Women Participation in Managerial Positions in Debreberhan Town, Ethiopia: Challenges and Tactics

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Abstract: *Even though women represent over half of the Ethiopian population, their participation in different managerial positions of public institutions is vastly underrepresented. This under-representation of women emanated from different socio-cultural and other problems which encumber women's active involvement and successfulness. On the other hand, the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the state, and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women equal to that of men in all fields including managerial positions of public institutions. Accordingly, this study intends to trace challenges which are facing women's participation and tactics to be implemented for improving women's participation in managerial positions. In view of these, this study found out that patriarchy is the major challenge that affects women's participation in managerial positions of public institutions. Patriarchy as a socially constructed concept considers men as superior to women in different social, economic and political activities and practices. This biased attitude and perception limit women's interest and success in a managerial position. In addition, gender division of labor which reserves productive and community role for men and reproductive (unpaid) activities for women is another challenge that affects women's involvement in managerial positions of public institutions. Moreover, fear of public criticism, low level of self-esteem, lack of assertive skill, low level of education and experience were found to be the fundamental challenge that hinders women from holding managerial positions of public institutions. Generally, the presence of gender-biased socio-cultural set up plays a negative role on women's participation and effectiveness in managerial positions of public institutions. Hence, gender awareness training, proper implementation of affirmative action measures, diversified enabling strategies and other tactics could reverse these scenarios.*

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Gender, Patriarchy, Gender Division of Labor and Assertiveness

1. Introduction

Despite women constituting over half of the world population, their participation in different positions, including leadership is vastly underrepresented. On the other hand, the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world, and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women equal to that of men in all fields (UNGS, 1979).Besides, Women are a major force behind people's participation in the life of society today. Not only do they comprise the majority in terms of population, but they also play a crucial role in society as procreators of posterity as well as producers of goods and services. Although women have made great strides forward in obtaining a vote and the right to be elected to political offices in many countries, they comprise less than 15 percent of the Members of Parliament and less than 5 percent of heads of state worldwide. They hold only a fraction of other leadership positions nationally and internationally. In Kenya, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men prevail as many people uphold cultural practices which enhance the subordination of women. Consequently, men continue to dominate women in political, economic, social, and religious realms (Kasomo, 2012).

Additionally, a long period of time, women finding themselves with double responsibilities both in the workplace and the home. In order to fulfill their roles as mothers and wives in the home, they face difficult time and energy to participate in politics and other affairs of the society. In countries where women are restricted physically such as cultural restrictions on their mobility, they find difficult to participate in political spheres that need interaction with all the public (PRHSA, 2011). Moreover, quite often women have been marginalized and their rights and contributions have not been recognized. The exclusion of women in decision making positions makes Africa to lose giant human resources which help to achieve the desired development objectives (Lunyolo *et al*,2014).

In line with these, the study conducted in Sierra Leone by Castillejo (2009) stated that gender relations in Sierra Leone are extremely unequal and women face high levels of exclusion, violence, and poverty. The basis of this inequality is patriarchy and other related problems that hinder women's participation in different social, politically and other spheres of society.Women experienced high levels of violence during the conflicts, which influenced their demands for greater rights following the conflicts. On the other hand, the political participation of women has been encountered by different problems. As well, the study conducted in Kenya by Onsongo (2004) point out that in many Kenyan communities, the traditional perceptions of the society towards women as inferior to men continue to prevail as many people invoke in the preservation of African culture to justify the subordination of women. In recent years, in Kenya, women's participation in management positions and all spheres being advocated.

In the context of Ethiopia, the study conducted in Jimma zone by Uki Gelashe Jebessa e*t al. (*2015) disclose that women constitute half of the Ethiopian population and had contributions for the development of Ethiopia. In spit of their number and their contribution, their participation in managerial positions is insignificant. Also, their

participation in all spheres is mainly as subordinate positions instead of holding the managerial positions.They further found out that women's active involvement in managerial positions is very critical for the organizations to achieve their goals and the low participation of women attributed to different personal, societal and institutional factors (Ibid: 77).

Similarly, the study conducted by Endale Alemu Hora (2014) in Bedle town administration found out that that there are several factors hindering women participation in Leadership such as socio-cultural attitudes, lack of experience, lack of role model women, and domestic responsibilities. However, there is no well documented and deep-rooted study in Amhara region that explores genderized societal perceptions towards women's participationin managerial positions of public institutions.Hence, this study intends to trace the challenges and tactics to be implemented in the participationof women in managerial positions in Debreberhan Town, Amhara region, Ethiopia.

