

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND GENDER INEQUALITY: AN IN-DEPTH  
EVALUATION OF STRIDES MADE ON SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF GENDER  
INEQUALITY**

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***Abstract***

*The study explores affirmative action and its significance as a strategy that guarantees the inclusion and protection of minorities within societies and further examines the fundamental strides for resolving gender inequality problems. Furthermore, the assessment involves collected works of scholars and public papers from countries like Kenya, Ghana, India, USA, and Norway within four continents while using the Systematic Quantitative Assessment (SQAT) methodology. The central research question reads; Has affirmative action been an effective tool for addressing the problems of gender inequality? The findings divulged that affirmative action had been an effective apparatus for solving gender inequality related challenges but the bold achievement is dependent on economic structure and gender laws of a nation, which is visibly engraved in most countries' constitution through the two-thirds gender law, though there is no specific structure that enables optimum implementation. The study recommends notable campaigns, awareness, and implementation structured in favor of affirmative action.*

**Keywords:** *Affirmative Action , Gender, Gender Inequality, Minority.*

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## **1. Introduction**

An eloquent food for thought reads if one dislikes affirmative action, what plan does one have to ensure a leveled turf of opportunity (Maynard Jackson, 2019). The preexistent quote is distinctively projected from the policy and public debate on affirmative action by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in an attempt to protect the marginalized in the society; strongly propelled by laudable efforts of Nations in the 2030 UN Program for Sustainable Development geared towards providing increased opportunities to demeaned citizens within member nations (Mulligan, 2017; Madsen, 2018; Bush, 2019). Affirmative action can be defined as an actionable approach that emanates when organizations allocate resources (involving time and money) to asseverate that individuals do not endure segregation constructed on the premise of gender or ethnicity (Drucza, 2017; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018; Fleischmann & Burgmer, 2019).

Globally, affirmative action is designed for impartial clear run to guard against bigotry, to publicize jobs and to effectuate bursarship programs so as to enable specific groups gain the chance of recruitment in the future (Drucza, 2017; Foley & Willamsom, 2018; Fleischmann & Burgmer, 2019). The aforementioned statement is unsurprising considering the bold strides made by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) to address the drivers of affirmative action as well as minimize historical segregation related to women or minorities and people from a low social class (Rasumssen, 2017; Sommer & Asal, 2018; Fleischman & Burgmer, 2019).

Neoteric scholarship on gender inequality elucidates the dynamics and prospective impact of affirmative action (Nahmo et al., 2017; Potokri & Perumal, 2018; Bush, 2019). The most commonly underpinned focus among the stimulators of affirmative action are gender quotas (women representation) and female education (Girard, 2018; Elias, 2018; Cassan, 2018).

With respect to gender quotas, scholars reveal that affirmative action platform is pivotal in ensuring meaningful and cognizable representation (Allen & Cutts, 2018; Grajzi & Obasanjo, 2019; Hughes & Paxton, 2019). As more countries adopt affirmative action, advocated for by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) relevant emphasis was laid on proper comprehension and implementation of the type of quota (i.e. reserved seats, quotas for probable legislative candidates and discretionary party quotas) structure that ensures utmost possible outcome suitable and beneficial for public policy in both developed and developing countries (Poloski Vokic et al., 2019, Grajzi & Obasanjo, 2019; Shinbrot et al., 2019).

Relevant scholarships further depicted that a higher number of women on government have an efficacious effect on gender inequality (Irvine & Halterman, 2018; Connell, 2018; Ladman et al., 2018). However, as well as enabling them to eke out a living (Dahm & Esteve-Gonzalez, 2018; Elias, 2018; Moyo & Dhilwayo, 2019).

In connection with female education, the rising recognition for education has paved the way for female education which has been substantially advocated for by consortium of Non-Governmental Organizations (Irvine & Halterman, 2018; Humber et al., 2019, Shinbrot et al., 2019). Scholars infer that the role of organizations in addressing gender inequality is positive as the scope is widen to underscore the relevance of organizations in facilitating movements against assault toward women (Faniko et al., 2019; Anderson-Faithful & Goodman; 2019; Cassan, 2019).

History on female education showed how understanding education, recollection of girls growing up, female access to tertiary education and professionalism have been molded by the dominant position of gender, class, ethnicity and race in modern thought (Nhamo et al., 2017; Humber et al., 2019; Shinbrot et al., 2019). The ideology and practices of female education is influenced by the perceptions of nations and internationalisms, geographic structure and political skirt which sharpens the concept of girlhood and womanhood in varied and fragmented ways (Mulligan, 2017; Allen & Cutts, Madsen, 2018).

