

## **Women's Participation in Higher Education Management Positions in Ethiopia**

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**Abstract:** *Despite improvements during the last two or three decades, female participation in higher education is generally low, and their participation in higher education management is strikingly low in many countries worldwide. The main purpose of this study was to find out the factors disabling women from participation in university management in Ethiopia. Data was collected from six public universities namely Addis Ababa University, Hawassa University, Wolita Sodo University, Rift-Valley University Hawassa campus, Zion College of Business and Technology, and Info-link College by using questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis. Data was collected from 10 male managers (heads of departments, deans, personnel officers, directors and vice-presidents), 26 women managers (heads of departments, gender officers, finance managers, personnel managers and coordinators of programs) and senior academic staff (20 women and 10 men) with a rank of lecturer and above. These amounted to a total respondent of 66. The respondents were selected using stratified simple random sampling and purposive sampling methods for both the female and male managers as well as senior academic staff members. The findings of the study revealed that women are indeed underrepresented in the management of the universities. There are multiple complex factors at the personal, institutional and societal levels that negatively affect women from participation in higher education management positions. At personal level factors such as child-rearing/childcare, balancing family and career were identified as major challenges faced by women in university management positions. At the institutional level discriminatory recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures, political appointments, unclear promotion criteria, absence of documented staff development policies for senior managers and few opportunities for further training affect women's participation in university management. In addition, societal factors such as discrimination against female child education and general beliefs about women's domestic role were identified as eroding women's self-perception just as those women who succeeded in*

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*public domain were seen as failures in their domestic roles. The study therefore concluded that women faced differential experiences and challenges as a result of their multi-faceted roles and gender-based stereotypes which stemmed from the patriarchal culture prevalent within the university environment. The researcher argues that for women to be represented in university management effectively, some of these barriers must be removed, and suggests ways helpful to enhance women's participation.*

## **1. Introduction**

In most countries, women constitute approximately 50% of the population, and wherever they are denied the right of equal participation with men in national affairs, a great human resource which could be brought to bear on the task of national development is lost. Ensuring equal access to higher education is fundamental to promote the status of women for both the good of the individual and that of the nation. In many countries, female participation in higher education is generally low, and their participation in higher education management is strikingly low. In the area of higher education, both in teaching and management, women are still a long way far from participating on the same footing as men (UNESCO 2002). In Ethiopia, women have made some progress in achieving parity in teaching but are grossly under-represented in higher education management (MoE 2014). The UNESCO 2002 report on higher education also talks of the 'snail's pace' at which women's academic career prospects are improving in many countries. Many research reports on women in higher education management observe that the pyramid and the glass ceiling are found everywhere (Cook & Glass 2014, Ogbogu 2011, Singh 2002 and Lund 1998). With hardly an exception, the Ethiopian picture is one of men outnumbering women at about five to one at middle management level and at about twenty to one at senior management level (MoE 2007). Three perspectives explain the continuing dearth of women in senior management positions: The first perspective is person-centered in which the paucity of women is attributed to the psycho-social attributes, including personality characteristics, attitudes and behavioral skills of women themselves. Among personal factors are family commitment, lack of motivation and self-confidence; limited aspirations in the field of management, lack of motivation and ambition to accept challenges, to go up the ladder, being less assertive and lacking ability to handle a crisis (Yousaf & Schmiede 2017).

The other constraint is the institutional barriers. The structure-centered paradigm advances the view that it is the disadvantageous position of women in the organizational structure (few numbers, little power, limited access to resources) which shapes and defines the behavior of women. The problem is vested in the structure and the remedy is a fundamental change to eliminate inappropriate discrimination in institutional policies and practices. Structural factors may be listed as: discriminatory appointment and promotion practices; male resistance to women in management positions, absence of policies and legislation to ensure participation of women, and limited opportunities for leadership training and for demonstrating competence as a result of the power structure in the workplace (Chliwniak, 1997). The third perspective explores societal constraints, which links gender centered and organizational structure perspective. This perspective is concerned with the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations to women and to men. These gender-based roles, irrelevant to the work place, are carried into the workplace. Higher education institutions therefore reproduce gender differences via their internal structures and everyday practices because of the cultural perceptions which determine the attitudes and behaviors of individual men and women and form barriers to the equal participation of women in senior management (Smulders, 1998).