2. Women rights in national, regional and international instruments

Evidently, there are different local, national, regional and international documents which recognize women's right and postulates mechanisms to protect their rights. Correspondingly, Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAWO (1979) noting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex, recalling that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity, concerned that in situations of poverty women have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs(CEDAWO, 1979).

This document further stipulates that Affirming that the strengthening of international peace and security, the relaxation of international tension, mutual co-operation among all States irrespective of their social and economic systems, general and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control, the affirmation of the principles of justice, equality and mutual benefit in relations among countries and the realization of the right of peoples under alien and colonial domination and foreign occupation to self-determination and independence, as well as respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, will promote social progress and development and as a consequence will contribute to the attainment of full equality between men and women(Ibid: 2).

In the same fashion, the United Nation Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (2000) elaborate eight goals with 18 measurable targets for the international community to achieve by 2015 and calls among others, nations to promote gender equality and empower women (Goal 3).

Likewise, International Labor Organization (2007) portrays international labor standards are primarily tools for governments which are seeking to draft and implement labor law and social policy, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, to acceptable international norms. They prescribe, among other things, minimum working conditions and the principle of non-discrimination in its many aspects, and are usually designed for all workers irrespective of their sex, ethnicity, physical ability, or other attributes. Here, in whatever any activities, men, and women need to be treated equally without discrimination based on socially constructed differences between them.

Correspondingly, a protocol to the African Charter on human and peoples' rights on the rights of women in Africa (1995), states that every woman shall have the right to dignity inherent in a human being and to the recognition and protection of her human and legal rights.Every woman shall have the right to respect as a person and to the free development of her personality. Likewise, States Parties shall adopt and implement appropriate measures to prohibit any exploitation or degradation of women. States Parties shall adopt and implement appropriate measures to ensure the protection of every woman's right to respect for her dignity and protection of women from all forms of violence, particularly sexual and verbal violence.

This document further depicts that States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political, economic And social life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that: women participate without any discrimination in all elections; women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes; women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programmes .additionally States Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making(Ibid:11).

Harmoniously, Ethiopian constitution; Article 35; describes the Rights of Women as follows: women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this Constitution, have equal right with men; Women have equal rights with men in marriage as prescribed by this constitution.; the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken into account, women, in order to remedy; this legacy, are entitled to affirmative measures; The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them to compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic life as well as in public and private institutions; The State shall enforce the right of

women to eliminate the influences of harmful customs(FDRE, 1995).

It further depicts that Laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited; Women have the right to maternity leave with full pay. The duration of maternity leave shall be determined by law taking into account the nature of the work, the health of the mother and the well-being of the child and family; Maternity leave may, in accordance with the provisions of law, include prenatal leave with full pay, etc(ibid: 10).

Generally speaking , the protection and promotion of equality between women and men are recognized as fundamental concepts in the major international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966); the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979) and its Optional Protocol of 1999; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990); the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and its follow-up; the Millennium Development Goals; and, most recently, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the Plenary of the General Assembly on 13 December 2006.

Ethiopia is the signatory of these aforementioned conventions and agreements but women's participation in social, economic and political aspects is far less than its potential.

3. Research Methodology

This session clarifies the methodology section that had been employed while the investigation of this study.Accordingly, Creswell (2003) depicts his work that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting.Based on thesejustifications,the researcher used a qualitative approach that enables to have deeper information towards the issues undertaken by using focus group discussions and interviews. Scientifically, a qualitative research approach has its own designs such as phenomenology, case study, ethnography and ground theory, etc. But, for the purpose of this study, a case studydesign was employed since this study intends to explore issues in some selected institutions of the study area.

Moreover, in this study, both primary and secondary data sources have been utilized. Accordingly, primary data obtained from interviewees, key informants as well as focus group discussions and secondary data obtained from published as well as unpublished books, research , journals, and others. Furthermore, asthe data collections instruments, the study used unstructured (In-depth) interview, key informants interview and focus group discussion. Additionally, document review was used as supplementary data gathering instrument of the study. Accordingly, in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of participants to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors or want to explore new issues in depth (Boyce and Neale, 2006 as cited in Wubante, 2015). On the other hand, focus group discussion is very useful to explore new ideas that could be raised after interviews have been accomplished. Moreover, descriptive and thematic types of qualitative data analysis techniques were employed.

