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# Attitudes towards Affirmative Action Policies' Implementation in Local Politics in Tanzania: A Case of Misungwi District, Mwanza Region<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

For about two decades, Affirmative Action (AA) policies, particularly *Quotas* and/or *Special Seats* have been substantial measures for increasing women's political representation and participation in developing countries and Tanzania in particular. However, attitudes related obstructions influences AAs' implementation in the country. With this rationale, this study was conducted in Misungwi District to assess factors influenced attitudes towards AAs' implementation. A key question in this study was: *Do sex, awareness/knowledge on Affirmative Actions (AAs) and duration in local leadership positions influences respondent's views towards AA's implementation?* Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and documentary reviews. The analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 13. Findings revealed that, more women had positive attitudes towards AA's implementation as opposed to men. Knowledge on reasons for Affirmative Action's introduction was also positive. In addition, respondent's attitudes were positive for respondents stayed six years and above in local leadership positions. Though it was a case study findings depicted a real picture of most District Councils in Tanzania. The study concluded that negative views towards AAs' implementation exacerbated women's under-representation as well as poor participation in local politics. Finally, we recommend that the family, schools and political parties should be entry points to eliminate negative attitudes towards AAs' implementation in Misungwi District and the nation at large. Public gender awareness campaigns, accompanied with empowerment programmes are also highly recommended in this regard.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Affirmative Action policies, Implementation, Local politics, Women participation, Misungwi District, Mwanza, Tanzania

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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<sup>1</sup> **Kabote S.J** (2009). Attitudes towards Affirmative Action Policies Implementation in Local Politics in Tanzania: A Case of Misungwi District, Mwanza Region. *Journal of African Studies* 25: 83-102.

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Gender representation and participation in politics have come to be an issue that has gained not only global but also regional and local significance in recent years. The reason for this trend is among other things related to the socialization process taking place at the family level, school and society in general, which women undergo during their development process (Massoi, 2003). With this thesis, women have remained underprivileged in local political structures in terms of access and active participation in Tanzania and Misungwi District in particular, even under Affirmative Action's (AAs) implementation epoch (United Nations, 1992:44; Francis, 2005; Shayo, 2005)

Quotas (commonly named *Special Seats*) of 25% and 30%-in form of Affirmative Actions (AAs) have been implemented in Tanzania for about two decades at local and parliamentary level respectively to address women's under-representation in politics. The endeavours of which mounted women members of parliament from 16% to 21% in 2000, and up to 30.4% in December 2005 (Johnson and Mosha, 2004; Solomon, 2006; Samwel, 2008). However, by 2005, no any woman was reported to hold chairperson position in District Full Councils (DFCs) and/or mayor in Tanzania. Overall, women representation in villages and District Full Councils continued to diminish (URT, 2005; Samwel, 2008). For-instance, Women Councillors (WCs) in Misungwi District were 8 (29.6%) compared to 19 (70.4%) of their male counterparts by 2007. In addition, eighty eight percent (88%) of Women Councillors were chosen through AA arrangements (Samwel, 2008). This study assessed factors influenced attitudes towards Affirmative Action's implementation in Misungwi District and how these attitudes affected gender representation in local politics in the District.

