society.

The Ugandan media is not unique in its negative portrayal of women. For example, The Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media showed that women represent just 33.3% of full-time journalists of the surveyed 522 news organisations (International Women in Media Foundation, 2011). This means that men still occupy the most powerful positions in the news media with unchecked power to influence the way media reports and covers women's affairs and shape public opinion (Tresch, 2009). Furthermore, research has shown that women's affairs get limited attention in most media (Maractho, 2017).

Studies from a feminist perspective have indicated that media coverage of politics manifests gender bias, with women facing an uphill battle to make news as compared to men (Tresch, 2009). Literature has also shown that media representation of women is often more gendered (O'Neill & Savigny, 2014). This is particularly the case in the political space and public leadership positions. For instance, Gidengil and Everitt (2003) analysed television news coverage of the 1993 and 1997 Canadian elections. The study found that the media reported women leaders more aggressively and negatively. The study concludes that the media portrayal of women politicians may affect women's chances of being elected to political offices (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003). O'Neill and Savigny agree with this conclusion and state that the way women are reported or ignored in the media could affect the democratic processes (O'Neill & Savigny, 2014). Patterson (2016) also illustrates how the media coverage of the female candidate Hillary Clinton during the 2016 United States elections was biased with an overall 62% negative coverage, compared to 56% for her rival Donald John Trump.

In Nigeria, despite the overwhelming active participation of women in politics since the 1999 military dictatorship, women's interest in politics is not visible in the country's news media (Ette, 2017). According to Ette (2017), women in Nigeria are marginalised in terms of coverage as subjects of news and as sources. A similar finding was reported by the Global Media Monitoring Project (2015) which states that female journalists are more likely than their male counterparts to select women as news sources. Some scholars have attributed this to the way women's position is understood in society. For example, Ette (2017) states that the media often portray women in Nigeria as powerless and lacking agency because traditionally, women are located outside the competitive political space. This media narrative adversely affects women's chances of flourishing in politics. The limited media coverage of women politicians, according to Ette (2017), reinforces the patriarchal understanding of politics. Washbourne (2010) concurs and further states that the nature of political coverage determines the voting decision-making by the voters.

The present chapter provided an overview of media representation of female political leaders from a global perspective and narrowed down to Uganda which is the focus of this study. An historical analysis, current political situation, the way the media represents them and their struggle for freedom and emancipation explored in this chapter.

The next chapter (Chapter Three) presents the theoretical framing of the study and the methods used in this study.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

Chapter three describes the theoretical lens used in the study, the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). The FCDA is described and how it was applied to the study's methodology. Other methods employed to sample news articles, collect and analyse data are also described in this chapter.

### 3.1 Theory

This master's thesis is primarily about representations of gender in the Ugandan media (Gill, 2007). To that end, the study employed a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to analyse and unpack the discursive ways in which female politicians, in particular, are discussed and talked about in the Ugandan media. Lazar (2005a) defines FCDA as a discourse analysis that deploys a feminist perspective to interrogate the patriarchal ideology that shapes gendered social practices in society and the representation of women in the media. Lazar (2005) states that this approach is mainly concerned with critiquing discourses that sustain a patriarchal social order. Therefore, the concept of patriarchy is used in this thesis to identify the political domination of women in Uganda. Patriarchy is a gendered ideology that men have historically employed to render the nation-state "a repository of male hopes, male aspirations and male privilege" (McClintock, 1993, p. 77; Pateman, 1991).

The FCDA enabled this work to interrogate the Ugandan media in order to understand how media images and gendered cultural constructions are connected to patterns of gender inequality and political domination of women (Gill, 2007). Thus, this research project aimed to excavate the gendered discourse that the Ugandan media employs to establish men's political domination of women in society. The study of discourse revolves around the critical interrogation of how language is deployed by the media and other societal institutions to normalise gendered practices of identifying the nation with the political aspirations of men (McClintock, 1993). Discourse analysis investigates "the role of language in sustaining power relations in society" (Miladi, 2021, p. 121). Ultimately, discourse analysis is used in this project to investigate how media representation of female politicians in Uganda functions as a legitimising instrument of social and political dominance (Miladi, 2021).

The media representation of women politicians in Uganda tends to be framed discursively such as the demonisation of female politicians or feminists or by depicting female politicians as mothers of a nation which is trivialising as Lind & Salo (2002) indicate. Another discursive frame the Ugandan media employs to portray women politicians is what Lind and Salo (2002) describe as a “trivialisation frame”. The media often deploys this frame to minimise the accomplishment of women politicians. The media achieves this by narrowly focusing on the personal attributes of women politicians instead of the political vision and agenda that a particular woman politician is advocating for. The personal attributes that the media tends to focus on include the marital status of female politicians, their appearance and beauty, personal habits and whether they conform to gender norms (Lind & Salo, 2002). Focusing on personal traits instead of substance serves to trivialise female politicians and their positions (Lind & Salo, 2002).

The media often employs the demonisation frame to portray female politicians who challenge the patriarchal order as crazy, man-hating, family-wrecking, ugly, ill-tempered and radical lesbians (Lind & Salo, 2002). The frames identified by Lind and Salo (2002) confirm the feminist claim that prevailing societal norms and values, which societal institutions like the media often express, mirror the gendered worldview of men (Fairclough, 1995). This thesis defines framing as the engineering of discourse through a process that involves a selection of “some aspects of a perceived reality and makes them more salient in a communicating text” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). In other words, framing is the intellectual process by which sense is made of social and cultural events (Lind & Salo, 2002). Framing provides the audience with intellectual tools to understand politics, controversies and scandals (Brewer & Gross, 2010). In short, framing promotes “a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation” for the issues discussed and described in a communicating text (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

As far as this thesis is concerned, understanding how media portrays female politicians is “important because research has shown that people’s attitudes and judgments can be affected by the media’s framing of issues ... especially when people lack first-hand knowledge of and experience with the issue at hand” (Lind & Salo, 2002, p. 211). Research shows that political news is often framed plays an essential role in the performance of power (Entman, 1993). This is largely because the frames employed to communicate political news tend to reflect “the imprint of power - it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the

text” (Entman, 1993, p. 55). Political news, in general, highlight frames which are often introduced by political actors to influence opinions in a way preferred by political actors, and one that is favourable position to their policy solutions (Brewer & Gross, 2010).

This thesis will show that the media representation of female politicians in Uganda is framed mainly via two discursive frames: the demonisation and the personalisation and trivialisation frames. As has already been pointed out, the demonisation frame involves portraying female politicians as “man-hating”, “crazy”, and “deviant” (Lind & Salo, 2002, p. 218). The personalisation and trivialisation frame, on the other hand, tends to foreground the personal attributes of female politicians, attributes such as marital status and physical appearance (Lind & Salo, 2002). These two frames are employed by the Ugandan media to “call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements”, the ultimate objective being to shape public opinion on female politicians (Entman, 1993, p. 55; Brewer & Gross, 2010).

According to Maractho (2017), the Ugandan media often demonises successful women politicians by referring to them as “natural snobs” and “insubordinate immoral” women who sleep their way to the top (p. 32). Hence the stereotype goes further to claim that women are incompetent and cannot perform their jobs since they did not get those jobs by merit. Moreover, this stereotype is used to portray successful women as deviant and therefore a social threat to the moral order of the country. It is against this backdrop that the Ugandan media cast female politicians as “aggressive, unemotional” rebels, “iron ladies”, and “scary ladies” who disrupt social norms (Cooper, 2010, p. 49).

Research also shows that the Ugandan media continually trivialises female politicians by focusing on their sexual attributes and portraying them as less intelligent and less capable than men (Byerly, 2004). Maractho (2017) observes that the Ugandan media invariably portray female politicians as indecisive, brainless and submissive and diminish their credibility by referring to them as a sport for men’s pleasure.

Given the power of the media, it is difficult for Ugandan female politicians who are victims of this framing to engage the media to rectify inaccuracies, innuendos and stereotypes (Maractho, 2017). Mukama (2002 in Marachtho, 2017, p. 32) concludes that the mainstream media in Uganda are the “chief perpetrators of distortions and misrepresentations of women and women’s issues”.

### 3.2. Methodology

This study is a qualitative feminist desktop study of the Ugandan media. Qualitative research provides rich data that helps the researcher understand the research phenomenon through non-numerical data collection and using methods such as interviews, focus groups, notes and observations, and the study of images and symbols (Sofaer, 1999). This study focused on discourses of media representation of women politicians in Uganda. To that end, it interrogated the online coverage of women politicians in the Ugandan media in two newspapers, namely: the *Daily Monitor* and *The Observer*. The samples of the news articles analysed in this study appeared in the online editions of these newspapers published between 2018 and 2022. In this study, the selection of the *Daily Monitor* and *The Observer* was based on public popularity, independence in reporting news stories and how easy the news stories were to access on their online portals. The *Daily Monitor* and *The Observer* are the second and third most read newspapers in Uganda, respectively, after the government owned *The New Vision*. *The New Vision* was excluded from consideration for this study for two reasons; first, the newspaper is considered biased and pro-government, and second, its website was inaccessible.

