
Status of Women Academicians and their Perceptions of Gender Bias vis-a-vis Some Organizational Variables: The Case of Three Public Universities in Ethiopia

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Abstract: This study examines the number of women academicians in academic and administrative positions in three public universities in Ethiopia. Besides, it investigates the relationships of women academicians' perceptions about gender bias and some organizational variables. To gather data on the women academicians' perceptions about gender bias in the universities, a self-constructed questionnaire consisting of Likert type scales was administered to 95 female academicians. The findings of the study show that women are relentlessly underrepresented in senior academic ranks and administrative positions in the universities. The findings of this study also show that women academicians do not perceive that they are discriminated in the universities because of their sex, and they think that they are fairly evaluated for their performances.

Introduction

Gender inequity in academia has long been the subject of extensive research. Research findings show that women are underrepresented in the academic hierarchy of higher education positions (Wirth, 2001; Bagilhole, 2000, 2002; Damtew & Altbach, 2003; Kloot 2004). Studies also show that there are a disproportionate number of women in administrative positions at universities (Rathgeber, 2003; Ozel, 2008). For example, a study shows that of the 39.6% of the women in Turkish Universities, only 16.4% hold administrative positions. This is true even in countries which have strong legislative provisions against gender discrimination in both employment and education.

Similarly, studies conducted in Ethiopia, show that marginal positions are given to women academicians' in universities and in the academic labour

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market (Almaze, 2003, World Bank 2004). Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa, but has the last percentage of female academicians. At present, women academicians constitute 11% of the total faculty of public universities in the country. Trough women population constitutes over 50 percent in Ethiopian; they hold law academic and administrative positions which lead to ask series of questions: 'To what extent are women under-represented in faculty and administrative positions in public universities?' 'What factors explain women's disproportionate presence in leadership positions in universities?' 'What is the perception of women academicians about gender discrimination in their own universities?' These questions are worthy of investigation in connection with the increased recognition of today's gender equality in the work place. This study attempts to investigate the underrepresentation of women academicians' in three public universities in Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, and Haramaya Universities. It also examines the perceptions of women about gender bias in their universities and the relationship between the perceptions and organizational variables. Perception, in this study, refers to the ways in which the participants regard, understand and interpret their immediate realities using their senses.

Rationale for the Study

There are several rationales that underpin the present investigation. The various arguments heard in favor of gender equality in the workplace are no more disputable. The role that women are in development should not be underestimated. Women, as citizens, should equally and fully participate in nation building as men do. In 1975, the United Nation's Economic Commission for Africa, for instance, noted, "[T]he most serious problems of development defy solution without the active participation of women" (p.47). It has been indicated elsewhere that "[T]he presence of women in great numbers ... brings different experiences , perspectives and approaches to decision making and policy formulation" (The Hansard Society Commission Report, 2012, p.22). Besides, according to Wirth (2001, p.v) "There is a growing awareness and mounting evidence that gender equality boosts enterprise productivity, spurs economic growth and improves the welfare of

families. Today, the best organizations and firms depend on a balanced mix of so-called “masculine” and “feminine” attributes.

This partly explains why international commitments to gender equality today are stronger than ever. In 2000, the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Declaration established time bound gender equality goals for all states. One of the eight goals of the Millennium Declaration reads: “promote gender equality and empower women”.

There is also a need to analyze the participation of women in the workplace. According to ILO (2007), at a time when the world increasingly realizes that decent and productive work is the only sustainable way out of poverty, analyzing women’s role in the world of work is particularly important. Progress on full, productive and decent employment, a new target in the Millennium Development Goals, will only be possible if the specific areas for women in labour markets are addressed.

The very presence of adequate number of women in higher education has its own advantage, Wirth (2001) states, “When more women are appointed to higher positions and within non-traditional areas, they will provide important role models for further generation of young people” (P. 93).