## 2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE

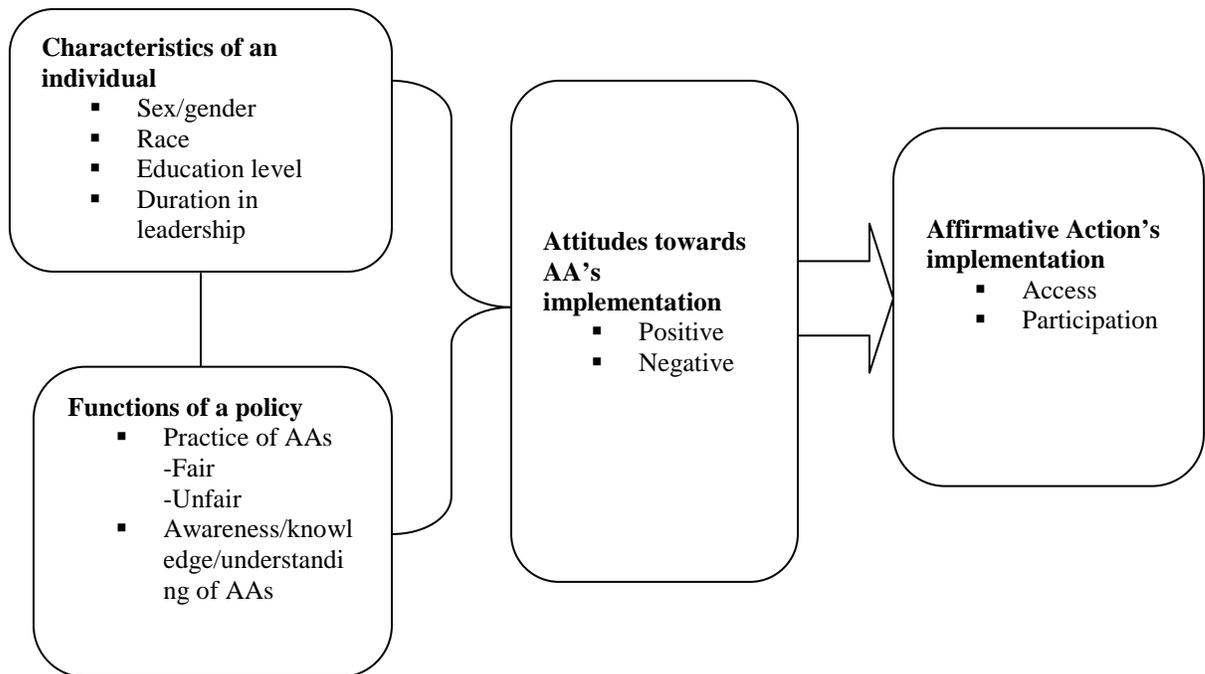
Affirmative Action (AA) policies such as target system, quota system and special measures aims at realizing two objectives: first, to reach out and encourage historically disadvantaged groups such as women; and second, to permit preferential treatment in belief that preference will remedy past discrimination (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2003). Special measures are taken in recognition of existing gender inequalities for the purpose of enabling women to overcome those inequalities. Arguably, these measures must be reasonably intended to provide substantive equality such as gender equality. A report by Princeton University (2005) highlighted that special measures must only last as long as gender inequalities still exist and are no longer resolved.

The Quota system, on the other hand, is implemented through legislation by employing a certain minimum number of workers to ensure that a given proportion of employees consist of designated people with special needs such as women (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2003). In Tanzania, quotas are referred to as *Special Seats*. A quota may be voluntary or mandatory (Meena, 2003). Some of key features for mandatory quota system include guiding principles, legislative framework, quota percentage as well as eligibility criteria for the quota. In addition, a quota should never be executed in isolation, instead implemented along side other measures such as capacity building programmes (Shayo, 2005). Nevertheless, target system considers rights based anti-discrimination laws for disadvantaged groups including women (Sheridan, 1998). It is a form of voluntary quota that includes women in different spheres and at different levels to address under-representation.

Crosby *et al* (2006) articulated three importances of Affirmative Action (AAs) policies: first, AAs assure gender diversity in politics, work places and schools including universities. Second, they ensure that decisions in political decision-making structures are fair; and third, they safeguard a well functioning society. In a well functioning society, women may make contributions to society in an even greater proportion than their men counterparts, in terms of professional works. However, AAs may undermine women through promotion of stereotypes that treats women as weak in different context (Johnson and Mosha, 2004).