The *Daily Monitor* is published daily, while *The Observer* is published twice a week (Monday and Thursday). The public perceives the *Daily Monitor's* and *The Observer's* reporting as independent, objective and of a high standard. The *Daily Monitor's* circulation pre-pandemic was estimated at 24 230<sup>1</sup>, and *The Observer* at 23 809 with a social media following on Facebook of over 340 000<sup>2</sup> people. The news articles that were identified and gathered for analysis from the two selected newspapers were accessible online between the period from 2018 to 2022. In addition, this study selected articles with political content to analyse how the authors represented female politicians.

Although there were numerous articles where authors wrote about women on varied topics, the researcher's interest was to identify the news articles that were more broadly on politics and female politicians. Initial sampling of news articles was conducted with an open mind to gather all articles to identify the discourses used to describe female politicians. Lazar (2005) indicates that a feminist critical discourse analysis employs a feminist perspective. In searching for the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daily\\_Monitor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daily_Monitor)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ugandaobserver/>

articles, this perspective was consistently followed to identify those news articles that tended to employ frames critical of female politicians. The study of discourse revolves around the critical interrogation of the ways in which the media and other societal institutions deploy language to normalise gendered practices of identifying the nation with the political aspirations of men (McClintock, 1993). Against this backdrop, the selection was narrowed down to those news articles that depicted gendered language when writing about female politicians. Therefore, attention was paid to selecting news articles that used the personalisation, trivialisation and demonisation frames (Lind and Salo, 2002) when reporting on female politicians.

The theoretical framework on the language framing of female politicians as employed by the media developed by Lind and Salo (2002) has been deemed valuable in studying how language is framed to depict women that defy the patriarchal social order. This framework is highly regarded as firmly grounded on a long tradition of feminist tradition and has been applied by other feminist scholars such as Sisco and Lucas (2015). In particular, stories deemed relevant to women political leaders were analysed in more detail to identify the discourses used by the media to report for public consumption. Therefore, the analysis of the discourses only focused on representations that could fit the personalisation and trivialisation and demonisation frames as identified in Lind and Salo's (2002) framework.

Overall, 22 news articles were gathered for analysis. Nine (9) news articles were from the Observer newspaper, and thirteen (13) were from the Daily Monitor. These articles were published between the years 2016 and 2022 (see at the end for analysed news articles).

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

To analyse data, this study used manual coding to generate themes. Based on the FCDA and the reading of the literature, two discursive themes were generated to analyse the data, namely the demonisation frame and the personalisation and trivialisation frame. This means that the study searched for themes in media texts in which female politicians were explicitly portrayed in ways consistent with either of these two discursive frames. This work was premised on the methodological approach that "the major task of determining textual meaning should be to identify and describe frames" that shape public opinion (Entman, 1993, p. 57). News texts, especially about female politicians, often contain discursive frames which have or do not have

specific tropes, narrative devices, stereotyped images as well as “sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The research concludes that the media employ these discursive frames to tell stories about female politicians and thus shape public opinion about women politicians (Lind & Salo, 2002).

Although frames have four locations in the communication process, namely the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture, this thesis focused on one location – the text (Entman, 1993). Space constraints prevented this study from investigating the other three locations in the communication process. To critically investigate news text, this study interrogated news texts for the presence or absence of certain tropes, narrative devices and stereotyped images that perpetuated and reinforced gendered perspectives about female politicians (Entman, 1993).

Media texts tend to “make bits of information more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them” with familiar cultural symbols or prevailing discourses about gender norms (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Ultimately, news texts are more than just fact providers; they also provide frames that are part and parcel of political arguments and prevailing discourses (Brewer and Gross, 2010; de Vreese, 2010). In other words, this study understood news framing as an ideological process that involves presenting political, economic and social issues in such a way that provides the reader with alternative ways of defining and understanding issues that do not challenge the status quo (de Vreese, 2010). For example, the demonisation frame and the personalisation and trivialisation frame are employed by the Ugandan media to undermine the credibility of female politicians in order to normalise the patriarchal notion that women have no role to play in the political sphere and that state matters are the domain of men.

This chapter covered the theoretical framing; a FCDA employed by the study to analyse and unpack the discursive ways in which female politicians, in particular, are portrayed in Uganda. The methods used in this desktop qualitative study to analyse data were also covered in the chapter. The next section presents the two analysis chapters covering each newspaper. Chapter Four is the analysis of the *Daily Monitor* and Chapter Five, *The Observer*.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE DAILY MONITOR

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data analysis and the findings from the *Daily Monitor*, one of Uganda's leading newspapers. The researcher employed the personalisation and trivialisation frame as well as the demonisation frame, to analyse data. The next section begins with a discussion of the personalisation and trivialisation frame analysis of the data.

### 4.2 Personalisation and Trivialisation Frame

This section presents the extracts from the *Daily Monitor* that used the personalisation and trivialisation frame to represent female politicians to the public. According to Lind and Salo (2002), this frame is used by the media to downplay the achievements and capabilities of female politicians, and this is achieved by emphasising the marital status, style and physical appearance of female politicians.

For example, in an article published in the *Daily Monitor* on July 19, 2020, the author Mr Amos Ngwomoya who is a journalist belittles Hon. Doreen Nyanjura, an experienced female politician, in stating that her promotion to the position she occupied was not on merit but consolation.

She had been handed the appointment by Lukwago, seen more as a consolation, having lost the race for the speaker to Abubaker Kawalya. By appointing Nyanjura, the bubbly counsellor for Makerere University, Lukwago hopes to open a new chapter. (Ngwomoya, 2020, para 2)

The above quote reinforces the idea that men are the managers of the political system, and as such, they sometimes have to be generous enough to appoint women who do not belong in the system. Hon. Lukwago is presented as an authority figure who has to manage and console a wayward little girl who is in over her head. Hon. Nyanjura is portrayed as burdensome to this kind patriarchal figure. This is despite the fact that Hon Nyanjura has over 10 years in politics, having served in different leadership capacities.

The political history of Hon. Nyanjura, which is not mentioned in the article, is that Hon. Nyanjura started her political career while still a student at Makerere University as General Secretary and was instrumental in building the structures of the largest political party in

Uganda. Instead of undermining Hon. Nyanjura's achievements, the article could have discussed the political journey of Hon. Nyanjura, from her university days to today. Additionally, the article could have explored what Hon. Nyanjura's political career means for the political struggles of Ugandan women in the twenty-first century.

In a similar instance to the above, the *Daily Monitor*, on July 25, 2021, published an article with the title "Kamyra or Nakalema, who will outshine the other?" (Kiyonga, 2021). Mr Derrick Kiyonga, a journalist of the same paper, wrote the article. Both Kamyra or Nakalema, whom Kiyonga discusses in his article, have served for over 20 years each in various high government positions, and have made record achievements in their careers. Despite these two women's impeccable records in politics and public life, this article was written to portray them as sycophants for the president. The author wrote:

Both IGG designate Betty Kamyra and State House Anti-Corruption Unit boss Edith Nakalema seem to love the limelight, and it will be interesting to see how they streamline their work, considering that they both have to impress President Museveni. (Kiyonga, 2021, para 1)

Instead of discussing the two women's credentials and political experience, the quote above seems to suggest that these two women achieved political success because they love attention and the limelight. This negative portrayal of these women politicians is a common sexist stereotype that women are vain and frivolous. This sexist stereotype is used to portray powerful women as incompetent and not deserving of their success.

Furthermore, the author asserts that President Museveni "shocked" the nation by making these two appointments. This infers that women were not expected to fill these positions, and knowing that this was the case, the author goes ahead to undermine it as irrelevant – making it seem like more ceremonial roles (Kiyonga, 2021, para 6.). These are important positions in the government and Hon. Betty Kamyra is also an experienced politician with more than 20 years of experience, a former Minister for Kampala and a 2006 presidential candidate. The author diminishes the importance of her position because a woman was appointed, and he probably would not have written in the same tone if a man had been appointed to this position. This is a patriarchal sense of entitlement that perceives that only men should occupy the most powerful positions, and women are only fit for menial positions such as clerks.