In Ethiopia women's participation in key decision-making positions is still minimal. In the public service, women in management positions are very few as compared to men. Women in executive positions, like in university board council represent only 1.1%, compared to 99.9 % of men in the same groups (Seyoum, 1991). Research has revealed that women mainly occupy junior positions in university management in Ethiopia. A survey of university staffing positions conducted in six universities (four public and two private) reveals that women are missing from among the top management positions of the universities (World Bank 2003). In many University board councils which determine who manages the university is comprised of mainly men. For example, in Hawassa University, out of the fourteen members of the council no one is female. The situation at Addis Ababa University and Wolita Sodo University is not different. Of the ten deans of faculty in Hawassa University only one is a woman (Institute Of Language Studies), and of the 42 heads of department only six are women (Ademe 2007). The fact that women are

missing from the major policy and decision-making forums of universities has an implication on their recruitment and promotion opportunities (Endale, 2014, Almaz 2003; Seyoum 1991).

### **1.1 Rationale for the study**

The presence of a high number of women in management positions in Ethiopia would play an important role to boost the efforts of promoting the education of girls and women. Women need to be present in top university management positions to voice the needs and different programs that would affect women. Decision making requires the empowerment of the various actors involved in higher education and women are one of the major actors. When women possess the expertise required for decision making, they are well represented in higher education management and are gender conscious, they will have the power to shape policies and introduce change that can be useful for both women and men. In Ethiopia women have been under-represented in management positions, especially in higher education institutions and little is known about their experiences and challenges. Despite the existence of formal policies to redress these inequalities and in the wake of equal opportunity policies such as the “gender policy” and “equal employment opportunity” in Ethiopia, women are still grossly underrepresented. The Policy-making bodies in the University system seem to be overwhelmingly occupied by men. This has prompted an interest to investigate the major barriers that affect women participation in higher education management positions and how the few women who had managed to get to these positions had done it, and what their experiences and challenges were, thus, the experiences and challenges these women face in management positions may be unique to women and are therefore worth investigating.

### **1.2 Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the factors disabling women participation in higher education management in Ethiopia.

#### **Specifically, the study aimed:**

- i. To establish the positions women occupy in university management in Ethiopia;
- ii. To determine the factors that affect women’s participation in university management

- iii. To suggest possible strategies that could be used to enhance the participation of women in higher education management in Ethiopia

### **1.3 Research questions**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What positions do women occupy in university management in Ethiopia as compared to men?
2. What are the major personal, institutional and societal barriers that affect women from participating in university management?
3. What are the possible strategies/interventions that can be used to enhance women's participation in university management in Ethiopia?

## **2. Methodology**

Descriptive research design was employed in the study because it helps to determine the current status of the population with respect to one or more variables. Besides, it can put a problem on the map by showing that it is more widespread than previously thought. Three types of instruments were used to gather information from the key respondents. Questionnaires were administered to senior academic staff (women and men) to solicit the relevant information.

Interview guides were used to interview managers such as: vice presidents, deans, registrars, gender office directors, department heads, personnel managers, finance managers, development officers, and coordinators of programs. Both men and women managers were interviewed regarding the policies that govern recruitment, appointment and promotion of staff to senior management position and the possible reasons for the absence of women from top management positions.

Document analysis guides were also employed to analyze such documents as recruitment, appointment and promotion criteria, job advertisements, job application forms and interview guides, as well as staff development policies. This instrument was beneficial to see the extent to which equal opportunity rights for both women and men are stressed and how they affected women's participation in the university management. The lists of academic and administrative staff were used for gathering information about existing positions occupied by women in the university management.

### **2.1. Sample and sampling procedures**

The sample was drawn from three public universities (Addis Ababa University, Hawassa University, Wolaita Sodo University, and three other private colleges (Zion Business & Technology College, Rift-Valley College and Info-link College) in Ethiopia. The universities were selected using stratified random sampling and purposive sampling procedures, respectively. First, the universities were stratified into public and private. Then, from each stratum three public and three private universities were selected purposively. Addis Ababa University was selected because it is the oldest institution of higher learning in Ethiopia. It is fairly large in terms of student population, staff establishment and offers of a variety of disciplines in both sciences and humanities. It was therefore assumed that the management functions of the institution are many and hence the need for many managers. The other two public universities are relatively new and were included to determine whether they were incorporating gender equity issues in their recruitment and appointment policies. *The three private universities* were included to see if there were variations between public and private universities in empowering women to management positions.

