



Women Participation in Leadership Roles of Private Higher Education Institutions of Ethiopia

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Abstract

Women are not well represented in higher education institutions leadership posts transversely in the globe in general and their figure become diminish in developing nations. Though women leadership and management possession in Ethiopian higher education institutions is a comparatively novel concept, its growth is not yet showed well in academic literatures. The study used a descriptive phenomenology research design and the data from the participants were organized by employing in detail face to face and telephone interview sessions. Also data were gathered through documents and manuscript assessment. This study aspires to deal with this concept by probing women higher-ranking leadership improvement, involvement, feature and inclination based on the observations and exposures of women superior leaders from privately owned universities. The findings point out that even though women have made important advancement in obtaining higher-ranking leadership posts, senior leadership secured for men where women are infrequently seen. The outcomes of this study disclose that women have supposed leadership excellence and offerings. The findings advocate that increasing women leadership and management progress needs giving guidance, coaching and prospects particularly intended at developing women to higher-ranking leadership roles, and make certain regular maintenance of women leadership improvement agendas. The study recommended that the training programs and seminars are contributing less to making women successful in leadership. This happened because of less availability of leadership-related training programs and seminars that equip females in the skill of leadership. Therefore, higher education institutions should facilitate different leadership skill-building training and seminars to develop women to the position of management. That is, the university should organize different seminars, training, and mentoring programs in order to create more opportunities for women to make them participate in a leadership position

Key Words: Women, Leadership Roles, Higher Education Sector, Private HEIs, Women Participation

I. Introduction

Today businesses are proving quite challenging, yet ever evolving, with the advancement of technology, innovative opportunities and complex global interactions, which require diverse approaches in terms of perspectives and experiences and recognizing the importance of including more women in leadership positions and roles (Melese, 2019). Leadership is important in organization because without effective leaders it will be difficult for an organization to achieve their goals (Prabu, 2012) and the presence of women in leadership position at worldwide brings development, and ensures social justice through gender equity at leadership and decision making levels (Panigrahi, 2013). Despite their concern with women's low representation in top leadership positions, they agreed that policies designed solely to increase women's participation are not enough (Murniati, Titiek, 2012). In this regard, the implication for women who aspire to the top position of organizations is that they should be aware of and understand the visible and invisible challenges in relation to their career advancement (Mohajeri & Mousavi, 2017). Accordingly, the issue of women's empowerment and gender equality is at the top of agendas across the world, as gender inequality is widespread in all cultures (Bayeh, 2016). Therefore, this chapter introduces the conceptual and theoretical background and framework of the study, and the problems identification from the perspective of global, continental and national aspects. The study also discusses the aim, contribution and scope of this dissertation.

Empowerment can be defined as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important (Page & Czuba, 1999; Bayeh, 2016). This supports the economic opportunity available to the woman increases their power (Bushra & Wajiha, 2015). It involves the action of boosting the status of women through literacy, education, training and raising awareness (Alvarez and Lopez, 2013). Therefore, empowerment is central to the processes of maintaining the benefits of women (Malhotra et al., 2009). However, empowering women has been neglected for long and was applied in the 1970's and later, the content of education, economic participation of women, poverty and economic opportunity available for women increases their empowerment (Bushra & Wajiha, 2015).

The right of women to take part in decision making positions at all levels of public and private institutions organizations is boldly showed in diverse scholarly literatures and other sources including documents in human rights Convention on the exclusion of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The constitution of federal democratic republic of Ethiopia and the nationwide legislation and laws of Ethiopia also guarantee gender equality in key decision making positions. More Specifically in Higher education institutions the participation of women in key leadership posts become vital in enhancing quality education and development. Accelerating better quality in higher education sector and reaching shared responsibilities needs higher education institutions (HEIs) to have well-built direction since successful

leadership is vital to a HEIs accomplishment (Warlan 2009). This results leadership becomes mainly significant issues that require to be taken into contemplation for any institution's prospect. Leading a HEI a difficult duty and it is becoming progressively more demanding and tough in the current era for diverse causes. Some of these rationales are the growth of academic programs and enrolling student numbers with diverse needs, anticipation of the society, and also the expectation to deal with national and international contemporary issues (Randall G. H. 2014). The notion of women leadership in HEI is more challenging in the countries like Ethiopia as these institutions are not gain enough budget and they didn't equip with a advanced infrastructure and not rewarding in terms of benefits package and low level of capable academic and administrative staff. Higher education Institution leaders are also need to direct cleverly which includes an equilibrium among their perspectives, visualization, awareness, and go beyond routine difficulties and political struggles. Dealing with stated difficulties and reaching needs of concerned bodies necessitate active, knowledgeable and well-informed higher education leaders either in public or private institutions. This on the other hand needs HEIs to assemble the ability of educational leaders to deal with the rising difficulty they encounter as well as accomplish their objectives (Abebaw 2022).