On July 11, 2020, the *Daily Monitor* published a news article titled “Why women are not breaking the glass ceiling on open seats”, written by the paper’s editorial desk (Daily Monitor, 2020). The article was about the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, one of the longest-serving female politicians in Uganda, and it portrays Hon. Rebecca Kadaga as a beneficiary of affirmative action. For instance, the editorial author stated:

Kadaga would comfortably share a dinner table with Nancy Patricia Pelosi, who serves as Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and has been in elective office since 1987. ... Unlike Pelosi ... Kadaga’s longevity in office is a function of affirmative action. (Daily Monitor, 2020, para 4)

The author ignores Hon. Rebecca Kadaga’s political experience and capability to incorrectly argue that Hon. Kadaga is not deserving of her political accomplishment. The interesting twist in the article is the contrast between Hon. Kadaga and Pelosi, a White woman who is a beneficiary of White privilege and American dominance in world affairs. Hon. Kadaga has arguably had to overcome more stumbling blocks in her political career than Pelosi and her achievements in a country like Uganda is more impressive than Pelosi’s achievement in the United States.

The fact that women like Hon. Kadaga have had to rely on programmes like affirmative action to have their talents and achievements recognised and rewarded says more about the Ugandan political system than about Ugandan female politicians. Affirmative action is provided for in the Ugandan Constitution, under article 32(1), mandating the state to create leadership positions for marginalised groups based on gender, age and disability. Among the positions created under affirmative action based on gender is the district woman Member of Parliament (MP), Hon. Kadaga occupies to represent the Kamuli district.

Affirmative action was introduced in Uganda because women politicians were historically marginalised and kept out of mainstream politics and leadership positions (Goetz, 1995). As has been pointed out in Chapter Two of this thesis, the 1995 Ugandan Constitution states:

(2) The State shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realise their full potential and advancement. (5) Without prejudice to article 32 of this constitution, women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition or custom. (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, p. 13)

In other words, the constitution established affirmative action to counter the discrimination against women and the patriarchal marginalisation of women in politics and to increase women's representation in parliament. Without programmes like affirmative action, women politicians like Hon. Kadaga would be discriminated against. The fact of the matter is that Hon. Kadaga is deserving of her position.

Member of Parliament (MP), Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, who began her political career in 1989, has held very high positions in government, most recently as the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for East African Community Affairs and was Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament for ten years. With over 30 years of political experience under her belt, the author stating that her "longevity in office is a function of affirmative action" is a belittling and sexist remark that is meant to portray her as an incompetent politician who would not have been politically successful had it not been for affirmative action (Daily Monitor, 2020, para 4.). The article also insinuates that Hon. Kadaga would not comfortably win in a contest open to both women and men but conveniently forgets to mention that Hon. Kadaga became the Speaker of Parliament after defeating a man (the late Hon. Jacob Oulanya).

When affirmative action is not used to undermine the authority and the achievements of women politicians, nepotism is deployed to cast aspersions about their election. For example, the *Daily Monitor* published an article written by journalists Mr Micheal Woniala and Fred Wambede titled "I was born a leader, says Bulambuli LC5", on May 22, 2021, but goes ahead in a contrary way to discredit Nandudu's abilities as a natural leader. The article portrays her election to the district council as being mainly due to nepotism. Although the authors are careful not to explicitly state that Nandudu's political success is due to her husband's influence, the article paints a picture of a woman following in her husband's footsteps.

On the outskirts of Soti Sub-County in Bulambuli District sits a remote village, Go-Down. This is the rural setting that the new and first female chairperson of Bulambuli, Ms Annet Nandudu, hails from. Ms Nandudu, who is married to Mr Ezra Gidongo Mwambu, a former district councillor of Simu Sub-County, says despite the hurdles, she remains focused. She formerly worked as parish chief and sub-county chief of Simu and Sisyi Sub-County until 2015, when she resigned. (Woniala & Wambede, 2021, para 2)

The authors describe Ms Annet Nandudu as the "first female" to get elected as the district chairperson to highlight a significant and historic milestone for her (Woniala and Wambede,

2021, Para 1.). The authors refuse to credit her efforts in this success but instead tie her victory to her husband's political influence in the area. The husband was a former sub-county councillor of Soti, a tiny fraction of Bulambuli district that Nandudu won. Despite the husband's popularity in the district, Nandudu won the district based on her own merits and hard work. For instance, she had worked as a parish and sub-county chief, the two positions that enhanced her popularity in the district without her husband's influence. Instead of detailing Nandudu's hard work and her journey to winning the district, the article seems to be more interested in linking Nandudu's political achievements to her husband. Contesting for a position like a district chairperson is time, energy-consuming, and financially constraining as it requires traversing a large geographical area, enduring bad roads and weather, and financing other logistics for campaign rallies. The authors trivialise her credibility as a capable politician by not giving her credit for running a hard-fought campaign and her other qualifications, such as educational status besides marriage and her husband's popularity. This article employs stereotypes and a patriarchal narrative when describing Nandudu's achievements as a female politician.

In the same way, an article published on May 18 2021, by Ms Irene Abalo Otto, a freelance journalist, trivialised Hon. Florence Namayanja, then Mayor-elect of Masaka City by ignoring her political experience. Instead, the author focused on her marital status, style and character as primary contributors to her political victory:

At 61, Ms Namayanja, a mother of four, is also a grandmother. If family is salt of her life, then politics is the sugar. It is, therefore, unsurprising that her sweet tongue has charmed the electorate wherever she has made a dig-in for direct elective political position. (Otto, 2021, para 3)

Rather than focus on the Hon. Namayanja's political experience as a former MP for 10 years, the above quote frames Hon. Namayanja's political career on being a mother of four and a grandmother. Had Hon. Namayanja been a male politician, the article would not have foregrounded the fact that she is a mother of four and a grandmother. The Ugandan media generally presents male politicians as powerful individuals without ties to family and children. The overarching message in the quote above is that women "typically inhabit only the domestic space; positions of national significance and heroic activity are reserved primarily for men" (Crowell, 2013, p. 4)

Furthermore, by portraying Hon. Namayanja, as someone with a “sweet tongue”, the article creates an image of a crafty woman who is accomplished at misrepresenting the truth while appearing to be sincere (Otto, 2021, Para 3.). The subtext is that Hon. Namayanja has, throughout her political career, employed her feminine wiles to manipulate the electorate (Weiss, 2022). This thesis used Weiss’ (2022) insight to argue that the description in the case of Hon. Namayanja as having a “sweet tongue” is a backhanded compliment that is meant to present her to the public as morally questionable.

In an article published in the *Daily Monitor* on July 18, 2016, titled “Is Dr Kazibwe the best Uganda can sponsor for AU’s top job?” written by Mr Harold Acemah, a political scientist and retired diplomat, the former Vice-President Specioza Kazibwe’s character and experience is trivialised. She was contesting for the position of head of the African Union. The author stated:

... an interview Ivan Okuda conducted with Dr Kazibwe in which she was quoted telling the journalist that Uganda government asked her to contest for the top AU job because ‘as an individual I think I am the best. I am qualified, tested, experienced and I am a pan-African,’ by which I think Kazibwe meant to say she was a pan-Africanist! I was dismayed by her arrogant and irrelevant answers, but the contents of the interview clearly reveal the mind of a person who does not seem to know what AU is about beyond what she possibly read in a background brief prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The idea of fronting Kazibwe as a candidate for AU's top job is mindboggling, laughable and unacceptable to Ugandans who love their country. (Acemah, 2016, para 2)

The quote above reveals some of the ways in which women’s leadership is questioned and undermined in the media. For instance, Mr Harold Acemah attacks Dr Kazibwe personally as politically ignorant and he characterises her candidacy for the AU top job as “mindboggling” and “laughable” (Acemah, 2016, Para 4-6.). Mr Acemah does not accord Dr Kazibwe the common courtesy of respect and dignity that male politicians commonly show each other in public. Instead, Mr Acemah engages in character assassination of Dr Kazibwe under the aegis of patriotism. Although Dr Kazibwe has a PhD from the University of Queensland, Australia, Mr Acemah highlights words that Dr Kazibwe misspoke to question her intelligence and competency. Meanwhile, Mr Acemah has no PhD to speak of, in fact, Dr Kazibwe is far more educationally credentialed than Mr Acemah. But because Mr Acemah is a man, he feels that he is better educated and better informed, and therefore, more intelligent than Dr Kazibwe. This indicates a patronising and sexist attitude which considers women to be less intelligent

than men (Halstead, 2017). He disregards her track record in politics and instead focuses on trivial aspects such as misspoken words.

Overall, this theme discussed six cases of personalisation and trivialisation of women politicians in Ugandan media. The discussion showed that women politicians in Uganda tend to be trivialised in three ways: 1) as incompetent and undeserving of their political achievements, 2) as beneficiaries of affirmative action, and 3) women's political success is credited to their husbands.

### **4.3 Demonisation Frame**

This section presents the news articles identified in the *Daily Monitor* that used metaphors and language that demonised female political leaders. The media often use a demonisation frame to portray feminist politicians as “deviant” and threatening to social institutions like the family (Lind & Salo, 2002). Below is an analysis of articles that were found to employ this frame.