## **2.2. Respondents**

The respondents in the study were both men and women occupying management positions as well as senior academic staff in the selected universities. Data was collected from 10 male managers (heads of departments, deans, personnel officers, directors and vice-presidents), 26 women managers (heads of departments, gender officers, finance managers, personnel managers and coordinators of programs) and senior academic staff (20 women and 10 men) with a rank of lecturer and above. These amounted to a total respondent of 66. While men and women managers were selected purposively, senior academic members were selected by using stratified simple random sampling technique.

## **2.3. Data analysis procedures**

The data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. The information obtained from interviews was categorized into themes and analyzed through a process of content analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts of managers, and percentages of women managers; was used to show the status of women in the university management. Documentary data was also

utilized to cross check, supplement and confirm information obtained from interviews and questionnaires.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

#### 3.1 Background information on the respondents

**Table 1: Distribution of male and female managers, by age, experience and academic qualifications**

<b>1.1. Distribution of male and female managers, by age</b>			
	<b>Frequency</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
26-30	0	1	1
31-35	0	1	1
36-40	3	5	8
41-45	3	8	11
46-50	0	6	6
51-55	-	-	'
56-60	2	5	7
Over 60	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>1.2. Distribution of male and female managers, by experience</b>			
	<b>Frequency</b>		
<b>Years</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
3-5	2	6	8
5-6	2	0	2
6-10	2	4	<b>6</b>
11-15	2	6	8
16-20	1	6	7
Over 20	1	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>1.3. Distribution of male and female managers' by academic qualifications</b>			
<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
PhD	7	11	Total
Master's	3	13	18
Bachelor's degree	0	2	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>

Age was regarded as important element because it would give an indication of the age at which women usually ascend to management positions as compared to men. Research has shown that women being late comers to the academic would join at a late age. Table 1 (1.1) shows that the majority of the male managers were aged between 36- 50 years. The women managers were also aged between 36-50 years. Some (five) female managers were found to be

above 50 years of age, unlike their male counterparts. However, in general, there was no significant difference in age between the male and women managers. Table 1 (1.2) shows that 80% of the male managers had worked in the university for a period of over five years and that the same (76.9%) is true with the twenty female managers in the same working period. This shows that the respondents had worked in the university for more or less the same duration. Table 1 (1.3) shows that the majority of the respondents had a postgraduate degree with only two female managers having a bachelor's degree. This indicates that the respondents possessed the necessary academic qualification and were therefore duly qualified to hold the positions they were holding in the university management.

**Table 2. Distribution of senior academic staff, by age, experience and academic qualification**

<b>2.1. Distribution of senior academic staff, by age</b>			
<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
25-29	1	2	3
30-35	0	1	1
36-40	3	5	8
41-45	3	8	11
46-50	0	6	6
Over 50	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.2. Distribution of senior academic staff, by experience</b>			
<b>Years</b>	<b>Frequency</b>		
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Total</i>
< 5	1	2	3
5-10	4	6	10
10-15	5	8	13
15-20	0	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.3. Distribution of senior academic staff, by qualification</b>			
<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
PhD	4	9	13
Master's	6	11	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>

Table 2, 2.1 shows that while most of the men (70%) were aged 35 years and below, most women (65%) were aged 40 years and above. Again, no major difference in age between men and women of senior academic staff was observed. Interestingly, Table 2, 2.2 shows that 90% of both the male and



female senior academic staff had a working experience of between 5-20 years. Table 2, 2.3 also shows that the respondents in the study possessed the necessary qualifications for the positions they were holding in the senior academic staff.

### **3.2. Women's position in University Management in Ethiopia as Compared to Men's**

To find out the positions women were occupying in the university management as compared to those of men, the researcher used administrative and academic staff lists (where these were made available), University Calendars /Catalogues in cases where access to staff lists was denied, and information obtained from the respondents. Analysis of the obtained data and information reveals that women occupy a small percentage of the senior management positions of the universities surveyed. The findings are summarized in the Table 3.

