

Determinants of Women's Participation in Leadership Positions

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Abstract

*The study identified the significant determinant factors of women's participation in leadership positions. Social, institutional and psychological factors were given due attention. To meet the objective, the study employed an explanatory research design with quantitative research approach. Participants were selected using random sampling technique. Accordingly, 127 participants were selected out of 381 target population in the selected Woreda. Data were collected using a pilot tested questionnaire. Inferential statistics like Person correlation, chi-square, AVOVA, and linear/multiple regressions were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that women's participation in leadership positions was regressed on the predicted variables of social factors; it was influenced at statically significant $p=0.03$, and predicted that women's participation in leadership at unstandardized Beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.0554$), $F(2,103) = 31.152$. Psychological factors including confidence, dependability on male, emotion management and sensitivity, inferiority feeling and poor self-image were found to be significant factors in influencing women's participation in leadership positions at $[p=0.04]$ predicting women's participation in leadership at unstandardized Beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.01$), $F(2,103) = 31.152$. Institutional bureaucracy including appointment system, the less attractive and conducive working environment, absence of kindergarten in the public sectors, limitation in delegating women within the public sectors, less implementation of affirmative action, weak evaluation system, gap in accessibility and opportunities of education and training, nepotism, and women capacity and abilities to do organizational activities had high degree negative relationship with women's participation in leadership positions at statically significant difference $P=0.000$ $[P<0.05]$ & $r = -0.749^{**}$. Hence, stakeholders working on women need to strengthen the public awareness advocacy, build the capacity of women, and tackle institutional bureaucracy to improve the participation of women in leadership positions.*

Key Terms: Leadership position, Women participation, Public perspectives, Psychological factors and Institutional bureaucracy

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Introduction

The patriarchal status of most societies and male dominance in decision making has been the trend in many countries that exclude women from being productive members of the society. Recently, as one of the pillars of sustainable development agenda, gender equality/equity in leadership has been given due attention by governments. According to Samuel (2020), gender equity participation in leadership positions has influenced policy design and equitable distribution of resources in the public sector.

Women's participation in leadership is a human right that promotes democracy and healthy public sector functioning (Alotabi and Cutting, 2017). In Ethiopia, women's representation in politics and decision-making has been increasing steadily. Ethiopia has signed international laws and declarations which are also incorporated in its constitution of Article (9) 4 that affirm the legal rights and equality of men and women. Article 35, for example, reflects issues of equality of women's participation in the socio-economic and political advancement. In an attempt to improve the status of women in Ethiopia, the current PM has appointed the first woman president ever, and made women half of his ministerial cabinet. The proportion of women in the parliaments has also shown improvements in number, for example, from 2005 (21.9%) to 2010 (27.9%) though that does not show progress so far in achieving the millennium sustainable development goals. The issue of raising women's participation in leadership does not meet the desired goal at the grass root level.

Hankore (2018a) stated variables such as attitude, perception and family burden have significantly affected women's participation in leadership positions while Dhakal (2019) found organizational factors such as lack of

educational upgrading system, low women participation in decision making and the lack of fair appointment system of public institution as basic reasons for the situation. For Etagegn (2019), lack of inclusive work environment, rigid working time, absence of institutional child care centers, gender bias was amongst the factors that affected women in leadership positions. Moreover, personality characteristics such as confidence in abilities, emotion, and sensitivity and inferiority feelings have hugely impacted women's role in leadership (Maki, 2015).

Studies identified multi-dimensional factors why women are limited in their representation in leadership. Factors such as socio-cultural (Maki, 2015; Mekasha, 2017 and Hankore, 2018b); organizational (Morgan, 2017); policy (Nakano & Muniz, 2018); and psychological factors (Bethelhem, 2019; Obrien and Rickine, 2016) were found to be significantly related to women's leadership positions. Promoting women is not something that can be easily achieved as it is a deep-rooted and historical problem in Ethiopia. This study is an attempt to determine the relationship between women's leadership and influencing factors such as social factors, institutional bureaucracy and psychological attributes. The study tries to predict the level of influence of social, psychological and institutional bureaucracy factors on women's leadership positions. The study is delimited to West *Hararghe Zone, Badesa* Town Administration public sectors.