A news article titled “The things politics does to marriage” was published in the *Daily Monitor* on November 8, 2020, by Mr Gawayo Tegulle who is a lawyer. The title suggests a male perspective that is meant to reinforce the patriarchal gender narrative about marriage and cautions women from joining politics. The author asserts that:

The stability of the woman is the stability of the home since women are the fulcrum of a marriage. The instability of the man may shake a marriage, but that of the woman will make it crumble. We need to interrogate the impact of money and power on a woman's attitude towards her marriage. (Tegulle, 2020, para 6)

The quote above reinforces the patriarchal narrative that a woman's role in society is to be a wife. When women aspire to be more than a wife, then such women are seen as threatening the social institution of marriage. Men regard politically powerful women as a threat to hegemonic masculinity.

The idea that women are the fulcrum of the social institution of marriage has long been contested by feminists as a patriarchal ideology that is meant to socially control women (Watson, 1991). Feminists argue that men are just as responsible for the health of the marriage. So, where are articles raising questions about the impact of money and power on men's attitudes to marriage? The author further states:

The problem with my observation is that it is from the outside, looking in; so there's lots of possibility for error. But from the outside, looking in, it seems to me the big monies they are paid and the influence that comes with rubbing shoulders with the high and mighty in the political domain does things to women and to their marriages. (Tegulle, 2020, para 7)

The quote above shows the author using disclaimers about being an outsider to present himself as an "objective observer", whereas the whole article pushes the idea that politics is not the "natural place" for women, marriage is.

Furthermore, the article assumes that the "high and mighty in the political domain" are men (Tegulle, 2020, Para 7.). The way in which the whole article is written expresses unspoken patriarchy that communicates the message that instead of being devoted companions to men, women politicians strive to share male power with men (Gervin, 2016). This narrative is sexist and stereotypical, and the article is intended to belittle women as marriage caretakers who should not have any influence in politics. The author sees women as only fit for the marriage role, not politics, a portrayal that belittles female politicians which is inspired by social gender role stereotypes that women are fundamental to successful and stable marriages.

On September 14, 2020, the *Daily Monitor* published an article authored by Mr Brian Mugabo that cast Hon. Miria Matembe, a lawyer and former MP, in the role of a rabble-rouser:

It is such fearless, straight-talking activism that has earned her [Miria Matembe] a gallery of adjectives, ranging from professional controversialist, political evangelist, senior concerned citizen, avantgarde preacher, through to good governance consultant, bitter-truths vendor, moralist and women-rights activist (Mugabo, 2020, para 3).

Instead of engaging with Hon. Matembe's political views, the article lists labels to mischaracterise these views. The labels are backhanded compliments meant to portray her as almost unhinged. In fact, the article cites an example that is meant to portray her as emotionally unstable:

In one such infamous episode, she [Matembe] advocated the castration of rapists, citing 'improper use of their potentially dangerous instruments'. One of those who took her advice seriously was Mbarara's Angelina Kyomugisha after 40-year-old George Mugarura defiled her 10-year-old daughter. She cut off his penis, igniting debate between those who thought he deserved stricter measures and those who labelled it an act of lawlessness (Mugabo, 2020, para 12).

Instead of presenting the whole incident as the problem of rape in Uganda, the article seems to make Matembe's views on rape the problem. For this author, the problem does not seem to be a middle-aged man raping a 10-year-old girl, but Matembe's influence on the mother of the raped girl. By presenting Matembe as an advocate for the "castration of rapists", the article demonises her to show her as an out-of-control, man-hating and radical politician (Mugabo, 2020, Para 13.). The author does not address the core issue of rape. This portrayal of Matembe in the article was meant to demonise her as a dangerous demagogue.

In another article published on July 6, 2019, the author, Ms Charlotte Ninsiima portrayed former MP Ms. Miria Matembe as a rude and condescending woman, a common frame the Ugandan media use to portray female politicians as aggressive to influence public opinion.

I finally catch up with her [Miria Matembe] at Mackinnon Suites [Hotel], where she meets people for her other business. Just after 20 minutes, someone comes in to see her, but she requests him to wait for the next 15 minutes. 'What do you want to know about me?' She retorts in a very intimidating way. 'I want to know what you are doing with yourself in retirement,' I responded. She quickly replies, 'I am out of informal employment, and I don't know what you will get out of me.' (Ninsiima, 2019, para 1).

The *Daily Monitor* represents Ms. Miria Matembe as "intimidating", an image associated with being aggressive and condescending (Ninsiima, 2019, Para 1.). The *Daily Monitor* portrays this sexist image to indicate that Ms. Matembe's behaviour does not conform to women's cultural or social expectations. Stating that her conduct is intimidating, the author pushes a narrative that demonises Ms. Miria Matembe's character as an aggressive woman. Both the July 2019 and the September 2020 articles ultimately cast Ms. Miria Matembe in the role of a threatening female character who acts "against the traditional social structure of male leadership" (Crowell, 2013, p. 11).

Another article published by the *Daily Monitor* on August 25, 2019, by Dr Emilly Comfort Maractho, a university journalism lecturer, describes the conflict between the Minister for Finance and Investment, Hon. Evelyne Anite and her male colleagues, whom she accused of being corrupt. Hon. Anite accused Deputy Attorney General Mwesigwa Rukutana of wanting to kill her. Rather than investigate these allegations, Dr Maractho takes sides and argues against Anite and accuses her of being arrogant, emotional and lacking emotional intelligence. Consider the extract from the article below:

Ms Anite has been advised to stop being emotional and learn some emotional intelligence. Some people have asked her to resign and run for her life. She has been advised to join the opposition if she is tired of the corruption in government. And many, without mincing their words, have intimated that this was long overdue; she is getting what she deserved for her actions in what they perceive as a sheer display of arrogance of power in the past (Maractho, 2019, para 4).

The article uses unnamed sources to slander Hon. Anite and to portray her as being emotionally unstable. Who are the people who have asked her to resign? Who are the people advising her to join the opposition? A shoddy piece of journalism like this can only be published if it is about a woman politician. Journalism is about investigating the truth and reporting that truth to the public. Journalism is about holding politicians accountable. Instead of investigating serious allegations of corruption in the government, the article accuses Hon. Anite of arrogance. Rather than investigate threats to murder the Hon. Anite, the article advises her to run for her life. A newspaper article like this would never be written about a male politician.

The article demonises Hon. Anite by accusing her of a “sheer display of arrogance” for challenging patriarchy (Maractho, 2021, Para 4.). The whole article is meant to portray Hon. Anite as someone who has a propensity to hysteria and insanity, essentially a source of chaos and anxiety for those who confront her (Blyth, 2017).

Take another example of an article written by the *Daily Monitor* on May 18, 2021, about the Mayor of Masaka city, Hon. Florence Namayanja. The article is titled “Namayanja prides in beating men at polls” written by Ms. Irene Abalo Otto, a freelance journalist. The title of the article creates the impression that Hon. Namayanja delights in “usurping male authority” (Crowell, 2013, p. 13). The image created by the article is of a woman who does not play by the patriarchal rules held customary in Uganda society. Blyth (2017) indicates that women who do not conform to traditional rules are perceived to destabilise social order. What the article does not foreground is Hon. Namayanja’s extensive political experience. For instance, Hon. Namayanja was a MP for 10 years. Instead, this is how the article describes Hon Namayanja:

Assertive, outspoken and congenial. To many, she is macho-like. Some critics even censure her as rude. It is the disposition of Ms Florence Namayanja, the outgoing Bukoto East Member of Parliament for 10 years, who is rebounding to local government political leadership as Masaka City pioneer mayor (Otto, 2021, para 2).

The quote above portrays Hon. Namayanja as dangerous to patriarchal dominance. The article creates an image of a woman who rejects traditional gender roles, a dangerous woman who emasculates men by being too assertive and thus challenges “male prerogatives to privilege and power” (Blyth, 2017, p. 39). In Ugandan society, assertive and rude women are considered threatening to the cultural and social order. Feminists have long argued that character assassination is a common ploy employed in patriarchal societies like Uganda to shrink women’s chances of participating in public leadership and political space (Goetz, 2002).

The *Daily Monitor* has also demonised female politicians as unfit for office by portraying them as lacking emotional intelligence even in sensitive issues such as sexual harassment. For instance, on July 5, 2018, Ms Betty Ndagire, a *Daily Monitor* journalist wrote an article titled “MP weeps in court over love text messages”. This referred to Hon. Sylvia Rwabwogo, a former MP for Kabarole District who was suing a college student (Mr Isiko) for sexually harassing her by sending inappropriate text messages. The author describes Hon. Rwabwogo as follows: “Tears rolled down Ms Rwabwogo’s cheeks as she told court that she started receiving calls admitting love from a stranger” (Ndagire, 2020, Para, 2.).