**Table 3. Distribution of women in public universities management**

Positions	AAU			HU			WSU			Grand Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
President	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	3
Vice-president	1	1	2	3	0	3	3	0	3	7	1	8
Registrar	7	2	9	2	0	2	3	0	3	12	4	16
Gender office manager	0	3	3	0	4	4	1	2	3	1	9	10
Director of institute	7	2	9	2	2	4	7	2	9	16	6	22
Dean of students	4	6	10	0	1	1	1	0	1	5	7	12
Dean of faculty	13	1	14	3	2	5	2	1	3	18	4	22
Finance officer	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	3
Librarian	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	3
Head of department	71	14	85	10	3	13	14	2	16	95	19	114

**Source: University's Bulletin, 2008**

Table 4 shows that women occupied such positions as heads of departments (19), gender office manager (10), deans of students (7) director of institutes (6) deans of faculties (4) librarians (1) and registrar (4). Overall the public universities surveyed seemed to have more women as heads of departments, gender office managers, deans of students and registrars. Furthermore, it was observed that women headed traditionally what is so called "Feminine subjects" such as the departments of gender & development studies, food and nutrition, language and arts etc.; however, there was one woman who directed an institute of computer science in one of the universities an area which is traditionally considered as a preserve of men. Another woman, in public university, headed the department of journalism and communication.

**Table 4. Distribution of women in private universities management (as of July 2008)**

Positions	RVU			ZTC			IFC						Grand Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
President	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	3			
Vice-president	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	3			
Registrar	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	2	4	1	5			
Director	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	3	1	4			
Dean of Students	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	3			
Finance officer	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	3			
Librarian	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	3			
Gender office manager	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	5	4			
Public relations officer	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	3			
Head of department	4	4	11	5	4	10	3	2	5	12	10	21			
HIV/AIDS office manager	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	4	4			
Development officer	1	0	1	0	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	2			

*Source: University's Bulletin, 2008*

Table 4 shows that the majority of the women in the private universities under review occupied the positions of heads of departments (10). Other women occupied such positions as gender office manager (5), HIV/AIDS office manager (4) and librarian (2). Overall, the private universities survey seems to have more women (10 out of 22) heading departments than that of public universities (19 out of 95). One major factor that emerged from the interviews was the fact that most of the women heading departments in private universities had worked in public universities for several years before moving to private universities. This appears to indicate that private universities were opening up more opportunities for women in management and were tapping the unused resource in the public universities. One of the vice-president, in whose university there were more women than men heading departments, when asked the reason for this trend, he explained that: *Women are good workers, they perform their duties with diligence, are patient and willing to offer services to people whereas men do not have the patience especially to work in young universities which may not be financially stable.*

In both public and private universities, the document analysis showed that women tended to work in the traditionally feminine areas such as, gender office managers, directors of catering, directors for the institute of gender studies, heads of food and nutrition and deans of students. The findings from this study agree with the general picture painted in the literature about the positions women occupy in university management (Lund 1998; Singh 2002).

### **3.3. Extent of Women's Representation in Managerial Positions**

**Table 5: Respondents Opinion on the Extent of Women's Representations in Management Positions**

<b>Extent of Women Participation in Management</b>	<b>Frequency N=66</b>	<b>%</b>
Low	44	66.7
Moderate	20	30.3
High	2	3.0
Total	66	100

Table 5 shows that out of all the 61 respondents, 44 (66.7%) indicated that the extent of women's representation in university management positions was low. Also, 20 respondents (30.3%) of the total perceived the women's level of representation in university management positions as moderate; while 3.0% perceived their representation to be high. From the analysis of data, it is revealed that the extent of women's representation in university management position is low. This finding corroborates Aina (2014) view that 'because of the masculinized nature of university leadership, women are more often than not placed at the lower levels of university leadership, for example, as either heads of departments and/or as directors of gender office, and rarely as vice deans, deans, and vice-presidents'. Women are poorly represented in management positions in the old universities and newly established universities, though the representation is lower in latter. More so, it is skewed towards underrepresentation, especially in the universities of science & technology where there are more men in the area of technology than women.