Efficacy of affirmative action on gender inequality differs in approach and practice round the world as different sovereign countries implement in deferent variation as to the system of government they practice, and so does the developmental level of the country (Viswanath,2018; Wekerle et al.,2019; Yamaguchi, 2019). Thus, the implementation level in the first world countries differs from that of the third world countries (Viswanath,2018; Wekerle et al.,2019; Yamaguchi, 2019).

This study consulted peer reviewed articles and books that critically discussed on the subject matter and equally recognized the notable advocacy of NGO's in order to answer the central research query Has affirmative action been an effective tool for addressing gender inequality?

Subsequent segmentations of this study are dissected as follows: the methodology, the discussion and findings where literary works are gauged, the efficacy of affirmative action in congruence with gender inequality in various countries thus proffering answers to the central

research question; followed by the recommendation and finally the conclusion where the limitations of the study are laid out as well as gap for further research.

## **2. Methodology**

In conducting a critical review on affirmative action as an effective tool in addressing gender inequality questions, the inquiry espoused the Systematic Quantitative Assessment Technique (SQAT) instigated by Pickering & Byrne (2013). SQAT depicts effectiveness in the modus by which literary evidences are evaluated to savvy their insertion or elimination in the retrospective design and the focus is on the peer-viewed journal articles and books with an eye on superiority of literary works (Pickering & Byrne, 2013). The study postulates SQAT as being thorough, of comprehensible usage and effortless reproduction, summing up vital mechanisms of a critical appraisal.

SQAT exhorts five essential phases in piloting an efficacious review. Progressive phases and their utilization in the study is limned in Table 1 which are depicted below:

**Table: 1 Description and application of SQAT**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>STEP</b>	<b>APPLICATION OF CURRENT STUDY</b>
1	Define topic	Affirmative action as an effective tool for addressing the problems of gender inequality.
2	Formulation of research question	Singular central research question: Has affirmative action been an effective tool for addressing the problem of gender inequality?.
3	Identification of key words	affirmative action , Gender Inequality
4	Identification and apt search on data bases	1) 12 databases utilized: Emerald; Elsevier; Sage; Springer; Taylor and Francis; Wiley; Cambridge; JSTOR; Oxford; Inderscience; Igenta; HeinOnline 2) All in title search using 4 combinations Affirmative action + gender Affirmative action + inequality Affirmative action + past discrimination Affirmative action + Affirmative action + gender discrimination

		3) Anywhere in the article using 3 combinations: Affirmative action + gender inequality Criticism + Female employment Affirmative action + discrimination overturn
5	Explicate and access publication	1) Abstracts of works reported were read to certify that they discussed the effectiveness of affirmative action in tackling gender inequality. 2) It included books and literature reviews of peer-reviewed conceptual and empirical papers.

The table above clearly describes the effective and efficient critical description and application of SQAT. Thus a total of sixty-eight peer-reviewed English affirmative action articles and eighteen books met the desired standards from the twelve databases. More so, given the rareness of texts on affirmative action, the journals are collocated with books so as to gain an exhaustive over view of the concept of affirmative action, in order to ascertain whether or not it has been effective tool for addressing problems gender inequality.

**Table 2: Details of literatures consulted (1987-2020)**

S/N	Database	Number of peer-reviewed articles	Conference proceedings	Books
1	Emerald	1	-	-
2	Elsevier	9	-	1
3	Sage	17	-	2
4	Springer	13	-	10
5	Taylor and Francis	6	-	5
6	Wiley	15	-	-
7	Cambridge	3	-	-
8	JSTOR	2	-	-
9	Oxford	1	-	-
10	Inderscience	1	-	-
11	Igenta	-	-	-
12	HeinOnline	-	-	-
Total		68	-	18

From the aforementioned table, a total of sixty-eight peer-reviewed articles and eighteen books illustrating affirmative action and gender inequality were dully consulted and used to educe cogent nexus of the central research question; Has affirmative action been an effective tool for addressing the problems of gender inequality? as of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

### **3. Discussions of How affirmative action Has Been an Effective Tool in Addressing the Problem of Gender Inequality**

