***Title: ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF NEO-LIBERALISM IN UGANDA’S POVERTY POLICY PLANNING FRAMEWORKS (1986-2017)***

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# ABSTRACT

The neo-liberal ideology has almost attained a status of an unquestionable religious cult in Uganda like in many Sub-Saharan countries. Therefore criticisms of its invisible hand and economic growth dogmas render one an economic heretic and intellectual heathen that deserves to be banished to academic hell. Recalling the Marxian dictum that *religion is the opium of the people* that sedates individuals into a drunken stupor amidst a sea of social injustices, this thesis has used critical theory and critical theory motivated methodologies to unravel the ethical contradictions of the neoliberal ideology that Uganda has wholesomely embraced in its poverty policy planning frameworks.

The thesis argues that although neo-liberalism has been dissimulated as an ideology that can be ethicized and engendered, its amoral positivistic essence is not in tandem with ethics, human rights and pro-poor empowerment for poverty eradication. Neo-liberalism treats values such as; promoting and protecting the rights to health, education, water and work as a means to economic growth stimulation and not as intrinsic ends in themselves. Consequently, neo-liberalism does not regard Social and Economic Rights as moral claims but rather as mere economic aspirations that ought to be realized progressively as GDP growth improves.

The findings of the study further reveal that ethics has not played a crucial role in the evolution of Uganda’s five generations of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). These PRSPs are texts that have largely been reinforced through colonial coercion although they have been projected as participatory and based on a democratic bottom-up consensus. In addition, they are premised on the flawed GDP growth metric and income poverty perspective instead of a structural perspective to poverty and underdevelopment. Thus, they are oblivious to structural injustices that reinforce and feminize poverty.

This thesis contends that ethical poverty reduction is still elusive in Uganda because of the situatedness of Poverty Policy Planning Frame works in an amoral and positivistic neo-liberal ideology that is not in tandem with engendered rights based poverty reduction. The thesis has thus created and defended a new framework for poverty policy planning in Uganda known as the Dignified Humanness Paradigm (DHP). The DHP is superior to African Socialism and Ubuntu ethics paradigms which are sexist, androcentric and hence oblivious to structural nature of poverty. The DHP is founded on the moral economy, a post-growth critique, androgynous gender ethics, human development sustainabilities and social justice liberalism.