## 2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1: Factors Influencing Attitudes towards Affirmative Actions Implementation



Source: Constructed by the researcher from literature, 2007

In this study, attitudes were referred to as respondent's opinion about Affirmative Action (AA) and their ideas of what it is like. Figure 1 informs that attitudes towards AA's implementation are influenced by two factors. One is function of a policy: attitudes towards AAs vary as a function of how AA policy and its practice are portrayed or understood. For-instance, "Soft" forms of AAs such as outreach programmes are favoured over "hard" forms such as programmes that use race or gender as a tiebreaking factor in hiring decisions (Crosby *et al.*, 2006). People who view AA as a gender preference dislike it rather than people who view it differently. Generally, the fairer a practice is perceived to be, the more highly it is rated.

Second, attitudes towards AAs vary as a function of characteristics of an individual in terms of sex, race, education, number of years stayed in political leadership positions, and general prejudice (Crosby *et al.*, 2006). Crosby *et al* (2006) reported that women endorse AAs much more strongly than men. The endorsement of AAs is generally, but not always, greater among people of colour than among white people. Golden *et al* (2001) cited by Crosby *et al* 2006 found that people with higher education level supported AAs more than people with lower and/or no formal education. Similarly, those stayed in leadership positions for a long time tends to support AAs than those with shorter period. In terms of prejudice and political ideology, the opposition to AAs is greater among those who believe that women are weaker, less intelligent and less important than men (Crosby *et al.*, 2006). The remaining part of this paper examines factors influencing attitudes that limit AAs' implementation in Misungwi District. The study assumed that positive attitudes towards Affirmative Action's (AAs) would result into effective AAs' implementation as opposed to negative attitudes (Figure 1).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Location of the Study Area

This study was conducted in Misungwi district in September to November 2007. The district lies between 2<sup>0</sup> and 3<sup>0</sup> 30' South of the equator, 31<sup>0</sup> 45' to 33<sup>0</sup> 30' East of the Greenwich. It is a new district in Mwanza (Lake Zone area) region established by an Act of Parliament in July 1995 after being sub-divided from Kwimba district; and is one of eight districts in the region. The district share borders with Geita and Sengerema districts on its West and North-western part, Kwimba district to its East, and Ilemela, Nyamagana, and Magu districts to its North-east and North (Misungwi District Council, 2004.).

#### 3.2 Sample, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Table 1: Sample Size Distribution for the Study in Numbers and Percentages (n=60)

Category	M		F		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
District Councillors	9	23.6	8	36.4	17	28.3
Village chairpersons	2	5.2	0	0.0	2	3.3
Chairpersons at hamlet level	4	10.5	0	0.0	4	6.6
Village Executive Officers	5	13.1	0	0.0	5	8.3
Ward Executive Officers	3	7.8	0	0.0	3	5.0
Division secretaries	0	0.0	2	9.0	2	3.3
Political party chairpersons	5	13.1	0	0.0	5	8.3
Political party secretaries	6	15.7	0	0.0	6	10.0
Political party sensitizers	0	0.0	1	4.5	1	1.6
Head of departments	2	5.2	2	9.0	4	6.6
Ordinary people	1	2.6	7	31.8	8	13.3
Member of village council	1	2.6	2	9.9	3	5.0
Total	38	100.0	22	100.0	60	100.0