The move towards egalitarian and democratic society requires, among other things, the equal participation of women with men in all aspects of the socio-economic life of the society. Realization of this increases women’s involvement in academic and administrative positions in universities. In Ethiopia, although there is an increasing awareness of women’s marginal place in the higher education system, the practical initiative taken so far to increase their participation is minimal.

In addition, there is little empirical research on documented the status of women academicians in Ethiopian public universities. The few existing did not also go beyond mere statistical reporting of women’s representation in higher education (Seyoum, 1986; Aida & Utusmi, 2004). There are no studies examine reasons for the disproportionate number of women in

academic positions and of their marginalization, assess perception of women in academic positions about gender bias in their universities, and explore the relationship between their perceptions of gender bias and other organizational variables. In the absence of adequate data on these issues, system level actors and university managers cannot consider issues related to gender disparity in their universities and thereby take effective measures to improve gender bias in their universities.

Literature Review

Research findings show that women are found in disadvantageous status in their universities in terms of both their availability in senior academic ranks and their representation in administrative positions. A study that examined the career progression of female academicians in Australia and Mauritius pointed out a greater percentage of women concentrated at junior ranks than senior ranks in UK, USA and Australian universities (Thanacody et al, 2006). Similarly, in Africa, gender imbalance has been found to be severe in almost all countries and in the majority of disciplines in higher institutions. Research findings also show that the number of female academicians is smaller compared to that of female students in African universities (Damtew and Altbach, 2003). Such a state of affairs raises the unavoidable question of whether or not universities, as organizations, do in fact provide convenient work environment for women academicians. According to Mama (2003) “[r]ecent scholarship suggests strongly that universities do not necessarily present the gender neutral organizational climate that tends to be assumed in HE [higher education]. There is evidence to suggest that they may, on the contrary operate in ways that reproduce gender inequality and injustice, instead of challenging it.” (p. 115).

Similarly, Poole, Bornholt and Summers (1997) write that universities have been perceived as traditionally elitist, male and patriarchal in their workplace culture, structures and values. The Hansard Society Report (1990) has also described British universities as “bastions of male power and privilege” (p. 68). Mama (2003) further argues that “despite institutional and managerial claims of administrative neutrality, the institutional and managerial cultures of

African institutions are...permeated with sexual and gender dynamics” (p. 101).

Studies also noted the relative absence of a favorable policy environment in higher education institutions in support of women’s concerns. Acker & Armenti (2004), for instance, noted that female academicians encountered problems related to “home/work conflicts, anxiety about being evaluated, fatigue and stress” (p.4). The authors asked, “Why in these changing times and after thirty or more years of feminist writing and resistance, do these problems appear to persist?”

It can be concluded that despite global and national efforts made to improve the status of women in societies, there is, globally, a disproportionate number of women in universities, especially in upper levels of management and in senior ranks of the academic ladder. In connection, the basic question to be answered is that “what are the factors attributed to the few number of women in universities?” One major explanation given to this question is that the limited educational opportunities that women had in earlier times, especially the transition from primary to secondary education (Lewis & Dundar, 2002; Nawe, 2004). This is obviously inadequate explanation for the few numbers of women in universities as it does not explain why women academics progress less slowly than men in academic ranks.

Another issue that needs explanation the unfair recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures employed by universities. The question that needs answer is that, “Are universities gender neutral in appointing and promoting procedures?” Universities are turned to be meritocratic institutions, using implement appointment and promotion cases based on merits. It would be naïve to presume that the principles of meritocracy equally work for both men and women in universities. “[O]rganizations often segment opportunity structures and job markets in ways that enable men to achieve position of prestige and power more easily than women” (Morgan, 1997, p.191).