By describing sexual harassment as “love text messages”, the author, although she is a woman, deploys patriarchal notions to dismiss Hon. Rwabwogo’s interpretation of events as false (Ndagire, 2020, Para, 11.). This male-oriented interpretation of events is not only meant to undermine Hon. Rwabwogo’s allegations of sexual harassment, but the ultimate objective is to portray her as an irrational and emotionally unstable manipulative woman who precipitates men’s downfall, a portrayal described in Crowell (2013) and Weiss (2022).

For credibility, the article relies on the fact that socially, marriage in Uganda is observed as a qualifier, especially for women, to attain respect and status. At the time, Hon. Rwabwogo was unmarried and in her mid-40s. The article employs patriarchal ideology to present Hon. Rwabwogo’s harassment as an amusing story of an unmarried 40-year-old woman who needs the courts to sort out her love life. Through this presentation, Hon. Rwabwogo’s situation is used as a cautionary tale for other unmarried women, and the message is that women need societal institutions like marriage to protect them from men’s sexual advances and sexual harassment.

Women have a right to reject any advances from a man. Unfortunately, in patriarchal societies like Uganda, sending unwarranted “love text messages” is not considered sexual harassment.

The assumption seems to be that single women are fair game, and that single women should expect and tolerate unwarranted “love texts” from men they have no interest in. By downplaying the sexual harassment against an honourable MP, the author sides with Isiko [defendant], partly because both the author and Isiko seem to believe that men are entitled to women’s bodies irrespective of how women feel.

Ms Jennifer Musisi, the former executive director for Kampala Capital City Authority, was demonised in the *Daily Monitor* article published on October 20, 2018. The author, Catholic church priest Fr Joseph Mukiibi, characterised Ms Musisi in the title as “an experiment that failed”. The author is referring to Ms Musisi, a political appointee, who experienced friction with the male mayor of the city and, therefore, “failed” to shake the patriarchal system in place. The author also states the following:

So when Ms Musisi was appointed first executive director of KCCA in April 2011, she came in with a mindset of the Alpha and Omega of Kampala who would, with the President's backing, kick to the side whatever it was that dragged the city behind, and move on. To her mind [Jennifer Musisi], Kampala would have a Lord Mayor elected through adult suffrage, but this Lord Mayor would only help to receive guests and attend parties – be ceremonial as it was widely said. (Mukiibi, 2018, para 8)

The quote above describes Ms Musisi using the metaphor “Alpha and Omega” to portray her as an arrogant and forceful character who joined the institution determined to revolutionise and dislodge a patriarchal system and make the Lord Mayor ceremonial (Mukiibi, 2018. Para, 8). The author also uses “kick whatever it was” to portray her as an aggressive woman (Mukiibi, 2018. Para, 8). The article indicates a gloating attitude over her failure to bring the transformation she envisioned, which indicates how some men take joy in the failure of women they consider a threat to the patriarchal system. In patriarchal societies like Uganda, women are rarely considered revolutionary. In this case, her plans were frustrated by a system that was established to preserve male dominion over Kampala city politics, and the City Authority is one of the most politically influential institutions in the country.

This chapter discussed how the *Daily Monitor* employs the trivialisation and personalisation, and demonisation frames to cover female politicians in Uganda. The next Chapter Five presents the analysis of *The Observer* newspaper.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE OBSERVER

### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five interrogates the ways in which female politicians are written about and talked about in *The Observer* newspaper. *The Observer* is a weekly newspaper, and it is the third most read newspaper in Uganda after the *Daily Monitor*, analysed in Chapter Four.

### 5.2 Personalisation and Trivialisation Frame

This section presents the extracts from *The Observer* that used the personalisation and trivialisation frame to represent female politicians to the public. As stated in the previous chapter, the media uses this frame to downplay the achievements and capabilities of female politicians and this is achieved by emphasising the marital status, style and physical appearance of female politicians (Lind & Salo, 2002).

The discussion begins with the coverage of Hon. Evelyn Anite, the cabinet minister for privatisation, who, as already discussed in Chapter Four, received death threats from her male colleague because she alleged that some of her colleagues were corrupt.

The coverage of Hon. Evelyn Anite in *The Observer* is not fundamentally different to how the *Daily Monitor* covered her. For example, an article titled “I cannot kill Anite”, written by Kaaya, Namuloki, Bahingwire and Jingo on August 21, 2019, quoted a colleague of Hon. Anite belittling her.

On Monday, Evelyn Anite, the minister of state for privatisation and Investment, took sharp aim at the government ‘*mafia, the cabal, the cartel*’ and suggested they want to kill her.” When asked about the allegations, one of the Hon. Rukutana, a cabinet member in question, responded by saying, ‘Why would I murder a girl anyway? I cannot kill Anite. I know how to put girls to *some other use*.’ (Kaaya, Namuloki, Bahingwire & Jingo, 2019, para 1)

The fact that a male cabinet member dares to refer to another cabinet minister as a “girl” in this weekly newspaper indicates how deep misogyny is in Uganda. For the same male cabinet member to further rhetorically ask why he would want to murder a “girl” when he knows “how to put girls to some other use” is an indictment of the whole political culture (Kaaya, Namuloki, Bahingwire & Jingo, 2019, Para 4.). The statement that Hon. Anite can be “put to

some other use” has a sexual subtext that implies that women’s role is to satisfy men sexually. The tone of the quote reveals disdain and utter contempt for Hon. Anite. In a culture that respects women, a male public figure would not get away with sexist utterances such as this.

Furthermore, serious journalism would not merely serve as a mouthpiece for such misogynistic statements. It is fair to say that all the male journalists who wrote the article and Hon. Rukutana seem to be colluding in their attempt to trivialise Hon. Anite’s political standing. The whole incident reveals a toxic male chauvinistic political culture that is hostile to women.

Another article that reveals *The Observer’s* sexist coverage of women politicians is an article titled “Meet Nyakecho, the MP who has served two constituencies”, which was published on July 3, 2017. Ms Olive Eyotaru, the author of the article stated:

While Nyakecho initially had no plans of joining politics, the creation of Otuke district in 2009 gave her the opportunity. With an added advantage of being married to a son of the soil, different people convinced her to take a shot at the district woman seat and in 2011 she did and won. While Lango sub-region is historically known as the political base of Uganda People’s Congress (UPC), Nyakecho won the seat on an NRM ticket, beating seven other contestants (Eyotaru, 2017, para 3).

The above quote seems to suggest that Nyakecho won the seat in the Otuke district because of her marriage to “a son of the soil”. By a son of the soil, the author refers to a male of high regard born and raised in a community with which he shares a common heritage, culture, and traditions. In patriarchal societies, including Uganda, women’s standing is not regarded as vital as that of men (emphasis mine). Therefore, by associating a woman with son of the soil elevates her chances of winning an election since it is a form of identity. The author seems to take the same patriarchal narrative that demeans women’s societal status. Furthermore, the article does not explain why being married to “a son of the soil” would be “an added advantage” (Eyotaru, 2017, Para 4.). Nyakecho is a daughter of the soil herself. And besides, Hon. Annet Nyakecho is a former MP for Otuke district who served in the 9th Parliament. She is a graduate with a Bachelor of Development Studies from Makerere University. In short, Hon Nyakecho is an accomplished politician and a highly educated graduate of Makerere University. Instead of listing these accomplishments in the article, the author foregrounds Hon. Nyakecho’s marital status and the possible political benefits she accrued from her marriage.

In this article, *The Observer* presents the coverage of Hon. Nyakecho's political success in a trivialising way, as the article suggests that Hon. Nyakecho was elected to parliament primarily because of her marital status. The author ignores other possible qualifications, such as being a graduate of development studies from the leading university in Uganda and the fact that Hon. Nyakecho was an MP. The story that *The Observer* does not tell is that Hon. Nyakecho beat the other seven candidates simply because she had more educational credentials and extensive political experience than other aspirants.

The sexual harassment case of Hon. Sylvia Rwabwogo, which was first introduced in Chapter Four, was also covered by *The Observer*. It is worth noting that *The Observer* covered the story differently from the *Daily Monitor*. For example, *The Observer* published an article about the case on February 3, 2022, after the court had dismissed the case, with the headline "Court dismisses case against the MP Rwabwogo admirer"(Observer, 2020). On the actual court decision, the author wrote:

Today, court heard that it was the seventh time that Rwabwogo had failed to show up, yet she is the only prosecution witness in the matter. As a result, court declared that Rwabwogo was no longer interested in the case.