4. Challenges Facing Women's Participation in Managerial Positions Of Public Institutions

4.1. Patriarchy (Men's superiority)

Patriarchy is a social system which appreciates and perpetuates the male domination over women. It shapes women's relation to decision- making areas including managerial posts. It creates biased gender relation and roles which makes male privileged whereas women to be marginalized or discriminated from leadership posts.

The patriarchal thinking of the society is still affecting women when they aspire to higher managerial positions and higher posts in government sectors. There is a male chauvinistic attitude regarding women's access to managerial positions (UNDAW, 2005).

Participants of the study explains that patriarchy is one of the major challenges that face women while they participate to hold top management positions of the public institutions. Patriarchal attitude or man's superiority which allows men to dominate productive activities as well as community roles hinder women's potential to participate in leadership positions of public institutions of the concerned area. The patriarchal attitude of the community, including women themselves restrict women's from different social, economic and political opportunities that help them to be an active participant and beneficiaries of the sectors including leadership positions of public institutions.

Men's chauvinistic attitude that they consider themselves as if they are capable, superior and decision maker systematically push women from the managerial positions. Ethiopian community perceives men as superior and decision maker whereas women as inferior and incapable of making the decision on political matters. This discriminate woman from managerial positions of government bodies. Even, those women who are already participating in the managerial positions of the government of Ethiopia are the

victim of patriarchal attitudes which manifest in the workplace.

Nonetheless, the leaders themselves consider women as inferior and incapable of top decision- making positions. They are not escaped from the male chauvinistic attitude which makes men superior and privileged. On the other hand, as the researcher observed that some women believed that men member of the community has much more capacity than women member of the community. they reserve key decision- making(managerial) positions for men those who are considered to make justifiable and accurate decision maker by the society. This kind of attitude and perception kills women's desire and potential to be the influential leader of Ethiopia. Ethiopian women confront this biased thinking when they aspire to and participating in managerial positions of public institutions.

Corspondinglly, Lunyolo(2014)found out that culturally there is a belief that women are supposed to be lead them to lead and stereotyped notions about women constitute major barriers. The societies still suffer the myth that women are too emotional and weak for senior management positions.

Thus, men patriarchal thinking which consider women as inferior and incapable is the challenge that hinders women's active involvement and effectiveness in managerial positions of public institutions.

4.2. Gender Division of Labor

Women face many problems that their counterparts do not encounter when they are running for holding managerial positions of public institutions. As a result of women's expectation of traditional social roles assigned by the society, women face double burden while they aspire to and participate in decision making or managerial positions. In Ethiopian society, gender division of labor which reserves productive and community activities for men member of the community and reproductive activities including all domestic activities for women is common.

In the socialization process of the Ethiopian society, gender plays the leading role. Women of Ethiopia socialize as they are responsible for all domestic activities and they accept and respect it as it is even though there is some improvement in the urban areas. These women's greater responsibilities in the domestic sphere greatly affect women's participation and effectiveness in the managerial positions of public institutions of the country.

Participants of the study explains that women are expected to carry out all unpaid domestic tasks which include food preparation, child care, care of the elders and other family members and etc. This unpaid household burden limit women's participation and effectiveness in the public sector. Still, those women who are holding and aspire to hold managerial positions face these challenges.

Moreover, assigning roles such as reproductive, productive and community roles based on socially constructed differences between men and women challenges women to pursue top management positions of the public offices.

Women have a burden of accomplishing food preparation, giving care for elders and children, washing clothes and other materials and they have no time to do other productive activities compared to that of men. Because of this burden, they hesitate to think to be the member of top management positions because all domestic activities wait for their hand and other family members gave all domestic tasks as the responsibility of women family members.

Likewise, Uki Gelashe Jebessa et al(2015) found out that the culture of the society which design and assign gender role put women at the subordinate level in comparison with their counterparts. Women are mainly assigned in the domestic role and reproductive roles while men are expected and assigned in different higher positions including management positions.

Thus, the unpaid domestic responsibilities of women which emanated from gender division of labor are the major challenge which confronts women's participation and effectiveness in the managerial positions of government bodies. Ethiopian women have multiple responsibilities that the society expected them to be house maker without payment and acknowledgment. They also try to accomplish works outside the home.