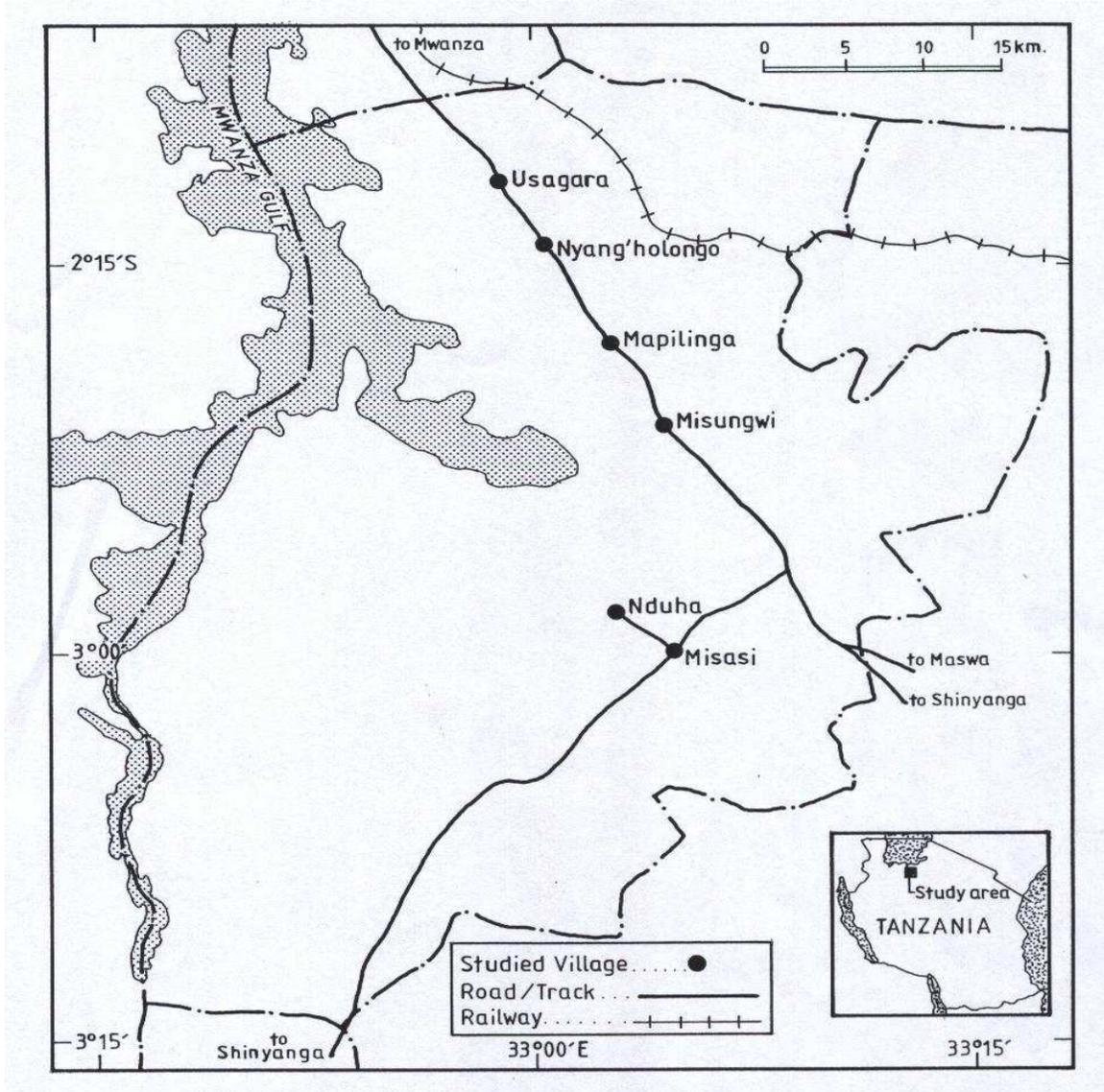
Source: Field data, 2007

M=Male; F=Female

Table 1 portrays that the sample for this study encompassed three major categories of respondents including political leaders, local government leaders and ordinary people. For triangulation purposes three divisions out of four (4), six wards out of twenty (20)

and six villages out of seventy eight (78) were selected for the study. In addition, sixty (60) respondents were involved [38(63.3%) males, 22(36.7%) females].

Figure 1: Map of Misungwi District Showing Location of Selected Villages for the Study



Source: Field data, 2007

During this study, two sampling methods were used: simple random and purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select key informant respondents (KIRs). KIRs meant local political and local government leaders assumed to be knowledgeable

about issues under study. Selection of divisions and wards was done purposively based on number of women councillors. Villages were also purposively chosen based on existence of good roads and public transport for easy accessibility (Fig 1).