He was accused of sending MP Rwabwogo love messages he extracted from poems and songs of famous international Artists like Akon, P. Square and Don Williams. Some of these songs carried messages like, 'Sorry you can put the blame on me'. (Observer, 2020, para 5)

The quote above reveals a severe lack of empathy for a woman who was subjected to sexual harassment. Research on women who have suffered similar kinds of sexual harassment show that "men making obscene telephone calls to women produced fear reactions 'ranging from uneasiness or nervousness to outright terror'" (Muldoon et al., 2016, p. 566). Some studies have found that survivors of sexual harassment do not report sexual harassment "despite its serious impact on them because they believed it would be regarded as 'trivial'" (Muldoon et al., 2016, p. 567). Instead of providing a nuanced coverage of the case that explored this complicated dynamic, *The Observer* chose to highlight the text messages that the alleged stalker sent to the Hon. Rwabwogo. One of the consequences of the publication of these text messages was that Hon. Rwabwogo was forced to relive her trauma.

The article does not emphasise that the MP had stated that Isiko sent multiple messages on several occasions, and she warned him to stop in vain. Isiko should have stopped when the MP rejected his advances the first time, he sent the messages. Many feminists believe that Isiko's behaviour was based on the historical belief that a woman who says no, means yes.

### **5.3 Demonisation Frame**

This section presents the news articles identified in *The Observer* that used metaphors and language that demonised female political leaders. As earlier stated in Chapter Four, Lind & Salo (2002) suggest that the media often use a demonisation frame to portray feminist politicians as “deviant” and threatening to social institutions like the family. Below is an analysis of articles that were found to employ this frame.

On April 17, 2017, *The Observer* published an article which demonised Dr Stella Nyanzi, a Ugandan female politician. The article by Mr Batte Lule portrayed Dr Nyanzi as bad-tempered and as a sexual deviant.

Nyanzi has cut herself a following for using graphic language mixed with sexual innuendo to attack President Museveni and his government. Previous attacks were largely ignored until she took on the powerful minister of Education and Sports, Janet Museveni, who for a long time has been shielded from public criticism. Using her Facebook timeline, Nyanzi attacked Ms Museveni for saying that the government lacked the money to buy sanitary pads for schoolgirls, attracting police attention (Lule, 2017, para 2).

The newspaper claims that Dr Nyanzi used “graphic languages mixed with sexual innuendo” because she demanded that the government buy sanitary pads for schoolgirls (Lule, 2017, Para 2.). The newspaper misrepresented Dr Nyanzi's political message about sanitary pads to create an image of a sex-obsessed woman who has no regard for society's norms and cultural values. The newspaper is able to get away with this labelling and defamation because of the toxic masculinity culture that shapes the media landscape in Uganda. Although the media can be legally held responsible for defamation, in Uganda, pursuing legal remedies is financially costly and it further attracts attention and public criticism and mudslinging which female politicians may want to avoid. Even the title of the article, “Stella Nyanzi's tongue may be acidic, but her sanitary pads campaign is real”, is meant to portray Dr Nyanzi as an insufferable, vitriolic woman who is hurtful to her colleagues.

In reality, Dr Stella Nyanzi is a poet and feminist activist turned politician who is passionate about advocating for women's issues. Dr Stella Nyanzi stood for the woman Member of Parliament seat for Kampala district on the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) political party ticket in the 2021 general elections. Although she lost the election, she continued her feminist advocacy and is vocal on political matters in the country. Her campaign to have the government provide sanitary pads to schoolgirls is a fundamental human right that would not be controversial in a society that respects girls and women. In fact, Dr Nyanzi's campaign is consistent with the United Nation's International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) position on this issue. According to UNICEF (n.d., paragraph 3), gender inequality and cultural taboos can "cause menstrual health and hygiene needs to go unmet". Consequently, according to UNICEF, when girls do not have access to sanitary pads, that may affect attendance in school and participation in community life. A provision of sanitary pads to schoolgirls has enormous benefits, such as sexual and reproductive health and the protection of the girl's self-esteem and dignity (UNICEF, n.d.).

The article in *The Observer* by Mr Alpha Male [journalist's full name] published on March 6, 2017, appeared to portray Ms Ingrid Turinawe, a famous politician, in a way that demonised her character. She is a high-ranking member of Uganda's most prominent opposition political party, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). Ms Turinawe is known for organising political protests against the government and has been assaulted by the police many times for being defiant. The author portrays her in a sexist and demonising manner as per the extract below.

You tell me, geezers; what kind of woman is this one called Ingrid? You and I have been watching her over the last couple years when she became something to talk about in our political spaces. You recall how she sprung to fame when she accused the police of fondling her breasts while being arrested (Male, 2017, para 5).

The quote above makes light of Ms Turinawe's allegations of sexual harassment. The fact of the matter is that in Uganda, women have to deal with sexual harassment regularly. Therefore, it is improbable that Ms Turinawe's allegations are false. Instead of seriously investigating these allegations like a serious newspaper would do, *The Observer* dismisses these allegations as something not worthy of serious investigative journalism. The general tone of the article is dismissive of Ms Turinawe and does not respect the authority of her office. A male politician would not be treated in this manner by *The Observer*.

She loves a bit of a show! As long as you have a camera rolling before her, expect no holds barred from this woman. But it's her defiance stance that has gotten many men worried (Male, 2017, para 8).

The assertion that Ms Turinawe “loves a bit of a show” invokes a longstanding sexist image of an irrational and hysterical woman (Male, 2019, para 8.). The hysterical woman trope stretches from Plato to modern-day popular culture (Mahdawi, 2016). According to Mahdawi (2016, para. 1), “women, we have been told in thousands of ways for thousands of years, are simply more emotional and more irrational than men”. This is the frame that *The Observer* employs to cover women politicians. The quote above is a perfect embodiment of how the newspaper deploys the hysterical women trope to undermine the authority of female politicians in Uganda.

This misogynistic portrayal of Ms Turinawe is carried out under the aegis of “decorum”. For example, the author of the article wrote:

And this begs one question; do some women know when to stop? Well, at the risk of being called names by feminists, don't we have something about decorum, even in the face of agitation for one's rights? (Male, 2017, para 10)

Feminists have long argued that one of the ways patriarchal cultures silences its critics is by demanding decorum, which in this context is tantamount to asking women to conform to patriarchal norms and values so that men can participate in the debate on their own terms. By referring to the need to have a sense of decorum, the newspaper is trying to undermine the legitimacy and the credibility of Ms Turinawe's political views.

In a rather different scenario, the analysis discovered a trivialising and stereotypical portrayal of a parliamentary woman by *The Observer*. The article published on March 6, 2017, was titled “Love for selfies hits MP Nabilah” to portray the former MP for Kampala, Hon. Nabilah Naggayi Sempala, as someone who likes the limelight. The author described her actions as follows.

But for Kampala Woman MP Nabilah Naggayi Sempala, the quarrels and boos did not bother her one bit.

She walked into the chambers two hours after campaigns by aspirants had kicked off, sat down and ignored the chants for and against different candidates. Instead, she

whipped out her rather expensive-looking phone to take selfies (The Observer, 2017, para 2)

Let us first address the boos and quarrels against Hon Nabilah Naggayi Sempala. Shouting down a woman in parliament is a sexist practice that has become standard misogynistic behaviour in patriarchal societies. Stopfner (2018) has indicated that “the quality of heckling changes as soon as a woman is standing at the lectern and that women speakers are more likely to be ironised and ridiculed insinuating that they cannot be taken seriously” (p. 621). According to the Rules and Procedures of the Ugandan Parliament Section 84 (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 2021, p. 102): “It is out of order to use offensive, abusive, insulting, blasphemous or unbecoming words or to impute improper motives to a Member or to make personal allusions”.

Therefore, booing female politicians is unbecoming and sexist behaviour since men dominate the Ugandan parliament. A similar finding is indicated in Shaw (2000), who states that female speakers in parliament tend to “face more rowdiness, jeers and unrest than their male colleagues”, which makes it “difficult for them to get their arguments across” (p. 416). Stopfner (2018) suggests that in the “communicative context of gender-related disruptive parliamentary heckling is aimed at silencing female speakers”, and that in some cases gender is employed as a pertinent social categorisation to “delegitimise women as public speakers in parliament”. In her opinion, women “still have to fight against gender stereotypes to keep the parliamentary floor” (p. 620). The coverage of Hon. Nabilah Naggayi Sempala’s parliamentary incident exposes *The Observer* as complicit in the sexist takedown of female politicians. *The Observer* achieved this through its portrayal of Hon. Nabilah Naggayi Sempala as an emotionally unstable woman who causes uproars in the parliament.