### 3.4. Experiences of Women in University Management Positions

**Table 6: Respondent's Opinion on the Experiences of Women in University Management Positions**

Variables			SA				A				N
	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	
Biases in recruitment, selection & promotion	11	16.6	24	36.4	4	6.1	20	30.3	7	10.6	3.13
Higher level of stress	25	37.8	30	45.5	5	7.6	5	7.6	1	1.5	4.15
Lack of self-confidence & intellectual inferiority	10	15.2	12	18.2	5	7.6	30	45.5	9	13.6	2.50
Gender-based stereotypes	12	18.2	24	36.4	13	19.7	13	19.6	4	6.1	3.24
Lack of opportunities for advancement	6	9.1	14	21.2	10	15.2	24	36.4	12	18.1	2.63
Lack of staff support	8	12.1	21	31.8	8	12.1	24	36.4	5	7.6	2.97
Difficulty to influence decision-making in a male-dominated workplace	23	34.8	26	39.4	5	7.6	9	13.6	3	4.6	3.97

Table 6 describes the frequency of respondent's level of agreement on the experiences of women in university management positions. The findings on the experiences of women in university management positions reveal that the majority of the respondents agreed that higher level of stress with a mean score of 4.15, difficulty to influence decision making in male -dominated workplace (3.97), gender-based stereotypes (3.24); and biases in recruitment selection and promotion (3.13) were major experiences for women in university management positions. The findings further show that, women in university management positions experienced higher level of stress resulting from administrative workload, family responsibilities, dealing with staff and students. The findings from qualitative study also show that the „stress's experience, to a large extent, affect the social life of women in university management positions. In relation to women academic experiences, these women in management positions are under

greater pressure to engage in empirical research and scholarly writing. In addition, results from the interview conducted reveal that stress is an inevitable part of a demanding position, and the participants in this study all admitted to having their fair share of it.

### **3.5. Main Responsibilities of the Male and Female Managers in Universities**

To investigate further the role women played in university management, the men and woman managers were asked to indicate their main responsibilities in the university. The purpose of this question was to find out the extent to which women were involved in key decision-making responsibilities in the universities. The responses to this question indicate that there were differences between women managers and male managers' responsibilities. The summary is given in Table 7 below.

**Table 7. Distribution of male and female managers, by main responsibilities**

Responsibility	Male	Female	Total
Administrative	3	5	8
Program development	3	1	4
Teaching	1	10	11
Coordination of programs	2	3	5
Supervisor /staff	3	3	6
Student discipline	0	2	2
Recruitment	3	1	4
Policy development	5	2	7
Guidance and counseling	0	4	4
Monitoring and evaluation	2	0	2
Budgeting	3	1	4
Research	3	1	4

Table 7 shows that most of the women managers (10) were involved in teaching, (3) in co-ordination of programs and supervision of staff, (3) in administrative work, and (4) in guidance and counseling. None of the women were involved in key decision-making activities in the universities, for example, in policy-making, monitoring and evaluation and budgeting. Instead, they shouldered heavy responsibilities in the support services like student discipline, teaching, guidance and counseling, roles which have been traditionally associated with women. These findings agree with what has been found in the United Kingdom (Brook 1997; Morley 1999) and United States (Glazer 1999; Park 1996) cited in Onsongo (2004). In addition to their responsibilities in the departments, faculties or institutes, women managers

were found to be involved in other activities. These activities are summarized in Table 8.

**Table 8. Other activities of women managers**

Activities	Frequency
HIV/AIDS committee	3
Disciplinary Committee	4
Graduation committee	2
Students welfare committee	10
Staff welfare committee	2
Task forces	2
Social affairs committee	4
Seminars, workshops & conferences committee	2
Co-curricular/clubs committee	5

The data in Table 8 shows that the women managers like other women elsewhere were shouldering a lot of responsibilities at lower/ less decision making positions. The women were involved in everything ranging from assisting in the coordination of programs to students activities and being in several committees. And yet, all these may not bring them any credit that helps their promotion. This is likely to translate into work overload, which might have an effect on their career advancement.

### **3.6. Barriers to Women's Participation in University Management Position**

This section deals with personal, institutional and socio-cultural factors affecting the participation of women in higher education management positions. The current study reveals that women hold less than 1 percent of top academic and administrative posts in higher education institutions. They are relatively better represented in lower level management positions and their participation relative to men decreases at successively higher levels. Representation in the committee system follows a similar pattern with women more likely to be members of departmental and faculty committees than on governing boards or councils.