Gender plays a decisive role in getting jobs and promotions. Benschop and Brouns (2003) note that even if women have the same qualifications and do what men do, they do not get the same recognition. According to (Knights and Richards, 2003; Kloot, 2004) masculine reasoning is at the very heart of the principles of meritocracy. Thus, when women get power and status in their institutions because of merits, men often find other emulated explanations for women's achievement other than merit. As that (Kloot, 2004) "[M]erit is perceived differently for men and women within institutionalized discriminatory practices". For example, in her study of women academic leaders in a Latin American University, Twombly (1998) quotes a Director of the University Council, a woman, who points out the double standard used in universities saying:

I can't speak of equality. We have to be to be two times better to succeed in the university. If one is equal in qualifications, the man has more opportunities; but if a woman stands out and excels, she can achieve success more easily than a man...For the council, one has to be an outstanding woman in order to win. Men get points for being men(p. 387).

In Twombly (1998) quotes another woman participant, the Dean of Letters, who was asked to comment on success in the University. The women responded: "Success? Officially or unofficially? Officially by ability, curriculum vitae and academic area. Unofficially, to be male carries more weight" (p.387).

Lack of adequate mentors and resources support for women is another explanation given for the few numbers of women in academic and administrative positions. In most cases, women are a minority group in universities concentrating at the lower positions. In addition, women have fewer models or mentors who can provide them with the necessary guidance and support, and thereby encourage them to succeed in their careers and/or to aspire for management position in their universities (Bagilhole, 2002). This, in turn poses considerable constraint on their career development. According to Sutherland (1985), "...the structure of the academic hierarchy

puts women in the situation of being judged only by those of the opposite sex on a great many occasions” (p.15).

A further explanation given for the disproportionate of women number in universities, today especially in higher levels of management or senior academic ranks is the feeling that women lack characteristics that are deemed necessary in organizational environment. Research findings show that men’s traits are generally considered more valuable than that of the women and men are often judged as more competent (Ridgeway, 1997). In connection, Morgan, for example, has identified some stereotypes traditionally associated with males and female in Western Society as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The male and female stereotypes

Male stereotype	Female stereotype
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical • Rational • Aggressive • Exploitation • Strategic • Independent • Competitive • A leader and decision maker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive • Emotional • Submissive • Empathic • Spontaneous • Nurturing • Cooperative • A logical supporter and follower

Source: G. Morgan: Images of organizations, p.192

Generally, as indicated in this review and elsewhere, gender bias in is very common in universities. It has also been noted that masculine goals and male norms are very dominant in universities. Morgan (1997), for example, noted a striking linkage between the male stereotype and that of the traditional principles of organization. He states:

Organizations are often encouraged to be rational, analytical, strategic, decision-oriented, tough, and aggressive, and so are men. This has important implications for women who wish to operate in this kind of world, for in so far as they attempt to foster these values, they are often seen as breaking the traditional female stereotype in a way that opens them to criticism (e.g., for being “overly assertive” and “trying to play a male role”) (p.191).

Literature also shows that “patriarchy” provides a broader explanation for the whole problem of the relationship between gender and organizations. The patriarchic view considers organization as unconscious extension of family relations. Morgan (1997) explains:

The bureaucratic approach to organization tends to foster the rational, analytic, and instrumental characteristic associated with...of maleness, while downplaying abilities traditionally viewed as “female”, such as intuition, nurturing, and empathic support. In the process, it has created organizations that in more ways than one define “a man’s world” where men and the women have entered the fray, joust and jostle for positions of dominance like stags contesting the leadership of their herd (pp. 226-227).

Likewise, African Universities are criticized for their becoming bastions for male patriarchy. Rathgeber (2003), notes:

...African Universities were established and organized to meet the needs of male students, [thus] female students sometimes have a hard time “fitting in” especially in non-traditional areas of study. This cannot be corrected simply by recruiting high numbers of female students and female professors, which could be done with affirmative action policies.... It involves a much more fundamental rethinking of the gendered nature of the higher education process and the underlying assumption that drive the behavior of both staff and students (p.83).

Feminists see patriarchy “as a kind of conceptual prison, producing and reproducing organizational structures that give dominance to males and traditional male values” (Morgan, 1997, p. 226). Morgan also, argues that “under the influence of matriarchal values organizational life would be far less hierarchical, be more compassionate and holistic, value means over ends, and be far more tolerant of diversity and open to creativity” (pp. 1997, 277).