Furthermore, the author in *The Observer* depicts Hon. Sempala as someone who loves showing-off and taking selfies in parliament. According to *The Observer*, Hon. Nabilah Sempala is a celebrity legislator who has dissolved the boundaries between her celebrity and political lifestyles. In doing so, the author undermines her political credibility. Sultan (2010) indicates that women in patriarchal societies are held to a different standard than men. Had Hon. Nabilah Sempala been a man, the media coverage would have been more lenient and less demeaning. Devere and Graham (2006) have indicated that women politicians are likelier to be trivialised and portrayed as diversions from the serious male game of politics. They further

state that the media tends to present women by focusing on their person rather than the issue of debate. Van Acker (2003) argues that the media sets higher standards for women than men in politics and elevate them to a ‘celebrity’ status. However, those women who do not meet these ‘celebrity’ expectations “fall from the pedestal and are often attacked or trivialised” (van Acker, 2003, p. 116). According to van Acker (2003), celebrity status is a media construction that results from media coverage. The coverage of Hon. Nabilah Sempala was meant to portray her as a hysterical celebrity who failed to separate politics from her celebrity lifestyle. Van Acker (2003, p. 116) further states that “media representations of women’s political styles illustrate perceptions about politics that continue to reflect entrenched gender norms”. This seems to be the case with the Ugandan media, which operates in a patriarchal society where gender norms still exert significant influence on media reporting.

In another article published on July 21, 2020, *The Observer* portrayed Ms Sempala as being dramatic for actively participating in the campaigning with Col. Dr Kiza Besigye, a famous male opposition political figure in Uganda. Col. Besigye had offered to campaign for Ms Sempala when she was contesting for the women MP for Kampala. The author Mr Benon Herbert Oluka wrote:

The most compelling drama was, however, saved for the time Besigye campaigned in Kampala. Despite the tensions between her and top FDC officials, Nabilah ensured that she was at the centre of every campaign activity that Dr Besigye engaged in (Oluka, 2020, para 8).

The author further described her as militant and aggressive:

At one point, in between rallies, when police stopped Dr Besigye’s procession, Nabilah went and kicked Dr Besigye’s aide called Musasizi from the co-driver’s seat. The young man humbly went and sat in the boot of Besigye’s Landcruiser, where he sat for the rest of the day (Oluka, 2020, para 9).

By alleging that Ms Sempala kicked Besigye’s driver out of the co-driver’s seat, the author portrays her as violent – a typical demonisation of influential female political leaders in patriarchal societies. This aggression is not expected of women according to the social gender role stereotypes in Ugandan society. According to Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, p. 107), the established gender norms depict women as “naturally emotional sensitive, nurturing and domesticated”.

Moreover, when “a person acts out of their ideal-typical gender role assigned to them through expectations of gender behaviour, the person will be criticised for their gender behaviour” (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007, p. 7). The paper demonises Hon. Nabilah for allegedly acting in a masculine manner, and the coverage would have been different had she been a man. Van Acker (2003) states that the media covers men positively when they depict ‘male’ traits such as being resolute, commanding and competitive. *The Observer* is, therefore, holding Hon. Nabilah to a different standard than men.

On March 6, 2017, *The Observer* Editorial team published an article titled, “Tough Nankabirwa scares Minister Muloni over roads”, to portray Minister Muloni as intimidating. The author wrote:

During a Natural Resources committee meeting with minister of energy Irene Muloni and her team the other week, Nankabirwa expressed disappointment with government’s neglect of Kyankwazi district which neighbors some districts of the oil rich region of Bunyoro. ‘I have seen you have made designs of the oil roads, they are really good.’ On hearing this, Muloni put on a wide smile in appreciation of the compliment by Nankabirwa. Then in a loud tone, Nankabirwa added: ‘You make oil roads, and you don’t include where they are going to pass, will they just fly?’ At that moment, everyone looked scared, and the minister and her team from the ministry and fellow legislators looked at each other without commenting. After adjournment, one official said to colleagues as they hurriedly walked downstairs: ‘Eeeeh, that woman of oil roads is tough’(The Observer Editorial, 2017, para 2)

The quote above portrays Nankabirwa as a combative and intimidating woman. This behaviour would be normalised or portrayed more positively if it was a man in her position. Gidengil and Everitt (2003a, p. 574) state that political reporting exhibits a gender bias and tends to portray female politicians with images of “warfare and violence”, while this is presented as if it is “part of the game” for their male counterparts. The portrayal of Hon. Nankabirwa by *The Observer* was meant to “play up the women’s confrontational behaviour” (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003a, p. 574) and depict her negatively to the public. Galdi et al. (2014) also indicate that the media portrays female politicians as offensive and intimidating – the same image that the author in *The Observer* portrayed. The author also uses anonymous sources to buttress her claims that Nankabirwa was aggressive, disrespectful and unhinged in the way she addressed other meeting attendees.

In conclusion, this chapter uncovers the chauvinistic and sexist way *The Observer* depicts female politicians in its coverage. It can be concluded that *The Observer* newspaper does not follow professional journalistic standards in its coverage of female politicians. The newspaper embraces misogynistic statements made by other male politicians that trivialise female colleagues and uses other trivialising metaphors such as the marital status of female politicians to justify their political success. Furthermore, the newspaper coverage trivialises the sexual harassment cases put forward by female politicians, which reflects society and culture in Uganda that objectifies and disrespects women. *The Observer* also uses the demonisation frame to portray the women it deems are veering from the established societal norms and traditions and those it perceives to challenge the patriarchal political establishment. The newspaper depicts such female politicians as toxic and harmful, as being dramatic and aggressive, among others.

This chapter analysed the way *The Observer* covers female politicians in Uganda using the trivialisation and personalisation and demonisation frames. The next section is Chapter Six which provides the conclusion of the study.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides the conclusion of the study. It starts by giving a general summary of the study. It summarises the frames used by the media to represent female political leaders: the personalisation and trivialisation and demonisation frames. The last two sections provide a general conclusion and recommendations for further study, respectively.

### **6.1 Summary of Study**

As has already been pointed out in the methodology chapter, this thesis employed an FCDA to analyse and unpack the discursive ways in which female politicians are discussed and talked about in the Ugandan media. The rationale of the research project is that the online media portrayals of female politicians in Uganda remain largely unexplored. Therefore, this thesis contributes to ongoing efforts to research and theorise “the implications of online media for women’s political campaigns and for the democratic process itself” in Uganda (Ritchie, 2013, p. 102).

Additionally, the study demonstrated that the media representation of female politicians in Uganda is mainly framed via two discursive frames: the demonisation and the personalisation and trivialisation frames. To reiterate, the demonisation frame involves portraying female politicians as “unladylike”, confrontational, hot-tempered, “unintelligent”, “man-hating”, “crazy” and “deviant” (Johnson-Myers, 2019, p. 205; Lind & Salo, 2002). The personalisation and trivialisation frame, on the other hand, objectifies women politicians by “focusing on their physical appearance, character traits, family, and sexual orientation rather than issues or policies” (Johnson-Myers, 2019, p. 195).

### **6.2 The Personalisation and Trivialisation Frame**

A key finding of the thesis suggests that female politicians in Uganda are primarily portrayed in the online media through gender stereotypes that “diminish their [women’s] place and importance in the political sphere” (Johnson-Myers, 2019, p. 195). The online media in Uganda achieves this by focusing on the marital status of women politicians and not that of men (Johnson-Myers, 2019). This thesis argues that the focus on the marital status of women

politicians functions to cast women politicians “in the shadows of their husbands” (Johnson-Myers, 2019, p. 195).

In the first case, this can be observed in how the *Daily Monitor* covered Hon. Namayanja. According to the newspaper, her marital status contributed immensely to her election as Masaka City Mayor, and they ignored her more than 10 years of political experience. In another article, the *Daily Monitor* attributed Hon. Nandudu’s election victory to her husband’s popularity, regardless of her previous political experience. In the second case, the paper portrayed women as the caretakers of marriage and suggested that for the institution of marriage to continue unhindered, women needed to stay out of politics. The newspaper observed that politics is an exclusive domain for men that women should not interfere with. In the case of unmarried women like Hon. Kadaga, the *Daily Monitor* attributed her success to affirmative action instead of her efforts and experience in politics.

Similarly, *The Observer* indicated that Hon. Nyakecho could only win in Otuke County because she was married to “the son of the soil”. This sexist representation is similar to how the *Daily Monitor* portrayed Hon. Nandudu and Hon. Namayanja whom the paper alleged were helped by their husbands to win elections in their respective positions. The only aspect in which *The Observer’s* coverage differed from the *Daily Monitor’s* is the explicit claim that marriage is a woman’s domain. These findings are similar to those in Donkor’s (2016) study on media coverage of female politicians in Ghana. Donkor (2016, iii) indicates that “women were covered more negatively in sexualised and familial frames, compared to their male colleagues”.