### **3.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

The study used questionnaire whereby both open-ended and closed-ended questions were administered. Other techniques used for data collection include focus group discussions (FGDs) and documentary reviews. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 13. Simple descriptive statistics such as cross tabulation were done and data presented in tables and bar-graphs. Data from documentary reviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were broken down into small categories called units and then organized to describe phenomena under study.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Respondent's Key Characteristics**

Sixty three percent of respondents involved in this study were males while thirty seven were females. Most of leadership positions among respondents were held by men 37(62%), where as women occupied 15 (38%). Higher positions such as chairperson of the District Full Council and village chairpersons were held by men. Surprisingly, three women out of four positions were reported as Division Secretaries. It should be noted that division secretary in Tanzania is nominated not elected; this was a reason why there was many women division secretaries than men. A few numbers of women were political party mobilizers, heads of departments, District Councillors as well as members of the Village Council (VC). These findings were in line with Francis (2005), Shayo (2005),

Massoi (2003) and United Nations (1992) who reported inadequate women representation in politics including governance institutions in developing countries and Tanzania in particular.

Findings also showed that majority of respondents 49(81.7%) were mature aged between 28-57 years (table 2). This was the age group whereby most respondents were still in formal employment. Respondents within this age group were also still physically and mentally active with regard to participation in local politics and thus supposed to be knowledgeable about Affirmative Action policies as their connected with women participation in local politics.

Table 2: Respondent's Age Distribution

Age Group	M		F		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
18-27	2	5.2	4	18.2	6	10.0
28-37	10	26.3	5	22.7	15	25.0
38-47	11	28.9	4	18.2	15	25.0
48-57	12	31.6	7	31.9	19	31.7
58-67	1	2.8	2	9.0	3	5.0
68 and above	2	5.2	0	0.0	2	3.3
Total	38	100.0	22	100.0	60	100.0

Source: Field data, 2007

M=Male; F=Female

#### 4.2 Reasons for Introduction of Affirmative Actions (AAs) in Misungwi District

Table 3: Respondents' Knowledge on Reasons for Introducing AAs in Misungwi District in Numbers and Percentage (n=60)

Reasons For Introduction of Affirmative Actions	M		F		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 To bring gender equality and equity in politics and leadership arena	8	21.1	5	22.7	13	21.6
2 To integrate women ideas in decision-making and development	6	15.8	9	40.9	15	25.0
3 Increase women's representation in political decision-making organs	6	15.8	1	4.5	7	11.7
4 An opportunity to empower women's participation in politics	5	13.1	2	9.1	7	11.7
5 Provide women's leadership right that has been denied	4	10.5	2	9.1	6	10.0
6 Help women because they hardly compete with men for leadership	5	13.1	1	4.5	6	10.0
7 Don't know	4	10.5	2	9.1	6	10.0
8 Total	38	100.0	22	100.0	60	100.0

Source: Field data, 2007

M=Male; F=Female

Overall, findings revealed that majority 54(90%) of respondents were aware of the reasons for introduction of AAs in the District. Reasons were: to facilitate integration of women's ideas of concern in the decision-making process so as to bring gender equality and equity in local politics sphere of influence. This finding informs that women's voice had not been taken into consideration before introduction of Affirmative Actions (AAs) in the District. This signifies that, AA policies were expected to eliminate women's discrimination, exclusion and oppressions in terms of political decision-making. Second, AAs were aimed to increase women's representation and simultaneously empower women's political participation, provide leadership rights for women; and hence, relevant to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number three that aims at gender equality and women empowerment. In addition, introduction of AA policies aimed at empowering women in terms of leadership skills. These findings suggested positive attitudes towards Affirmative Action policies in Misungwi District.