A consequence of this pattern of decreasing representation at successively higher levels is that senior women frequently find themselves isolated in hierarchies which are predominantly held by males. What can be the reasons for the low numbers of women in higher education management? The study of administration is not generally regarded as a traditional male discipline in the way that science or engineering might be. Indeed one might think that the

research and analytical skills developed through the study of the humanities and social sciences or the nurturing, interpersonal and intuitive skills with which women are supposedly endowed by nature, would be very much in tune with the strategic planning, policy making and staff management responsibilities of senior managers. There are increasing numbers of women in top positions in politics, and in both private and public sectors in Ethiopia. Yet top management in higher education is still overwhelmingly a male preserve. Similar studies have consistently shown that women are underrepresented in university management across the globe (Endale Hora, 2012; Brikite, 2014; Seyoum 1991, Schmiede 2017, Singh 2002, Asmah 1993). The path to top management in a university is generally built on experience as head of department and dean. Factors which interrupt that natural progression for women are personal, institutional and societal. These factors are summarized below.

### **3.6.1. Personal barriers**

In spite of increased participation in higher education, women are underrepresented both in teaching and management positions in many Ethiopian universities. Their underrepresentation amongst academic staff is consistent with their limited access to higher education. This is consistent with what Singh (2002) notes the need for a critical mass in higher education to provide the «quarry» from which higher education managers come. The current study acknowledges that the necessary pool of women talent is not yet there. A majority (95%) of the women managers said they had encountered some personal obstacles, while a few (5%) of the women said they did not encounter any personal obstacles in route to their current position. Some of the personal barriers encountered were time management, family responsibilities and lack of confidence. Responses show that family responsibilities were the major obstacles faced by most women managers.

**Table 9. Personal barriers – responses from the women and men participants**

Personal Factors		Frequency		
		Male	Female	Total
Women don't aspire higher	15	6	21	Women don't aspire higher
Lack of confidence among women	6	4	10	Lack of confidence among women
Eligible women turn down appointment	5	2	7	Eligible women turn down appointment
Timidity of women	2	3	5	Timidity of women
Family commitments	20	8	28	Family commitments
Lack of ambition	0	2	2	Lack of ambition
Low academic qualification	0	3	3	Low academic qualification
Lack of motivation	11	5	16	Lack of motivation
No role models	5	3	8	No role models
Women tend to be helpers	0	1	1	Women tend to be helpers
Lack of experience	7	3	10	Lack of experience
Women want favors	1	0	1	Women want favors
None	2	1	3	None

The data in Table 9 reveals that family commitments stand out as the most personal factor that explains the absence of women from management positions in Ethiopian universities. This is closely followed by women not aspiring for higher positions, lack of motivation and lack of experience. These findings conform to other findings, (Singh, 2002; Morley 2014) reports that in a workshop conducted for women in higher education management in Malaysia, the participants identified family commitment and lack of the necessary qualification and experience as the two main disabling factors that prevent women from ascending to senior management positions.

The other factors included were: women's less assertiveness or aggressiveness, poor networking, lack of support to other women, lack of personal conviction, lack of adequate knowledge and skills. Responding to a similar question during the interview session on why women are missing from senior management, the senior academic staff (men and women) also concurred that some of the reasons include: lack of adequate qualifications, fear of public office and competition. Some of the senior academic women had the following reasons: One woman said, "Women due to their upbringing have a fear of



public office”. Another one added, “Women have little or no time to take these positions due to domestic commitment and responsibilities”.

Similarly another one noted, “We are still few who have at least achieved the foundational basic qualifications (PhDs)”. A male senior academic staff also noted, “Very few women have the qualification and willingness to participate in senior management positions”. Unlike women, men often have the tendency to take risks and apply for jobs for which they fulfill few of the requirements, and the qualifications. On the other hand, women tend to do the opposite (Dines 1997). This could be true of some Ethiopian women in the study. However, Ethiopian situation is also different because most of the senior positions are not advertised for open competition for the women to apply.

### **3.6.2. Institutional barriers**

It cannot be expected that numbers of women in senior management will increase while so few are employed in academic or administrative positions compared to men. Several writers note that in spite of the difficulties that women face in gaining access to education, there are women well-qualified for academic positions who nevertheless fail to be selected. To quote Zamora cited in Seyoum, “A man is preferred because he is a man” Discriminatory appointment and promotion practices constitute barriers in institutions without equal opportunity policies Singh (2002). The women managers were asked to identify the institutional barriers they had encountered in route to their management positions. The institutional barriers faced by the women managers are summarized in Table 10.