Higher education leadership and management are not gender particular and a position and the duty set to merely men. Though, plentiful scholarly literature and practices illustrate that women are gravely nor well represented in leadership positions in higher education institutions across many nations and this keep in current era too. The higher education segment requires being conscious of the vast involvement of women's progress in higher education leadership for the industry, its players and the nation at large. Researchers in the area explained and underlined the significance of better participation of women in higher education institutions leadership positions. The need for supplementary women leaders in higher education must not be determined by mere insertion and gender depiction which is further a social impartiality. Growing the share of women in leadership roles provides to diverse academic and monetary profit of institutions. The higher education industry requires being conscious of the huge input of women's progression in higher education leadership for the segment, its stakeholders and the society at large (Cheung 2020).

In the context of Ethiopian higher education, until 2018 the Ministry of Education was in charge for all levels of education and training. Though, in 2018 the new reformed administration organized the Ministry of Science and Higher Education which had a duty to guide the improvement of three major areas includes science, higher education, and technical and vocational education and training. Subsequently the formation of a new administration in 2021, Ministry of Science and Higher Education was amalgamated with Ministry of Education. Also the former Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) which is responsible to evaluate, control, check and approve accreditation for private higher education institution has changed the name to Education and training Authority with legislation to uphold more responsibility and authority for the higher education program and institutional relevance and quality (Abebaw 2022).

In Ethiopia, there are about 59 public universities and 358 private universities and colleges answerable to Ministry of Education and Education Training Authority respectively. Regarding public universities the assortment and appointment of higher-ranking leaders includes key stakeholders whereas in private higher education institutions, it is frequently the owner who employs higher-ranking leaders. This paper focuses on the assessment of women participation selected private HEIs which have a comprehensible instruction on their human resource manual and guideline on the selection and appointment of leaders and managers. Fairly speaking, women leadership in higher education in most advanced and some less developed nations has been an extensively studied area. Though, women leadership in Ethiopian higher education is a theme which is not studied in detail. This is regardless of the truth that there are numerous matters that require to be assessed. Therefore, this paper focuses to discover the insights, observations and understanding of higher-ranking women leaders concerning the growth, involvement, excellence and inclination of women leadership in private higher education in Ethiopia (ETA 2023).

2. Research Methods

The study used a descriptive phenomenology research design to better understand women's leadership development in private higher education from the insights and understanding of women leaders. In the context of Ethiopia, there are known first generations of private universities based on their excellence, experience, number of campuses in national level and year of service in the sector. There are five private universities (Rift Valley University, Unity University, Harambe University, St. Merry University and Admas University) and six university colleges owned by investors and shareholders. For the purpose of this studies from five private universities 10 participants were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Throughout the data creation phase there were ranked in dean, academic dean and school heads.

The data from the participants were organized by employing in detail face to face and telephone interview sessions. Also data were gathered through documents and manuscript assessment. Authorized documents including the proclamation on the definition of powers and duties of the executive organs and private universities legislation and Human Resource Manuals were used. Data collected from these manuals and legislative laws were frequently employed to validate the data acquired during interview sessions. Braun and Clark suggested reflexive thematic analysis is an incredibly supportive technique to enhanced realization and understanding on the assessment of Women Leadership participation in private Universities. Hence, this paper used theoretically flexible method to explore women higher-ranking leaders concerning the women leadership in higher education in Ethiopia in qualitative manner (Braun and Clark 2006).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 The Improvements of Women Participation in HEIs Leadership

Leadership and management in Ethiopian higher education were not obtained sufficient prominence in conditions of selection, appointment and exposure. As the organization of the earliest public higher education institution in early 1950s, the recruitment and appointment of

higher-ranking leaders had been the duty of the upper administration body. Yet the instant precedent higher education declaration describes that public universities have the independence to appoint higher-ranking leaders, this was not experienced practically. As an alternative, higher-ranking leadership selection was mostly based on ethnicity, vicinity and political association

whereas in case of private higher education institutions the appointment of senior leadership based on the interest of the owners of the university and on some instances selection and recruitment undertaken by recommendation as well as formal procedure (Adamu 2019).