In theoretical literature reasons for introducing AAs in local politics to enhance women's representation are explained by three arguments: first, women's interest and needs differ from those of men due to different socialization processes. With this view point women are best placed to articulate their own concerns that cannot be sufficiently represented by men. Second, equal representation of men and women in politics is a democratic principle. Since 1990s Tanzania embarked on multi-party politics as a way to express democratic principles (Johnson and Mosha, 2004). Within this view point it is undemocratic and breach of human rights to exclude women in political and governance structures.

The third argument is based on demographic perspectives: women occupy 51% of the entire global population including Tanzanian population and Misungwi District in particular. Under-representation of women in local politics and key decision-making organs implies that decisions affecting grassroots are made by people representing less than half of the population (Johnson and Mosha, 2004).

### **4.3 Views on Importance and Satisfaction of AA's Implementation in Misungwi District**

Although the proportion of female respondents was less than males, all female 22 (100%) than males 34 (89.4%) viewed AAs implementation very important and or important. A few men 4 (6.7%) had different views including neutral; and to them AA policies were not important. We also articulate that women highly accepted AA policies than their men counterparts. Putting these findings in different ways, we can argue that more women had

positive attitudes towards AA's implementation than men probably due to agonies women suffer from their exclusion in political spheres in the District (Figure 1).

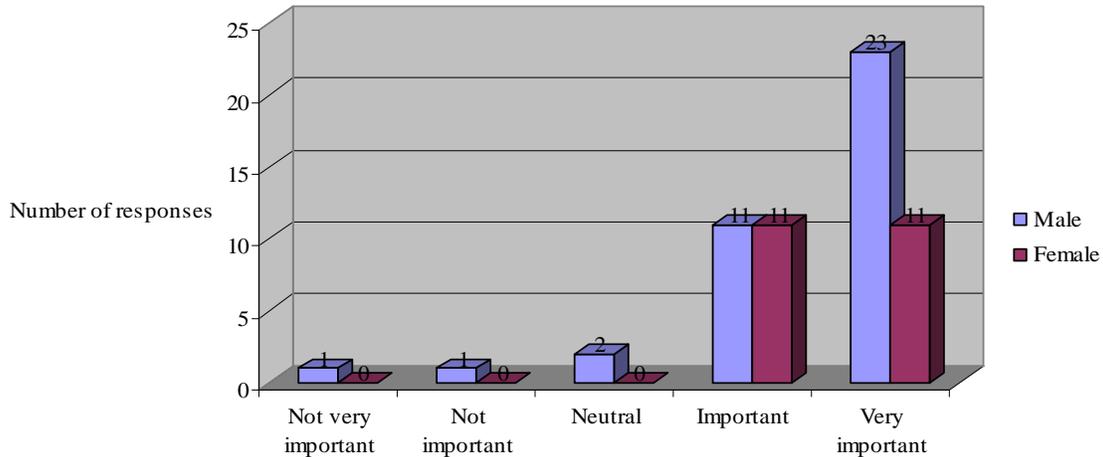


Figure 1: Respondents' Views towards AA's Implementation

The study argues that male's negative views could decelerate AA's implementation. Such men viewed AAs as means to propagate women's weaknesses. For instance, one male respondent said: *"...Women who joined political leadership through Affirmative Action (AA) policies are not aware of their tasks and responsibilities, not even accountable to people, this perpetuates women's weaknesses; if women are capable why should they not compete with men and win the position in constituencies?..."*, such views were strong and could adversely slow down AAs' implementation and hence exacerbate women's under-representation as well as poor participation in political arena. Findings also revealed that 55(91.7%) respondents were satisfied with AAs' implementation (Figure 2). However, 4 (10.5%) males compared to 1 (4.5%) females were dissatisfied by the way AA policies were implemented, probably due to too much dealing with numbers than qualitative aspects such as women's capacity to influence decisions (Figure 2).