Generally, an attempt has been made to show that, women hold few administrative and academic positions in higher education institutions throughout the world. Women are concentrated in disciplines traditionally labeled as feminine such as social sciences and humanities, but rarely found in the hard sciences. Besides, women academicians are concentrated as social sciences and humanities disciplines which are labeled ‘feminine’ UNESCO (1998), for example, states: “In most developing countries the picture is one of women continuing to dominate the arts, humanities, social sciences and educational fields” (P.21).

It has been also shown that gender discrimination and bias against women are very common in universities. Women are often considered inferior to their male counter parts. Besides, recruitment, appointment and promotion policies are often beleaguered with gender dynamics. Similarly, universities feel that the performance of women is different from that of the males. It has also been indicated that universities, as organizations, have also failed, in many ways, to provide a favorable policy environment in support of women. All in all, as Okeke (2004) states gender is a fundamental element of social organization in Africa.

Research objectives

This research tries to:

- (1) examine the number of women in academic and administrative positions in Ethiopian public universities across academic ranks and disciplines, and
- (2) examine women academicians' perceptions about gender bias and discrimination in their universities, and the relationship between the perceptions and other perceived important organizational variables such as performance expectation, resource support and mentoring, recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures, policy environment, and job satisfaction.

Method

Participants

Of the 280 women academicians teaching at Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Haramaya universities, a total of 119 (42.51%) were randomly selected for the study. Of the 119, 95 filled in copies of the questionnaire were collected. The number of copies of the questionnaire distributed to the women academicians working in the three universities and the number of copies of the questionnaire collected are indicated in Table 2. The calculated mean ages of the women academicians teaching at Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Haramaya universities were 32.2 (SD=6.25), 27(SD=11.4) and 29.5 (SD=11.4), respectively. Though it was not possible to select randomly women academicians from each university which represented a reasonable composition of women with regard to rank, experience, qualification and marital status, care was taken to select the women based on these variables. Accordingly, 47.3% of the participants were married. In terms of academic rank, 56.8% of the participants were lecturers, and 4.2% were assistant professors, and the remaining were assistant lecturers and

graduate assistants. With regard to the years of service, the 70% of them served for more than three years in their universities.

Table 2: Rate of return of questionnaires by university

University	No of questionnaires distributed	Returned questionnaires	Rate of return (%)
Addis Ababa University	45	27	60.0
Bahir Dar University	44	39	88.6
Haramaya University	30	26	86.7
Total	119	95	79.8

Survey Instrument

A self-constructed questionnaire consisting of 41 Likert-scale and some open-ended items was developed in order to collect data on women academicians' perceptions about gender bias and discrimination in their universities, and on the relationship between the perceptions and other important organizational variables. The questionnaire was developed based on a review of the literature in order to maintain content validity of the instrument. The instrument was piloted on a small sample of women academicians, and then improved incorporating comments and suggestions received. The respondents were instructed to refer to the practices of their universities, and report their perception about gender dynamics in their universities in answering questionnaire that asked about gender bias, practices of staff performance evaluation, appointment and promotion procedures, general policy environment related to women's issues, and the mentoring and resource support they received from peers and experienced colleagues. Items in the questionnaire also asked the women to respect their job satisfaction and their work load comparing to that of their colleagues. The questionnaire had three sections. The first section focused on the bio-data of the respondents: ages, academic rank, work experience, and marital status. The second section of the questionnaire focused on gathering data in gender bias and other organizational variables. This section had Likert-scale items sub-scales that ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) "strongly agree"

(5), with the exception of items on 'job satisfaction'. The coefficient alpha for the instrument was .86 which indicated a good level of reliability.

The third section of the questionnaire focused on generating data with regard to the justifications given for the few number of women in leadership positions in their universities. This section asked the data source to report peculiar problems that women academicians faced in the universities, and suggest mechanisms of minimizing the problems that women encounter in their universities.