Theoretical Framework

Social role and expectation are rooted in sociological assumptions that people react to leaders with gendered lenses which, in turn, leaders respond because of their internalized gender role (Mihiret, 2019). Under the Feminist inquiry Billing and Alvesson (2000) argued that structural and cultural assumptions

“reproduce global gender inequalities than social role and expectations. According to Morgan (2019), leadership is a dynamic as “Men think” ‘can do and will do’ while “women think” and men ‘have done for them and will do for them’ and hence gender stereotypes have been considerable barriers to female leadership. Alotabi and Cutting (2017) also noted the necessity of going out of the feminine socially constructed perspectives and move on into competence of women leadership. This study assumes social role and expectation, the structural and cultural barriers, and the social construction and competency of women are influencing factors for women's leadership positions. Women innately or nurtured are endowed with leadership qualities such as openness, empathy, relationship management, inclusiveness, flexibility, work management and collaboration.

Dhakar (2019) stated the socially constructed assumptions and perception of women's leadership has influenced the role of women in the public sector. Socio-cultural factors shape the status of women's leadership and validate actions of women. Socio-cultural factors are not, in fact, always imposed but manipulated and interpreted in multiple ways which, in turn, affect the social identity of women. Public sectors have their own institutional bureaucracy to efficiently perform institutional goals. They have realities, values, symbols and rituals that support the creation of norms and expectations of behaviour that is not valued, and how authority is asserted (Mekasha, 2017). Some public sectors have developed masculinity values by promoting male domination and stereotypical views towards women's roles, attributes, preferences and commitments which impact the effectiveness and participation of women in leadership (Bethlehem, 2018). Gender discrimination happens whenever institutions start to assign positions on the bases of gender than experience and abilities. Eagly and Johansson (as cited

by Alotabi and Cutting, 2017) have commented that leadership and management continue to be the domain of men and public sectors have continued to assign leadership on the basis of social identity of sex.

Women's self-image and confidence are important attributes of leadership. Women with negative self- image, low self-confidence, and fear of rejection for success were found to be significantly negative predictors of women leadership (Hankore, 2018a). Similarly, Bethelhem (2018) indicated that socialization of women as subordinate to male has contributed to the low self-confidence in some women. It affects women in the way that they are perceived by the public. Family responsibilities and abusive work environment have further limited women's participation in leadership. Due to lack of access to opportunities, for example, education and training, some women did not have the right experience and lacked credentials. Even when they managed to have the experience and got credentials, they seemed to have psychologically accepted a secondary role in their profession because of lack of confidence (Maki, 2015). The current study attempted to address dependent variables as depicted in the conceptual framework below:

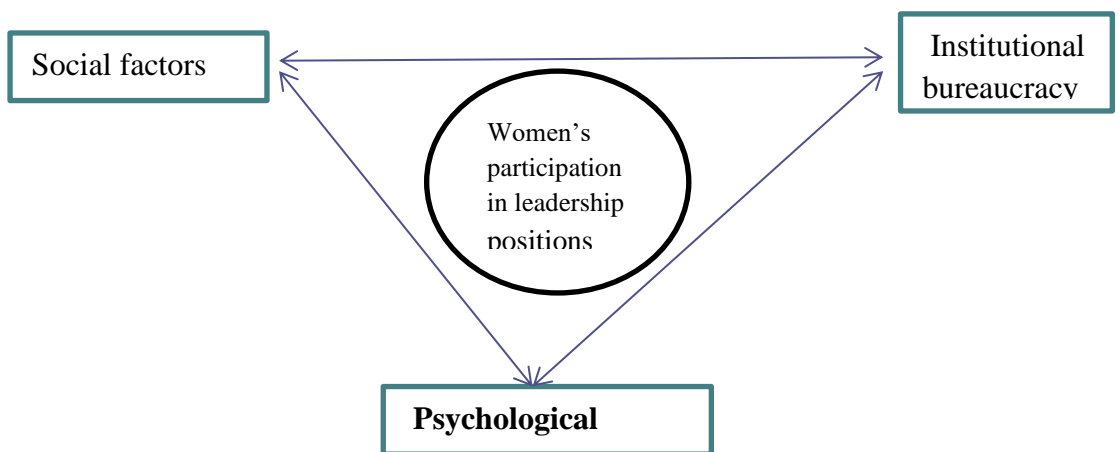


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Research Design

The study followed an explanatory mixed research design with the purpose to explain predictive factors of women's participation in leadership in the selected *Woreda*. Quantitative approach was employed to establish the relationship between dependent (participation in leadership) and independent variables (social, institutional bureaucracy and psychological factors). The target population of the study were 381 public servants in West *Harerge* Zone. The name list was compiled from 25 public service offices and a random sampling technique was applied to select 127 participants, one-third of the population. A questionnaire with close-ended items was employed as the main data collection tool. Data were collected from experts, group leaders and leaders of public sectors. The closed ended items were designed in a Likert scale format and coded as *very high effect* (5), *high effect* (4), *moderate effect* (3), *low effect* (2) and *very low effect* (1). The questionnaire was prepared in English and translated into Amharic.