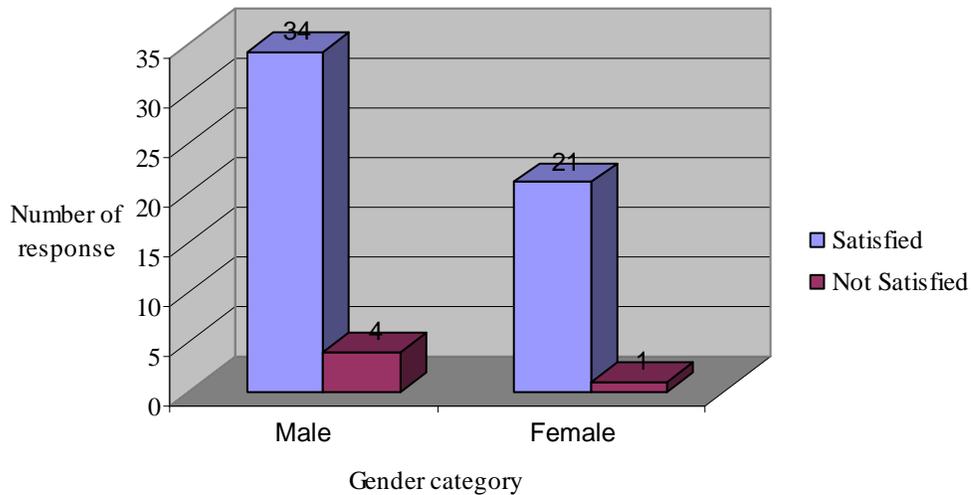


Figure 2: Respondents' Satisfaction on Affirmative Action's Implementation

#### 4.4 Attitudes and Number of Years Stayed in Leadership Positions

Veterans in leadership (respondents who had a lot of leadership experience because of long-term service) had positive views towards Affirmative Actions (AAs) implementation. For example, 100% of respondents who stayed in leadership positions for more than 11 years compared to 94% who stayed in leadership for 1-5 years and 89% who stayed in leadership for 6-10 years were supportive towards AA's implementation (Table 4). The reasons could be that those kind of respondents were most informed through experience about importance of Affirmative Action (AA) policies and therefore, more supportive in terms of attitudes than those who had short-term period such as less than one year. The implication was that Affirmative Actions were substantial measures as pointed out by Sheridan (1998) that could be able to increase women access to and participation in local politics and hence address gender inequality in political as well as governance institutions in the district.

Table 4: Percentage Responses towards AAs with Regard to Duration in Leadership Position (n=52)

CATEGORY	Number of Years Stayed In Leadership Position in Percentage					Total
	<1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	15+	
Not very important	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
Not important	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
Neutral	25.0	0.0	11.1	0.0	0.0	6.8
Important	25.0	25.0	44.4	12.5	33.3	27.3
Very important	37.5	68.7	44.4	87.5	66.7	61.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Field data, 2007

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Respondent's attitudes towards Affirmative Action's (AA) implementation were positive in Misungwi District. More female respondents however, had positive attitudes towards AAs implementation than male respondents. Respondent's knowledge on Affirmative Action policies also, suggested positive attitudes towards AAs implementation. Similarly, the more number of years respondent's had in leadership positions the more positive were their attitudes towards Affirmative Action's implementation. However, a few number of male respondents had negative views that could impinge AA's implementation efforts to address gender inequality in political spheres. Negative attitudes connoted constraints towards increasing women's access to and participation in local politics in the District and the nation at large.

The study recommends equality in education and socialization process for all community institutions including the family, schools and political parties. Public gender awareness

campaigns regardless of a political party affiliation are also highly recommended. The paper also recommends that implementation of Affirmative Action policies should be accompanied by gender empowerment programmes to address negative views including gender stereotypes that adversely affect development endeavours in the District. If real we need positive development transformation at local level in Tanzania, policy makers should organize gender awareness campaigns as well as gender empowerment programmes to accompany Affirmative Action policies so as to increase women's access to and participation in local politics.

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