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**Patronage or Empowerment the dilemma of affirmative action through
women's special seats in the Tanzania parliament**

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This study assesses the effectiveness of women's special seats in Parliament and the factors behind the Ineffectiveness, furthermore, the study seeks to investigate whether affirmative action in politics discourages or enhances women's Competitiveness, I lie study draws a conclusion as to whether women special seats leads to patronage or empowerment. The significance of this study was to understand the problems associated with affirmative action in relation to women's effective participation in politics. Our interest was to discover the underlying problems in order to be able to formulate effective strategies for women participation in politics and contribute to the existing theories and revise the existing strategies for its practicability. The study focuses on the 1095, 2000 and 2005 general elections, and the case study is the women who obtained special seats in the Tanzania National Assembly in the three elections. The study shows that special seats are a mechanism to discourage women from constituency competition and competitiveness in politics. The findings also show that even the political parties discourage women from competing in the constituencies by nominating very few women as compared to the long list of aspirants. It is also found that traditional taboos, support from political parties, financial resources, lack of confidence, lack of cooperation with women organizations, poor education and training and the electoral system undermine women's competitiveness.