#### **3.1. Africa: Kenya**

In Kenya, affirmative action predominately took on a gender standpoint (Taylor, 2004). This perception has long been at the epicenter of deliberation (Taylor, 2004; Vlassoff & Moreno, 2002). Majority of people are accustomed to affirmative action in linkage to university admission where the benchmark for female university aspirants are placed lower than those of their male counterparts thus spurring loftier Female access to education (Taylor, 2004; Tinker, 2004). In 2004, Hon. Phoebe Asiyo laid bare a gesture on affirmative action to amplify women's active engagement in the sphere of leadership actuating at least 33% of the decision making process in parliament and local authorities, a resolution which was solidly opposed (Morley, 2005). In 2004 Hon. Beth Mugo once more brought forth an identical motion which was passably fruitful which was sent to the Kenyan Constitutional Review Commission (KCRC) reviewing the Kenyan Bomas Constitution (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Adeya, 2004). The stipulation was popularized in the Bomas Draft, which sprouted the Wako Draft that was relinquished in a referendum in 2005 (Ainsworth et al., 2010; Lee Williams & Nichols, 2012). Nonetheless, the 2010 Kenya Constitution was gender receptive, as it vividly spelled out affirmative action tactics that showcased women in the vanguard (Beaurain & Masclet, 2016; Waweru & Prot, 2018). It's been the acumen that women are demeaned in Kenya (Calnitsky, 2019; Schmidt, 2019) dissecting the 1<sup>st</sup> general election to the most recent general election in 2017, of which men were the majority in parliament (Kagoda, 2019; Yamaguchi, 2019). In the first parliamentary stint during 1963, there were no female Prime Minister. The representation of women has only faintly improved. The Parliament had 4.1% female representation in 1997, 8.1% in 2002 and 9.8% in 2007 (Kagoda, 2019; Waweru & Prot, 2018). With the 2020 Constitution stipulating the two-thirds gender law, the 2013 general elections detailed measly 16 from an entirety of 290 women were voted in parliamentarians and, in 2017, the female parliamentary representative increased significantly to 21% as a result of the

enactment of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) affirmative action effort (Waweru & Prot, 2018; Weatherspoon, 2019).

### **3.2. Africa: Ghana**

There are (2) eras of affirmative action in Ghana (Tripp, 2016). The first era of affirmative action policies in Ghana are those that were introduced in the first republic till the culmination of the 1960s, while the second era of affirmative action was instigated since the 1980s (Shabaya & Konadu-Agyemang, 2004; Tripp, 2016). The first generation interventions concentrated on provincial variances and rural differences, even though there were some initiatives under Nkrumah regime to tackle gender inequalities in politics, education and work (Atuahene, 2014). Second generation affirmative action focused mainly on class, rural and urban differentials (Atuahene, 2014). Although the affirmative action of the second generation is of sole interest in this report, since it targets women in deriving their legitimacy from the 1998 Ghana Cabinet's Administrative Directive (Abor, 2017; Kluegel & Smith, 2017). Founded on the commendations for affirmative action in Ghana by an NGO known as the National Council for Women Development (NCWD), formerly known national women's machinery, the Administrative Directive established some directives for the methodical and consistent application of the innumerable facets of affirmative action for women's equal rights and opportunities in Ghana (Baah-Boateng, 2014). The Directive acknowledged that Ghana was an ardent member of the UN General Assembly that endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was properly endorsed without reservation by the government, and the government also partook soundly in the rumination of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Discussion on Women in Beijing 1995 which were the dispositions of affirmative action policies (Adeabah et al., 2019; Weatherspoon, 2019).

### **3.3. Critical Success Factors of affirmative action in Ghana**

Affirmative action has chalked successes in Ghana particularly. The first success is visibility and the establishment of public concern about the problems and the demands for affirmative action (Adeabah et al., 2019; Baah-Boateng, 2014). In Ghana, the infancy of several Affirmative policies in health, education and politics means that some of the improvements in the situation of women in these areas have not been properly attributed to affirmative action (Adusei-Asante, Hancock, & Oliveira, 2015). Since 2003, the Ministry of Health had established a maternal exemption policy and oversaw the delivery program in three deprived

of the four northern regions and the central region as these enabled women to have supervised deliveries for free (Adusei-Asante et al., 2015).

Prior to this, the Ministry provided exemptions for antenatal payments, children under five and certain types of diseases in establishments with primary health centers (Adusei-Asante et al., 2015; Morley et al., 2009). These initially experienced difficulties due to lack of clarity about reimbursements. Education figures showed clear improvements for girls, but particularly in the Southern part of Ghana (Atuahene, 2014; Baah-Boateng, 2014). Again, the percentage that can be accredited to affirmative action policies is not entirely clear. They have certainly made a difference, though the degree of difference has to be resolved (Atuahene, 2014). More importantly, in policy cycles there is some sort of a backlash (Baah-Boateng, 2014). Several policy makers and implementers argue that extra attention and resources are given to girls who are ignored (Baah-Boateng, 2014). Affirmative action is directed to all girls including those from privileged benefits (Adusei-Asante et al., 2015; Atuahene, 2014; Baah-Boateng, 2014).