**Table 10. Institutional barriers**

Factors	Men	Women
Few numbers	5	4
Male chauvinism	0	3
Management positions dominated by male	0	2
Patriarchal structure	3	4
Political appointment	4	6
Men fear female domination	0	2
Notion that female are not good leaders/managers	0	3
Discrimination against women	3	5
All panelist are male	0	0
Biased recruitment, selection & promotion criteria	1	1

At the institutional level, discrimination against women was viewed by the women managers as the reason why women were missing from management of universities. On the other hand, the men managers felt that the few number of women in the universities were the reason they were not appointed to senior management positions. The women managers as well as the male managers also pointed to the appointment, recruitment and promotion procedures as an explanation for the absence of women from university management. Such factors as political appointment of presidents and vice-presidents, irrelevant questions asked at interviews, male chauvinism, patriarchal structure of the academy, and the fact that appointment required long experience were some of the reasons given by the respondents.

One woman manager commenting on the experience requirement and noted that: “The fact that one cannot become a dean of faculty without having been a head of department was problematic for most women because most heads of departments are men”. In response to a similar question the senior academic staff pointed out institutional factors such as, few numbers of women and the fact that the top ranks are dominated by men were responsible for women’s absence from senior management positions. The researcher further investigated the issue of few numbers through document analysis. It was proved that women were indeed few and they occupied junior ranks in the academic ladder.

### **3.6.3. Socio-cultural barriers**

Stereotyped notions about women constitute major barriers. Assertiveness is frequently interpreted as aggression. Women in some cultures find it difficult to exert authority over males. Women in advanced industrialized societies as well as those in the developing world still suffer from the myth that women are too emotional or too illogical for senior management, or best suited to the domestic maintenance aspects of administration. It does not make it any easier that women frequently share these stereotypes and accept uncritically roles which leave them marginalized and with limited career prospects. The study findings indicated that culture influences participation of women in leadership in university management in Ethiopia. The analysis of data established that patriarchal structures and socialization of girls discourage women from seeking leadership positions.

Traditional beliefs and cultural attitude regarding the role and status of women in society are still prevalent and top leadership in any institution is viewed as a

masculine domain. The majority of the women managers said they had faced some social barriers in route to their current positions, while some said they did not face any social barriers. These responses may give an impression that the Ethiopian society was beginning to accept women in leadership positions. This may not be true because in the universities most of the positions held by women are mainly lower academic management positions for example, heads of departments, registrar and finance heads. Besides, some of the positions are in the areas traditionally considered feminine like director of gender office, HIV/AIDS directors, and chief librarian. To illustrate the societal barriers, one woman manager commented: “Women are not expected to excel in the sciences – computer scientists. Again – nurturing roles leave little time to pursue one’s career”. Another female respondent said, “There is discrimination against girls ‘education in societies. People are more comfortable relating to male.” In most cases those that go for these positions are seen as social outcasts who do not have enough time for their family responsibilities, and some of them end up being divorced as was the case with three women in this study.

### **3.7. Strategies to enhance women’s participation in university management**

The respondents were asked to suggest strategies that would be used to enhance the participation of women in university management. The respondents suggested various strategies at personal, institutional and personal level. Their suggestions are presented in the sections below.

#### **3.7.1. Strategies at personal level**

Women have been accused of being their own enemies by most men. What could be done amongst women to improve their status? The answers to this question are summarized as follows:

- Women should compete with men as par,
- Women should be assertive
- Sensitization and emphasize on girl child education at all levels,
- Political networking, publishing papers and improving their qualification

It is clear that most respondents see emphasizing girl education at all levels as key in improving the status of women in the society and in higher education management. This was closely followed by networking among women, administrative and academic training and empowerment of women to bridge the gender gap. Women were also urged to be assertive and aggressive so as to get

management positions by some of the respondents. One male academic staff said, “Women should assert themselves by genuinely and aggressively participating in all aspects of academic life and should not think that men are not giving them the opportunity.

### **3.7.2 Strategies at the institutional level**

The male managers who felt that something needs to be done proposed that women should be given equal opportunities, gender awareness campaigns should be mounted; more training opportunities for women to enable them attain academic qualification and promotion of the few qualified women on merit.