Table 3: Study subscales and sample subscale items

Gender Bias	1. Women academicians are discriminated because of their sex.(RS)* 2. Women academicians are treated differently, if not unfairly.
Performance Expectation and Evaluation	1. Women academicians are fairly evaluated for their performances. 2. The performance expectations of women academicians differ from that of men.(RS)
Resource Support and Mentoring	1. I have equal access to resources that men colleagues have. 2. I am always supplied with necessary resources whenever I need them.
Recruitment, Appointment and Promotion Procedures	1. There is transparency in employment processes. 2. Appointment and promotion procedures favour males rather than females.(RS)
Favourable Policy Environment	1. Policies and practices are gender blind.(RS) 2. There are favourable policies in place which take account of gender issues.
Job Satisfaction	Women respondents were asked to indicate their level of job satisfaction using a Likert-scale that ranged from 'not at all' (1) to a 'a great deal' (4).

Note: RS=Reverse scored

Procedure of Data Collection

In order to facilitate the timely collection of data, the researcher employed three other people for administering and collecting the questionnaire. Data collectors were oriented about the data collection procedures. The, data

sources were also oriented about the purpose of the study and ways of filling-in the questionnaire. Their willingness to filling the questionnaire was obtained. It was not found necessary to stratify women in terms of other variables such as years of experience, rank, or marital status in expressing issues related to gender bias and academic status.

Data for the study were also collected from annual statistical reports of the Ministry of Education (MoE). Data obtained from the MoE were cross-checked against with the data obtained from the universities. Data obtained from the MoE and the universities gave information about the number of women academicians in the universities and their academicians across and the disciplines. Data on the number of women academicians in senior administrative positions in Bahir Dar and Haramaya Universities were obtained from the human resource offices of the Universities, and that of the Addis Ababa University from the annual staff profile report of the 2011. It was noted that there were sometimes mismatches between the data obtained from the Ministry of Education and the Universities. In such cases, the researcher used his own judgments in interpreting the data.

Results

Women Academicians in the Universities

Addressing the issue of women enrollment in universities requires first and foremost placing the problem in the larger context of females' representation in the entire education system. In the academic year 2009/10, females' enrollment at the three levels of education indicated the marked trend: the higher the level of education, the lesser the number of females' representation (see Table 4). With few exceptions, this is consistent with global trends in female enrollment. A further disaggregation of females' enrolment in higher education shows that female students comprised only 11.4% of graduate enrollment in public universities. If the current enrollment of low percentage of women in graduate programs continues unabated, females' underrepresentation in higher education will continue to have an adverse effect in their subsequent under-representation as faculty members.

Table 4: Male Vs female enrollment in the three levels of education in 2009/10 academic year

Level	Male	Female	Female (%)
Primary education	8,309,889	7,482,215	47.4
Secondary education	974,474	721,456	42.5
Higher education	230,680	77,015	25
Total	8,617,861	7,005,484	44.8

Source: Women's representation, compiled from Education Statistics Annual Abstract (MoE, 2010)

According to the information in the 21 public universities gathered, women academicians represented only 11% in 2009/10 academic year (MoE, 2010). This representation is close to the representation of women in universities and higher education in 1971 (9.4%) (Seyoum, 1986). The negligible improvement in the percentage of female academicians representation over a forty-year period is not only distressing, but also points to the long standing under-representation of women in Ethiopian higher education system.

In the academic year 2009/10, female academicians also represented 13.2%, 11%, and 9.6% in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar and Haramaya universities, respectively (see Fig.1). The insignificant differences in the percentages of women academicians in the three universities, despite the differences of the institutional set-ups, clearly show the marginal attention given to women in recruitments.