The variables of the study are formulated as Y (Women's Participation in leadership) = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ social factors + β_2 Psychological factors + β_3 Public Institutional bureaucracy + e , $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3$. The social perspectives, institutional bureaucracy and psychological factors were analysed by using inferential statistic like Pearson correlation, chi-square, ANOVA and regression. To uphold the validity of the instrument, extensive expert advice was sought and revisions on items were made. Attempts were made to ensure that variables included in the study were represented and objectives were appropriately addressed. On the other hand, to ensure its consistency, a Cronbach's alpha reliability pilot test was administered to a sample of 13 respondents who were not included in the study. Accordingly,

some items were reconstructed while others were either replaced or discarded. To this end, the reliability coefficients of social, psychological, institutional bureaucracy factors were calculated as follows:

Table 1. Reliability Test Result with Cronbach's Alpha

No	Variables	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Social factors	9	.650
3	Psychological factors	10	.915
3	Institutional bureaucracy factors	11	.994
	Variables conducted reliability tested under study	23	

Results and Discussion

The demographic profile showed that 67.2% and 32.7% of the participants were male and female, respectively. Almost 96.4% of the participants were below 45 years of age; 81.8% were married and 73.3% were BA/BSC holders; about 79.3 % of the participants had above five years of work experience; and 74.4 % of them had monthly income above 6000Birr. In order to analyse the effect of independent variables on dependent variable, it was necessary to test whether the collected data violate the basics assumption of the standardized linear regression models or fitness so as to avoid biasness of parameter estimates.

Table 2. Determination of Model fitness

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std.-Error of Estimate	Change statics					Durbin Watson
					R2 change	F Change	DF ₁	DF ₂	Sig. F change	
1	.885a	.784	.759	.244	.784	31.152	12	103	.000	1.317

Predictors: (Constant), social, institutional bureaucracy and psychological factors.

From Table 2, the R, R², adjusted R² and the standard error of the estimate, which can be used to determine how well the regression model fits the data (Osborne, 2019)? The relationship between the independent variables (social, psychological and institutional bureaucracy) are factors contributing to the under representation of women’s participation in leadership positions. Accordingly, the dependent variable, women’s participation, was regressed on the predicted independent variables which could be playing a significant effect on the level of women’s participation in leadership positions. Moreover, the R² values 0.784 depicted that the models explain 78.4 % of the variance in participation of women in-terms of leadership positions across public sectors. The value of adjusted R² was 0.759 indicating a true 75.9% of the variation in the outcome variable explained by the predictors which are to keep within the model. Durbin-Watson (the standard error) of the model fits the assumption which could be implying that the standard deviation of the residual can help in predicting or estimating the dependent variable through which the standard errors of the model was 0.244.

Table 3. ANOVA Statically Significance difference point

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	Regression	22.188	2	1.849	31.152	.000b
	Residual	6.114	103	.059		
	Total	28.302	115			

The dependent variable dignified women's participation in leadership positions or how much women are promoted in leadership per year within West *Harerge* zone. Predictors (constant) consisted of social factors, institutional bureaucracy and psychological factors affect women's participation in leadership positions. The F-ratio within the ANOVA test, was conducted to see on whether the overall multiple linear regression analysis models was good (or not) fit the data. The independent variable has predicted the dependent variables at statistically significant difference $(2,103) = 31.152$, $P = 0.000^b$, < 0.05 which shows that the multiple linear regression was a good fit of data.

Table 4. Women participation in leadership: Regression Analysis

	Model	Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Significance (P) Values	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Multicollinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	3.158	286		11.041	.000	2.590	3.725		
I	Social factors	-0,0554	0.0274	-0.0992	-1.57	0.03	-0.1094	- 0.0008	0.6	1.6
II	Psychological factors	-0.01	0.02	-0.025	-2.46	0.04	-0.05	0.03	0.7	1.4

Social Factors and Women's Participation in Leadership Position

Women's participation in leadership positions [numbers of women promoted per year] was regressed on the predicted variables of social factors including attitude toward women's role, perception toward women's participation in leadership positions, sexual assault, an exclusive child bearing responsibilities have statistically significant difference [$p=0.03$], predicting women's participation in leadership at unstandardized Beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.0554$), $F(2,103) = 31.152$, implying that social factors can play a significant effect on women's participation in leadership position. In others words, for the increase of every social factor influence, holding the others variables constant, it is expected that women's participation in leadership could be decreased by 0.0554 (5.54%) per year.