**Table 11. Strategies at the institutional level (male and female managers)**

Strategy	Male	Female
Encouraging women to acquire qualifications	7	5
Promotions on merit	3	2
Training opportunities for women	4	2
Gender awareness campaign	2	20
Gender balance the positions	0	8
Develop a non-discriminatory procedure for recruitment & appointment	2	10
Scholarships, sponsorship for women	2	2
Affirmative action	8	4
Equal opportunity for men and women	2	2
Seminars and workshops	0	6

The majority of the male senior academic staff and male managers felt that encouraging women to acquire the necessary qualifications and affirmative action would go a long way in improving women’s participation in university management. Whereas most women senior academic staff and women managers felt that gender awareness campaigns in the universities would improve women’s status. Institutional sexism should be discouraged at all costs to put men and women at equal pace in all socio-cultural considerations.

### **3.7.3. Strategies at societal level**

The respondents were also asked to propose strategies that would involve the whole society. The socio-cultural attitudes towards women have been found to have a big impact on the access women have to education, employment and other facilities. As Zamora (2007:13) cited in (Morely 2014 ) argues: “providing women with more education without changing the gender and power structures that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequities, will not facilitate their

access to educational, employment level and political opportunities equal to those of their male counterparts”. The strategies proposed at the societal level are summarized as follows: i) Fight culture that hinder the progress of women ii) Change societal attitude toward women iii) Stress girl child education iv) Discourage societal sexism v) Train women on how to plan child births and child rearing vi) Develop and implement sound policies that support women. The data also shows that the majority of the respondents advocated for the development of policy and legislation to enhance the participation of women in management. Some respondents also suggested sensitization of society’s members to accept women’s leadership.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

Despite gender equality commitments and women’s educational attainment, still, women are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education management positions in Ethiopia. Regions and countries may vary in term of culture, achievements and development, but barriers for women’s representation in academia are surprisingly similar in many regions. It is found that there are several barriers which women might be experiencing in academia ranging from personal, institutional to societal level. At the personal level such factors as family commitments, child rearing/caring, lack of confidence and network and fear of public office were found to be deterring women from taking management positions. At the institutional level discriminatory recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures, political appointments, unclear promotion criteria, absence of documented staff development policies for senior managers and few opportunities for further training affected women’s participation in university management. In addition, societal factors such as discrimination against female child education and general beliefs about women’s domestic role were identified as eroding women’s self-perception just as those women who succeeded in public domain were seen as failures in their domestic roles.

In a nut shell, the study concluded that women faced differential experiences and challenges as a result of their multi-faceted roles and gender-based stereotypes which stemmed from the patriarchal culture prevalent within the university environment.

#### **V. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were forwarded to improve the representation of women in top universities management positions:

- **Broaden access to higher education for girls**

Improve access to education to girls and women so that they can fairly be represented both as students and academic staff, so that there will be enough pool of qualified women can successfully compete for higher education leadership positions. Of course, improving access to higher education requires the legislative back-up to support changes in cultural attitude. Formal requirements for gender balance in the provision of financial assistance and scholarships have proved effective in increasing the participation of women in higher education (UNESCO 2002).

- **Review higher education appointment and promotion policies**

Sound personnel management policies are needed to increase the number of women employed academics or administrations in higher education institutions. Frequently, this is a contentious issue with those supporting women as well as those opposed arguing against the appointment of token women. But at the heart of the issue is the principle of merit. It has been shown in some studies of some countries that when traditional appointment and promotion practices are put under scrutiny, it becomes clear that women are excluded for reasons that are peripheral and unrelated to their capacity to do the job. Again it has been shown that when formal procedures are introduced to ensure that irrelevant criteria are excluded from the process, women are much more likely to be selected for positions on merit. This is to the benefit of the organization as much as to the woman concerned (World Bank 2003).

- **Provide legislative and infrastructure support for women and girls**

The provision of legislative and infra-structure support is a tangible expression of organizational recognition and can make a great difference to the capacity of women to manage multiple roles. Gwen Williams points to the importance of reasonable provisions for maternity leave, child care facilities and mobility allowances. Special bodies to deal with women's issues have also been effective in changing deep-seated cultural bias against women (Onsongo 2004).

- **Provide special training and development programs for women in academia**

Leadership training is necessary to equip women with appropriate skills of management. Leadership training programs, special seminars and workshops are all offered as strategies for preparing women for top management. An important element of a special program is the opportunity it offers of a change of heart at the level of the unconscious. Only a deep-seated change at this level will have a lasting impact on the way in which women perceive themselves and give them confidence in their own capacity to be effective leaders. They have to feel like presidents, vice-presidents and deans if they are going to be presidents, vice-presidents or deans.

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