Although it is difficult to fight these gender norms and other gender-associated stereotypes, female politicians can make the media houses accountable for the sexist coverage of women in Uganda. These findings are consistent with other findings, such as Liu (2019), who indicates that the “gender norms imposed upon women often act as a bar on women entering politics” and that “girls are socialised into believing that they do not belong in the political arena because politics is a man’s domain” (p. 14). The feminist view argues that patriarchal hegemony is responsible for establishing these social norms that media houses consciously or subconsciously preserve in society. This is reflected in another study by Ette (2017) in Nigeria that analysed the media coverage of women. Ette’s analysis (2017, p. 1480) indicates that “women do not only occupy limited space in the news media but are also marginalised in political news despite decades of advocacy for gender equality”. Afolabi (2013, p. 6698) asserts

that stereotypes such as the ones used by the media to portray female politicians differently by creating different standards for judging women relative to their male counterparts; this “affects the experiences of women leaders and of women who aspire to leadership positions”.

The study also found that sexual assault claims female politicians made were downplayed in both *The Observer* and *The Daily Monitor* newspapers. They considered them minor; therefore, the victims were “expected to react proportionally to offence seriousness” (Rose et al., 2006 in Muldoon et al., 2016, p. 580). Muldoon et al. (2016) indicate that sexual assault cases regarded as minor can “produce profound deleterious effects on survivors” (p. 566). This can be observed in the *Daily Monitor’s* coverage of Hon. Evelyn Rwabwogo’s case against Brian Isiko. The *Daily Monitor* article downplayed the sexual assault in which the perpetrator sent obscene text messages to Hon. Sylvia Rwabwogo. Similarly, the *Daily Monitor* ridiculed the fact that police groped Ms Ingrid Turinamwe’s breasts during a political protest. Like the case of Hon. Rwabwogo, the newspapers’ coverage does not take the claims seriously, nor does it account for the psychological distress that such sexual incidents have on female politicians and simply dismisses the claims. A potential sign of trauma from similar events on female politicians could be the reporting that “tears rolled down Ms Rwabwogo’s cheeks as she told the court that she started receiving calls admitting love from a stranger” (Ndagire, 2020, Para, 2.). This is consistent with Muldoon et al.’s (2016) findings that “men making obscene telephone calls to women produced fear reactions” and Smith and Morra’s 1994, p. 590) findings that these reactions range from “uneasiness or nervousness to outright terror”. For severe sexual assault cases, like the case of Ms Ingrid Turinawe, Chen et al. (2010) indicated that survivors tend to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety. These accounts described in the findings in Chapter Four and Chapter Five are consistent with the feminist view, for they indicate the trauma sexual assault victims experience when fellow citizens or authorities violate women’s identities.

Finally, the study found that the media trivialised female politicians’ political experiences and portrayed them as sycophants for male politicians. This was mainly observed in the way the *Daily Monitor* covered female politicians. For instance, the *Daily Monitor* portrayed the appointment of Hon. Nyanjura Doreen as a consolation and that she was appointed to be used by a man, Mayor Lukwago, to achieve his political ambitions. Similarly, the same newspaper portrayed two experienced woman, Hon. Betty Kanya and Lieutenant General Judith Nakalema, as sycophants of the president who loved the limelight. This portrayal of female

political figures by the media is consistent with the finding of the UMWA and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2016, p. 5), that the media in Uganda portrays female politicians as “brainless, dependent, indecisive”.

The findings of this study are similar to those of other studies conducted in Uganda by Tamale (1999) and the African Media Barometer Uganda (2016), which maintain that the media trivialises and belittles female politicians and perpetuates women’s subordination. In addition, the findings are related to what is reflected in Mukama (2002 in Maractho, 2017, p. 32) that the media stereotypes women as “domesticated” and “incompetent and inefficient”.

### **6.3 The Demonisation Frame**

Another study finding is that women politicians who do not conform to gender norms in appearance and behaviour are often depicted in the Ugandan online media as “the antithesis of appropriate femininity” (Ritchie, 2013, p. 104). Therefore, women politicians whom the Ugandan media regards as “gender outlaws” are often depicted in the online media as “more quarrelsome”, “angry”, “bitter”, “hysterical”, and “selfish” (Johnson-Myers, 2019, p. 205). The logical conclusion in this sexist portrayal of women politicians is to question these women’s characters and their gender (Ritchie, 2013).

For example, *The Observer* associated gender roles and gender behaviour to describe Hon. Nabilah’s reaction for allegedly kicking Dr Besigye’s driver out of his seat when the police intercepted their campaign. *The Observer* used outright demonising terms to discredit and portray her as an intolerable woman.

Another example is the *Daily Monitor*, which used the term “sweet tongue” as a compliment for her charming personality to Hon. Namayanja, although this was meant to portray her as a manipulative politician and morally questionable (Otto, 2021, Para 3.). The same paper also referred to Ms. Miria Matembe as a “bitter-truth vendor” and “moralist” to mischaracterise her political views (Mugabo, 2020, Para 13). *The Observer’s* coverage of female politicians also portrays Dr Stella Nyanzi as having an “acidic” tongue, implying that she is a social deviant and intolerable to the Ugandan public (Lule, 2017, Para 2.). The *Daily Monitor* also employs demonising metaphors to portray female politicians, as was the case with Ms. Miria Matembe, where the newspaper portrayed her as intimidating, condescending and rude. In addition, it depicted Hon. Anite Evelyn as an emotionally unstable woman and used anonymous sources

to back up the claims made in the article. The media in Uganda is hostile to such powerful female politicians and regards them as threats in the political domain involved in a power struggle to challenge patriarchy, thus the negative coverage. This study's findings relate to Henaku's (2020) in Ghana, where Agyeman-Rawlings was demonised by the media when she was involved in a power struggle in the National Democratic Congress of which her husband was president. Henaku (2020) also indicates that international media targeted Mrs. Grace Ntombizodwa Mugabe with hostile coverage alleging that she wanted to succeed her husband, Robert Mugabe.

Furthermore, the use of unnamed sources was also found to be the case with *The Observer* in which it slandered Hon. Nankabirwa for "loudly" exploding at a colleague, Hon. Minister Muloni in a meeting where the paper did not have a reporter present (The Observer 2017, Para 4.). The manner in which the media represents female politicians in Uganda is consistent with the feminist narrative on media coverage of female politicians as described in Liu (2019) – in that print and broadcast media are sources of bias against women and "often employ and perpetuate gender stereotypes when representing female politicians" and that the "media coverage of female politicians can be both blatantly sexist, as well as subtly discriminatory" (p. 14).

The above findings of this study are consistent with other studies conducted in Uganda and other countries in Africa, which indicate media stereotyping and demonising of female politicians. The study conducted by UMWA (2016 in Maractho, 2017, p. 32) indicates that the media invariably portrays female leaders in high positions as "demonised and isolated as natural snobs". The findings are also similar to Jones' (2015) study in Liberia, which indicated the media use of backhanded labels to refer to female politicians who were demonised.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The study discovered that, generally, the newspapers employed stereotypical and patriarchal coverage of female politicians in Uganda using personalisation, trivialisation and demonisation frames. The study attributes this in part to an unequal representation of male and female authors as most author contributors to the newspapers are men, and few women write articles for the newspapers. For instance, the majority (eight out of 10) of articles analysed in the *Daily Monitor* were written by men. *The Observer* had a slight majority of male authors. Female

authors were observed to write more positively and cautiously about fellow women than the articles written by men. It can be inferred that the lack of a balanced representation of women and men authors in these newspapers partly explains the unfair coverage and more patriarchal narratives from articles written by men. There is a need for more women contributors and journalists to bring the feminine style to media coverage and to challenge the patriarchal narratives that set up a false dichotomy attached to gender that covers women and men in different ways. The transformation could start in institutions training journalists, which Ahikire (2003) suggests are structured to promote patriarchal narratives. Deconstructing patriarchy through training journalists in learning institutions could help develop a new breed of journalists (male and female) that are conscious of patriarchal narratives and, ultimately, improve the coverage of female politicians in Uganda's media.

In addition, both newspapers' coverage of female politicians reflected entrenched deep-rooted social and cultural norms and traditions in Uganda. The findings indicated a direct relationship between the social and cultural beliefs and newspapers' coverage of aspects such as sexual harassment and objectification of women, gender role stereotypes and marital status which newspapers used as a basis to trivialise and demonise female politicians. For women to be on a level playing ground in the political domain with men in Uganda, there is a need to sensitise the public about sexism in politics and negatively biased media coverage of politicians. There is also a need to hold malicious newspapers accountable like seeking court action against newspapers that publish slanderous stories about female politicians based on their gender.

### **Recommendations for further study**

This study primarily focused on understanding how women are portrayed by the two media organisations using online news articles; therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised. Future studies on media representation of female politicians could expand on the scope of the study to include more media organisations and various sources, including print and visual.

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