Psychological Factors and Women's Participation in Leadership Positions

Women's participation in leadership positions [numbers of women promoted per year] was regressed on the predicted variables of psychological factors including motivational influence of women, their confidence status, their dependability on male counterpart, emotionality, sensitivity, inferiority and low self-image adaptation, in average terms, have statically significant influence at [$p=0.04$] predicting women's participation in leadership at unstandardized Beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.01$), $F(2,103) = 31.152$, implying that psychological factors can play significant effect on women participation in leadership positions. In others words, for the increase of every psychological factor influence, holding the other variables constant, it is expected that women's participation in leadership could be decreased by -0.01 (1%) per year. Clearly psychological factors are affecting women participation at significant terms, and they need to be given due attention to increasing their motivation, self-image, confidence and decrease dependency on male counterpart.

Table 5 depicts the public institutional bureaucracy factors including appointment system, the less conducive working environment, absence of kindergarten, fear of women delegation, lack of affirmative action, access and opportunities to capacity building, weak evaluation system, and nepotism had a high degree negative relationship with women's participation in leadership positions at a statically significant difference of $P=0.000$ [$P<0.05$] & $r= -0.749^{**}$

The major objective of the study was to determine influencing factors of women leadership positions by addressing three independent variables: social, psychological and institutional bureaucracy factors. Accordingly, attitude, perception, child bearing responsibilities, sexual assault [verbal attack] and family burden were determined as negative influencing factors for women's participation in leadership positions. Samuel (2020), Etageny Fikre (2019), Bethelhem (2018) had similar claim on the variables (attitude, perception of societies and home responsibilities) as determinant factors. Psychological factors such as self-confidence and self-image have statistically significant effects on women's participation in leadership positions. Mekasha (2017) explored similar results stating that women in leading and managing public sectors had less confidence and did not make decision particularity with risk involving issues. He found a statistically significant p-value of women's self-image that was affecting their participation in leadership positions.

Similar to the current study Etageny's (2019) findings on organizational factors, including hiring and appointment practice, evaluation and recognition system, educational upgrading system and women participation in decision making were statistically significant. Hiring and appointment, unfavourable working environment, absence of kindergarten, limited delegation of women in the public sectors, less implementation of affirmative action, weak evaluation system, less access to education and training, and nepotism were found to have high degree of relationship with women's participation in leadership positions at statistically significant difference of $P=0.000$ [$P<0.05$] & $r = -0.749^{**}$

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Women's participation in leadership positions within public sectors is the most critical agenda and strategic focus area that need to be addressed. The findings showed that women are facing numerous challenges, and it is a long way to bridge the gap in the participation for leadership positions. Based on the major findings, the following conclusions are forwarded:

- Social factors such as societal attitude/perception, sexual assault, child bearing responsibilities, use of proverbs to discourage women's participation have played a significant role in lowering the status of women's participation in leadership.
- Psychological factors, self- confidence, economic dependability on male counterpart, emotionality, sensitivity, inferiority feeling and low self-image have statistically significant contribution for the lower status in the leadership participation.

- Leadership appointment system, less conducive working environment, absence of kindergarten around the public sectors, lack of trust in delegating women in public sectors, the problem of implementing the affirmative action, weak evaluation system, low access and opportunities for capacity building, and nepotism were dominant public institutional factors that hindered women from leadership participation.

Recommendations

In spite of the growing participation of women in the leadership positions, reducing the gap between men and women is still a long way to go. There is still male dominance in the public sector leadership positions reflecting male identity fits all approaches to leadership.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations could be suggested:

- Stakeholders' integration and public awareness about the low position of women should improve the status of women leadership in the public sectors;
- There is a need to establish a sound networking system to address public awareness and institutional factors that are more complex issues;
- Improvement in public institutional bureaucracy could change appointment system, evaluation and recognition systems and encourage women's participation;
- In order to involve women in decision making, there is a need to facilitate education and training access to enhance women's capacity;

- The psychological barriers such as emotionality, sensitivity, self-image, dependency syndrome, inferiority positions need to be prioritized and addressed institutionally; and
- The social policy of women should be mainstreamed and further studies are required to narrow the gap between men and women leadership in public sectors.

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