Respondents exposed that one of an excellent techniques to have additional women leaders in higher education is by increasing the sum of exceedingly capable female academic staff members which necessitates increasing the general admission of women to higher education as students and enhancing the number of female academic staff with elevated educational talent and work exposure.

Leadership Roles	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
BA/BSC Degree	71.4	28.6	63.2	36.8	61.8	38.2	53.7	46.7
MA/MSc	82.6	17.4	78.7	21.3	71.3	28.7	67.8	32.2
PhD	91.3	8.7	90.7	9.3	89.4	10.6	89.1	10.9

Table 1: Leadership Roles in Private HEIs
(Source 2023: Author Survey from five Private Universities)

There are some straight and oblique determinants helping to the rising number of women in higher leadership roles in higher education in Ethiopia in recent years. These comprise an enhanced figure of female students and academic staff members, commitment from university owners, and support from existed higher-ranking leaders.

Table 2: Academic Qualification of Staff Members of Private Universities

Leadership Roles	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Higher Level	97.7	2.3	93.5	6.5	89.2	10.8	82.3	8.7
Intermediate Level	67.5	32.5	63.8	36.2	54	46	60.9	39.1
Lower Level	76.6	23.4	68.3	31.7	74.5	25.5	58.4	41.6

(Source 2023: Author Survey from five Private Universities)

The above compiled data showed an insignificant raise in the figure of female academic staff in the preceding five academic years. Though, the figure of female academic staff members is very lower than the amount of male academic staff members. In triangulating this finding, study respondents reported that suggested higher education must increase qualified academic staff members in order to facilitate better leadership posts and roles for women. It also shows that an

improved amount of female academic staff members are the foundation for having additional capable female academic staff who is basically concerned to hold leadership positions. Educational qualification and academic level are the main criterion and necessities for higher-ranking leadership ranks as evidently described in their human resource manuals on the recruitment and appointment of leaders.

3.2 Women Commitment and Determination of Staff Members for Leadership

All respondents of this study have formerly provides service in the lower and intermediate leadership roles. They have attains this stage in a framework where without any female higher-ranking leader figure. In case of higher education where women's higher-ranking leadership is less probable to be acknowledged by the institution community and the public, thoughts about and settle on to take up leadership positions needs women's advanced commitment and determination (Abebaw, 2022). Even though there are diverse perspective particular features that inspire women to hold leadership roles (Miller, 2014), commitment and inspiration are the necessary and familiar features for women to gain leadership roles. Respondents of this study said that the reason for the enhanced in the figure of women higher-ranking leaders is the rising inspiration and commitment as well as determination of women. Accordingly the Ethiopian higher education framework, there are major determinants that provoked women to obtain higher-ranking leadership positions. These contain women's goal to tackle the difficulty they observe and countenance, and the purpose to establish their leadership ability.

3.3. Women's Empowerment

Female leaders get support and encouragement less frequently from top leadership towards participating in leadership and their career development. The interview revealed that "female gets support from staff to reach the top" is and which indicates the supports provided are less. Besides, an opportunity provided by institutions to empower and develop women in leadership and management positions is not frequently existed. Similarly, the environment is not enabling in providing opportunities to meet employment criteria. The result of this study also revealed that women have not given more opportunities to be in a more challenging positions that were previously held by men.

The finding of this study revealed that the extent of support provided to the women in empowering them is inadequate. This is in terms of the support and encouragement obtained from top level leaders to participate in leadership and their career development. Similarly, the extent of support received from the staff members and institutions is not sufficient. The institution is not sufficiently providing opportunity to empower and develop women to the position of leadership and management. Besides, the working environment is moderate as an enabling environment that provides women an opportunity to meet the empowerment criteria to the position of management. Moreover, the result of this study also revealed that women have not given more opportunities to be in a more challenging positions that were previously held by men. Other finding also indicates that although women have dominated the workforce in public education, limited access to senior leadership ranks remains (Morillo & Mitzi, 2017). Besides,

women are still unacceptably underrepresented, especially in senior administrative positions, in some parts of the world (Altbach, 2010). Compared to men, fewer women reach top management positions globally (Ilagan-Bian, 2004).