4.3. Lack of Assertive Skill and Low Level of Self Confidence

Assertiveness is expressing our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a direct, honest, and appropriate way. It means that we have respect both for ourselves and for others. Being assertive is not about being pushy or superior. It's about communicating what you want in a clear, level-headed manner. An assertive person effectively influences, listens, and negotiates so that others choose to cooperate willingly(Alberti etal,1995).However, relatively speaking, women have a low level of assertive skill than men as a result of gender.

Low level of assertive behavior hinders women to participate in top management positions of public institutions.Mostly, women are not capable to express their internal feeling freely compared to that of their counterparts. These restrict them from active involvement in different activities encompassing leadership positions of public institutions, unlike men who are relatively capable to express their feelings, emotions towards something.Thus, a low level of assertive skill restricts probabilities for women to be the leader of public institutions of the concerned area.

On the other hand,confidence matters in the process of women's participation and effectiveness in managerial positions of public institutions. But, women lack the required self-confidence to hold management positions of public institutions. Most women believe that they are less capable than men counterparts to run for office. Lowlevel of self-confidence and esteem challenges women whenever they want to hold top management positions of the offices. When women consider themselves inferior to their counterparts, it will be difficult for them to be active participantsin leadership positions which requires the skill of leading, managing and controlling the day to day activities

of the workers of the institutions(Wubante and Manju,2018). Thus, a low level of self-esteem or image and confidenceaffects women while they want to participate to have top management positions of public institutions. Low self-esteem degrading confidences of the workers to accomplish complex tasks like leadership activities equal to that of men counterparts.

4.4. Fear of Public Criticism and Low Level of Education as well as Experience

Education improves citizens' participation in social, political and economic sectors. In this regard, women's education can play a very decisive role in the improvement of society in general and women's life in particular. Education can improve women's participation in managerial positions of public offices through raising their awareness and making them be capable of holding the political office.

Women's low level of education creates difficulty for women to get access to information and reduce their confidence and skill required for holding public positions including political leadership positions in local and national level (Hoare and Gell,2009).

Compare to men, women's low level of education is another challenge that faces them in their participation to hold top management positions of public offices. Education experience of women plays adecisive role in their participation in different social, economic and political sectors.

Corspondinglly, Onsongo (2004), Uki Gelashe Jebessa et al. (2015), Endale Alemu Hora (2014), found out that that low level of education and experience limits women's confidence to apply senior management positions of certain organizations.

On the other hand, fearing negative criticism is the challenge that hinders women to hold positions of public institutions. Most women, unlike their counterpart, are not interested to accept and challenge the critics which could become after their action and decisions. Due to this, women prefer not to hold public office positions.Similarly, Lunyolo, H et al. (2014) found out that women fear negative criticism which makes them give up attempts to aspire to managerial positions.

Therefore, women's limited educational qualification and fear of negative criticism are the challenges which limits women's participation and effectiveness in the managerial positions of the public offices.

5. Tactics to be Implemented

As it has been investigated that there are several challenges which hinders women's participation in managerial positions of public institutions. Cognizant of these, the investigator forwarded the below-mentioned tactics to be implemented for the improvement of women's participation and effectiveness in managerial positions of the public institutions.

- Gender awareness training should be given to all workers, including top management holders of the public institutions. This training can create a conducive environment for women to be an active participant in managerial positions through reducing gender biased socially constructed and ideologically reinforced differences between men and women which favor male in managerial positions of public institutions.
- Proper implementation of affirmative action measures can enhance women's participation in managerial positions of public institutions. Affirmative action has been launched for empowering women so as to enable them in social, political and economic spheres of the country. However, there is a problem of implementation of affirmative action measures. This programor strategy must be properly practiced and strengthened in the concerned area to have more women in the managerial positions of the public institutions.
- Applyingdiversified enabling strategies. There should be different strategies to enable women to make them capable enough to participate in the different spheres of the community equal to that of their counterparts. Enabling women through offering special education and training opportunities can allow women toget top management positions of their institutions.
- Working with different women'sassociations and organizations. Evidently, the primary objective of women's organizations is assisting women to be an active, competentand responsible citizen. Working with women's associations or organizations can help women to share experiences and allowing them to start leadership at the grassroots level. They can give women financial and technical assistance in the process of holding management positions of public institutions. Women's organizations can fill knowledge and experience gap of women in social, political and economic matters.
- Active involvement in women's forums, committees, and meetings. Women's themselves have to be an active participant in the public spheres of the community. Women's active involvement in different committees, women's forums, and meetings could enable them to hold top management positions of public institutions through showing their knowledge, skill, and attitudes which can help them to challenge the public and private domains of the community.

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