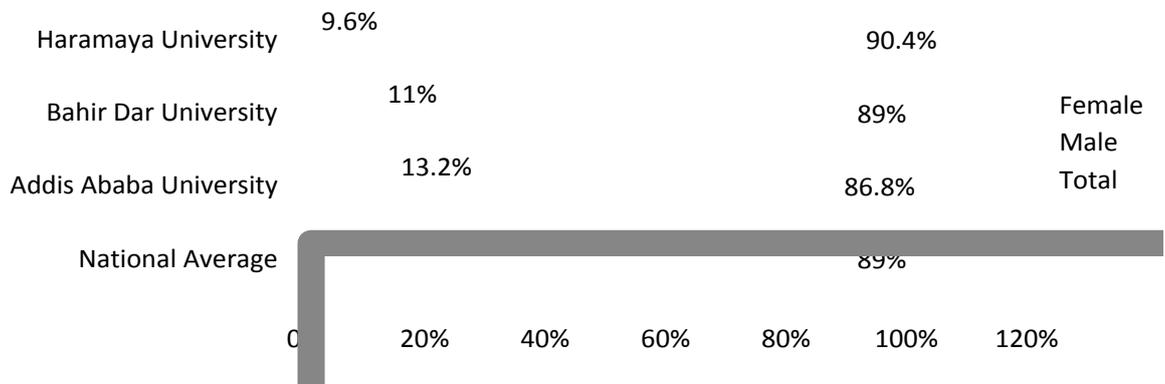


Fig. 1: Percentages of women academicians' in Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, and Haramaya universities (2009/10)

Source: *Women Representation across Disciplines, compiled from Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2010, and Addis Ababa University Academic Staff Profile Report, 2011.*

Table 5 below shows the representation of women academician across the five disciplines: Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural and Computational Sciences, Medicine and Health Sciences, Engineering, and Law. The table shows a relatively better representation (13.4%) of women in social sciences and humanities, but lesser in engineering (6.9%). This finding agrees with what often reported in literature on the area. With few exceptions, women are concentrated in disciplines which are labeled feminine in the world. Generally, the segregation of academic fields on gender basis continues to be a means of social organization (Okeke, 2004).

Table 5: Representation across disciplines (Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, and Haramaya Universities)

Disciplines	M	F	F (%)
Social Sciences and Humanities	1035	160	13.4
Natural and Computational Sciences	709	102	12.6
Medicine and Health Sciences	545	80	12.8
Engineering	593	44	6.9
Law	61	5	7.6

Source: Representation by Academic Ranks, compiled from Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2010

Academic ranks of the women show another telling story of their disadvantageous status in universities. Table 6 shows that most women were lecturer with and below the academic rank of in all the three universities. However, as shown in Table 6, there were only two women full professors in the country (in Addis Ababa University). The relative shortage of women at the assistant and associate professor levels is also conspicuous.

Table 6: Representation by academic ranks (Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, and Haramaya Universities)

Rank	M	F	F (%)
Professor	29	2	6.5
Associate professor	114	6	5.0
Assistant professor	328	11	3.2
Lecturer	769	60	7.2
Below Lecturer	819	185	18.4

Source: Representation in administrative positions, compiled from Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2007, and Addis Ababa University Academic Staff Profile, 2011

Table 6 shows the representation of male and female academicians in senior management positions in the three universities. A 'senior' management position, in this study, refers to academic or administrative positions starting

from deanship (or parallel administrative position) up to the position of the president. As shown in Table 6 only 8% of the senior positions were held by women. As the table shows, there was no senior position held by women at the Haramaya University, and only one woman held a senior position at the Bahir Dar University.

Table 7: Number of male and female academicians in senior management positions

Rank	M	F	F(%)
Addis Ababa University	64	10	13.5
Bahir Dar University	22	1	4.3
Haramaya University	39	-	-
Total	125	11	8.1

Factors for under representation in senior positions explanations given for the absence of women in leadership positions in the universities are indicated in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Reasons for the underrepresentation of women in management positions

No.	Reasons	(%)
1.	Lack of adequate academic qualifications	57.9
2.	Absence of adequate number of women	48.4
3.	Shortage of female academic mentors	48.4
4.	Lack of interest on the part of women academicians	41.1

As shown in Table 8 above (57.9%) of the respondents said that lack of adequate qualification was the main factor for the underrepresentation of women in management positions in the universities. As indicated in Table 6, underrepresentation of women in senior administrative positions is attributed to factors related to qualification, limited number of women, shortage of women academic mentors, and absence of interest on the parts of the women.