### **3.4. Asia: India**

In India, the affirmative action since 1950s launches quotas for historically contradistinguished castes (Asadullah & Yalonetzky, 2012; Calsamiglia, Franke, & Rey-Biel, 2013; Francis & Tannuri-Pianto, 2012). It ensures their admittance into public educational institutions and engagement in the public sector. The empirical findings on the effectiveness of Indian affirmative action are variegated. Asadullah & Yalonetzky (2012) found the educational accomplishment by the beneficiaries from 1936 to be inconsequential unmatched with those who became beneficiaries in 1976 (Higham & Shah, 2013). Antithetically, study found that the vacuum from beneficiaries to non-beneficiaries is tapering; however, there are still hurdles for finding suitable employment. Cassan (2019), avers that beneficiaries are muddled in academic programs by uncovering an evidence for the mismatch theory as an after math of India's grapple with affirmative action . In contrast, there is no such evidence found by (Asadullah & Yalonetzky,2012). In response to affirmative action critique of reducing productivity, Sabharwa et al. (2020) analyses the productive dexterity in Indian Academia, one of the largest firm utilizing policy beneficiaries, but found no indicator for such an effect.

### **3.5. North America: United States of America (USA)**

The beneficiaries of American affirmative action (USA) have been Black minorities and female (Title VII to the 1964 Civil Rights Act), dealings which encompassed university admissions and employment via federal contractors (Dubourdieu, 2006; Combs & Nadkarni, 2005). Nussbaum (2002), found that the policy tremendously improved the vocational engagement of Blacks, with heftier effects for Black females. He finds no evidence for noteworthy improvement of White female employment due to the policy.

Combs & Nadkarni (2005), scrutinizes the impact of USA's affirmative action on female and minority métier 1973 to 2003, exploring the disparity of firms in coordinating federal contracting. They revealed that the shares of American Blacks and Natives, alongside men in diverse ventures jacked up rapidly in the first four years of becoming a contractor (Wise, 1998). Nevertheless, the preeminent impact occurred in 1970s and 1980s and began to degenerate thereafter. Recently, some states in the U.S have disallowed affirmative action for university admissions (Smith, 1998).

Hinrichs (2012), gauges the effects of the restriction on college admission and educational accomplishment by maneuvering time and state discrepancies in bans. He finds no contrastive effects for a conventional college or a student but for fastidious colleges (top tier) he recognizes that the prohibition decreased the portion of underrepresented groups and elevated the share of White (majority) acceptance. He further postulates some distinct cases (University of California), that redirected the ban by stirring the portion of minority groups from fastidious colleges to less selective ones.

#### **Critical Success Factor of affirmative action in the USA**

In the USA the first word that calls to mind at the mention of affirmative action is the question of race, discrimination against women and men is equally common in inequality. Although affirmative action has theoretically provided a balance of equal opportunity for minorities, it flaws in action (Nussbaum, 2002; Shaffer, Joplin, Bell, Lau, & Oguz, 2000; Wise, 1998).

Affirmative action has helped women to transcend some of the discrimination they face even though they need the support. Women and affirmative action, just as race and affirmative action have much to experience before it can give justice to everything it seeks to help (Eberhardt & Fiske, 1994; Nalbandian, 1989; Slack, 1987; Smith, 1998).

### **3.6. Europe: Norway**

All Public Stock Companies (ASA) boards in Norway, postulated that each gender should be at least represented by 40% (Beurain & Masclet, 2016). While affirmative action for women was indisputably engraved in the constitution of most countries' by means of the two-thirds gender law, the study found that while there is no formidable masterplan for implementation, there are robust reasons for breaches. The decision-making branch of government ought to have the willpower to enforce positive propositions by conveyance to the House of Assembly public bills on such measures, thus authorizing them for smooth usage (Beurain & Masclet, 2016). It affects about 400 businesses out of more than 300,000 in whole. Seierstad & Opsahl (2011), in their inquest of the out-turns of affirmative action on the role, recognition and social resources of female directors in Norway, they stated that, from the beginning of the initiation the affirmative action policy until August 2009, the fraction of boards headed by women amplified from 3.4 % to 4.3% until August 2009. It implies that, the legislation had a peripheral outcome on the sex of the head of the board meaning, the board appeared internally fragmented until August 2009; thus fraction of boards chaired by women expanded from 3.4% up to 4.3. Though only 7 out of 91 noteworthy directors were females at the inception of the aeon scrutinized. Gender steadiness among predominant directors changed colossally within the aeon, 107 females and 117 males were distinguishable administrators as the end of the period under scrutiny (Johnson, 2018; Santo, 2018; Shams, 2018). In addition, the fraction of directors who are women increased when more significantly stringent concepts of prominence were introduced. If only directors with at least three directorships were contemplated, then 61.4 percent would have been women even though female directors with seven or more executive positions were to be considered as well. Consequently, affirmative action elevates the female population in directorship (Sisjord et al., 2017; Banerjee et al., 2018; Girard, 2018). In addition, the proportion of directors who are women upswings when more stringent concepts of prominence are encapsulated. In this way, affirmative action hoists the female population in the role of directorship (Bergh, 2007; Sisjord et al., 2017).