3.4. The Sense on Women's involvement in Leadership

The involvement of the present women higher-ranking leaders to attaining the visualize vision and objective of their particular institution is one of the main matters explained in relative to women's leadership in Ethiopia. Respondents of this paper also showed that the result of their leadership positions is two sided. As described on top the majority of them are the earliest women leaders in their respective institution and a research indicated that women leaders who were the foremost to get higher-ranking leadership in their universities frequently act as figures and winners for the subsequent cohort of female leaders (Cheung, 2021). Respondents also declared that the pessimistic effect of women leaders' malfunction and ineffective narrative on female academic staff is more than the depressing impact.

The broad determinants that give to leadership usefulness like high-quality leadership acquaintance and proficiency, this study point to that women's input could also differ depending on how they are selected. As evidently showed in the research framework, awaiting lately leadership selection was mostly based on vicinity and to some level political association. Yet in such a circumstance, women were not favored to get higher-ranking leadership positions.

3.5 Leadership Qualities Expected From Women

Respondents of this study showed that the majority male higher-ranking leaders believe women's leadership principally as an approach to realize gender enclosure. though procedures to restore the gender disparity in higher education leadership is vital, interviewees of the study boldly give emphasis that it must not be the driving energy for rising the amount of women leaders and manager. They also point out that they hold numerous leadership traits that give to efficient executions of the objectives of institutions, and therefore the purposes and actions to assign women leaders ought to focus on the involvements that they can present Higher Education Institutions (Airn, 2015). Respective respondents of the study also explained other qualities they acquire and are essential for an valuable leadership, truthfulness, capacity to work under difficulty and settle in to changing environment, soaring purpose and qualified dedication, elevated friendliness, fewer predisposed and dishonest, compassionate, superior on multipurpose tasks and effective resource utilization, bearing in good figure as a duty, and paying consideration to particulars (Zenger & Folkman 2020).

3.6 Women's Interest on Specific Leadership Roles

Women academic staff members choose for different posts and the majority of the respondents of this study hold campus dean, academic and research vice dean, faculty dean, department and school head positions. There might be diverse causes why women fancy for these leadership roles while these positions were determined to hold by the owner of the institutions and other existed upper level management bodies. The exceeding argument shows that women favor easier higher-ranking leadership positions and institutions as well be apt to consider that for diverse causes these are the spots where they are contented with and pleased to take.

4. Conclusion

In the modern years, women have prepared for momentous advancement in advance for higher-ranking leadership roles. The augment in women's entry to higher education as a learner and scholarly staff, women academic's commitment and purpose as well as the selection of women as cabinet in different political posts, are several of the key straight and roundabout determinants that supplied to the increase of women at higher-ranking leadership roles. The expansion of women in higher education higher-ranking leadership posts from roughly scratch involvement to some increments is clear; however the outcome indicated that women are still considerably not figured at higher-ranking leadership.

The women revealed that there are various opportunities for women to participate in leadership positions. However, still, the participation of women in an administrative position is not sufficient. Some of the opportunities that existed for women are related to institutional support and policy that encourages, women empowerment, affirmative action, and educational opportunities. Besides the institutional support and policies, women's personal commitment and motivation to involve in the leadership position contributed more than the institutional policy and support. The women are also interested to apply and accepting administrative positions without being enforced by other bodies. That is the women with related education and experiences are more interested to apply for the position of leadership. Moreover, most of the women who occupied the leadership position believed that they are successful because of their educational level as well as their conceptual and human interaction skills.

Comparatively, educational leadership plays a great role in the success of women leadership, while attending training and seminars are contributing less in making women leadership successful. Besides, the mentoring and training programs offered for women leaders are not sufficient and need to be improved. However, the women believed that the skills they obtained, particularly, their interpersonal and conceptual skills are contributing to the success of women's leadership. Moreover, the women believed that their subordinates are satisfied with their leadership style since they are applying a good leadership style. Furthermore, gender identity did not have implications on the success of leadership, while their good self-confidence contributed to leadership success.

This discussed that in Ethiopian higher education, higher-ranking leadership leftovers to be men's roles where women are infrequently attracted. The study also exposed that women consider they have excellent leadership traits and they are think they have added to attaining the objectives of academic and research institutions, and the expansion of women leadership, mainly in terms of being a figure head for female scholarly staff members. This shows that the purpose of growing women's leadership involvement must go afar attaining addition, since they have much to provide at the uppermost level. Captivating a leadership spot where one might sense at ease and become more victorious is a fine thing; however linking a leadership posts with gender is not a fine custom and drift.

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