### **4. Findings and Recommendations**

As reflected from previous works of literature, the intent of the affirmative action is essential, and its efficacy might vary depending on the economic structure of a nation (Shams, 2018; Santo, 2018). While affirmative action for females remained explicitly categorically stated in

most countries' dictum via two-thirds gender law, the study found that although there is no tangible device for enforcement, latitude for discrepancies is granted. The policymaking arm of government must possess the desire to reinforce these affirmative action strategies by instituting public bills on such polices to the General Assembly, thus legalizing them for ease of utilization and docility in countries tracking gender inequality. There are, however, gender generalization against female and female leadership, steering towards a stereotypical attitude biased against female headship which influences the ability to adopt affirmative action strategies especially in developing nations.

This study shows that Affirmative action for females is seen as an armament to combat the ingrained male domination of public life and eminent positions, and is unlikely to be optimally effectuated devoid of an organized apparatus and an amendment of attitude not restricted to politicians but also among the entire public. Wherever a transformation of attitude is made, affirmative action for women with defined implementation structures would even be done enthusiastically. As shown in this study, affirmative action for females has depicted signs that, although it is being implemented slowly, it can be achieved with a little more concentrated effort.

The study suggests that National-State Governments setting up programs to rectify political, economic and socio-cultural elements that inhibit the active engagement of women in public life, campaigns and viable cognizance raising ought to be reinforced in favor of affirmative action for minorities. Party strategy on nominating candidates for appointment in bulwarks of the party ought to target women premeditatedly as a constituent of party politics and obligation. The electoral cliques can also initiate discretionary allotments by averring women are over 30% of the nominees striving for seats in parliament. That would be a tremendous step towards affirmative action when all major actors do so in favor of women. Thus, reducing the gender inequality problems.

This study also recommended the measures adopted by United States (U.S) revealed by Combs & Nadarni (2015) which included university admissions and employment via federal contractors for implementation affirmative action by sovereign Government. The research on personal factors and stereotypes which prevent women from taking their even handed place in society needs to be more tenacious. They need to work on self-assuredness and politics-related assurance issues. It has to be understood that while academic accomplishment is exceptionally vital for leaders to be successful, an adequate discernment of policy and legislative concerns is

of equal preponderancy. Women mulling to be part of governance ought to acquaint themselves with sufficient political facets, and above all been exceptional in a male-dominated parliament. Due to their minute numbers, women currently in government need to put in more work to emerge as equitable quintessence for other forthcoming female politicians to enable the public laud their leadership. Female politicians need to be cognizant of the verity that they have a much greater responsibility on their shoulders since they are a minority, because everyone is looking forward to their performance. By the time women become trend-setters in public life, women are prone to find a level playing turf with men without compulsorily having to do so through affirmative action .

## **5. Conclusion**

Affirmative action is meant to combat previous discriminatory practices or to account for preceding discriminatory scruples or to envisage any discriminatory agenda. If used well, it can affirm political equity and guarantee that the non-two-thirds gender norm in the government is enforced. At the same juncture, over a length of time, it can obtain the shortest viable privileges refused. The ultimate aim of affirmative action in any given society is to bring more peace, unity and development. Bearing this in mind, action should be taken, with relevance to the efficient use of quotas as a viable means of globalizing affirmative action process. Furthermore, women are obliged to wholeheartedly endorse a mutual aim that bonds them in their assortment to forge ahead towards a gender equality intent in the cycle of governance and democratic transition of their respective countries. However, based on the broadness of the topic reviewed, this study was limited by the use of only peer reviewed journal articles and books as points of reference, as these articles discussing affirmative action in conjunction with gender inequality are spars and as such the available ones where neither exhaustive nor holistic. Therefore, it is proposed that prospective researchers should explore other angles of affirmative action such as minorities (people living disabilities, refugees, Immigrants etc).

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