Women Academicians' Perceptions of Gender Bias

One of the purposes of this study is to examine what women academicians feel about the male academicians' gender bias in the universities. Examining women academicians' perception about gender bias is important especially because a study in Africa shows that "they have done little to change the status quo" (Rathgeber, 2003, p. 89). Rathgeber also writes, "Generally women are not engaged in bringing about structural change or social transformation" (p. 89). Such charges against women academicians in Africa may explain female academicians' understandings of gender dynamics in universities, which leads to the question: "What do women academicians think about gender bias in universities?"

Eleven items were designed to gather data on what female academicians' perceive about the male academicians' gender bias. As Table 9 below shows, as reported by the women respondents, male academicians in universities do not have a stronger gender bias against women. The gathered data also show that women academicians have more positive perception of gender dynamics. For example, most women agreed with the statement: "Women are equally respected and treated with male colleagues" ($M=3.7$, $SD=1.16$), but disagree with the statement "Gender is a problem for women" ($M=3.4$, $SD=1.20$). Furthermore, women academicians think that there is less systematic institutional discrimination against women ($M=3.2$, $SD=1.12$), and feel that they are less likely discriminated because of their sex as in universities ($M=3.5$, $SD=1.21$).

Table 9: Female academicians' perceptions of gender bias

Item	M	SD
1. In my university, gender is a problem for women (RS).	3.4	1.20
2. women academicians' are discriminated because of their sexes (RS).	3.5	1.21
3. women academicians' are treated differently, if not unfairly.	2.6	1.24
4. women academicians' are alienated and devaluated by their male counter parts (RS).	3.3	1.27
5. there is a clear gender bias and discrimination in treatment (RS).	3.4	1.21
6. few men appreciate and regard women's concerns as important	2.3	1.04
7. male colleagues hold patriarchal attitudes and tend to be more conservative about the roles of women.	2.9	1.19
8. male colleagues like to see woman in management positions and committees.	3.0	1.29
9. male colleagues think that women have capabilities and potentials.	3.1	1.21
10. women are respected and treated equally with male colleagues.	3.7	1.16
11. there is a systematic institutional discrimination against women (RS).	3.2	1.12

Note: RS=Reverse scored

Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Table 10 shows reliability indices, means and standard deviations of the six sub-scales in the survey instrument. As mentioned earlier, the coefficient alpha of the whole instrument is .86 which can be considered 'good' (George & Mallery, 2003). The coefficient alphas of the variables ranged from .64 (favorable policy environment) to .80 (resource support and mentoring).

Table 10: Reliability indices, means, and standard deviations for the six sub-scales

No.	Sub scales	Reliability ^a	M	SD
1	Gender Bias (11 items; n=68)	.76	34.7 ^b	7.07
2.	Performance Expectation and Evaluation (5 items; n=87)	.68	17.5 ^b	3.74
3.	Resource Support and Mentoring (10 items; n=77)	.80	31.5 ^b	6.65
4.	Recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures (7 items; n=77)	.76	22.49 ^b	5.41
5.	Favourable Policy Environment (7 items; n=78)	.64	21.50 ^b	4.22
6.	Job Satisfaction (1 item; n=93)	-	3.16 ^c	.76

a. Cronbach's alpha

b. Rating scale: 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree

c. Rating scale: 1=not at all to 4=a great deal

Table 10 above shows that women instructs in the universities do not think that they are discriminated because of their sexes (M=34.7, SD=7.07). They also perceive that universities expect from them the same performances they expect from male instructors, and thus that they are fairly evaluated for their performances (M=17.5, SD=3.74). The data sources also report that that they receive resources and mentoring supports from experienced colleagues, peers and management (M=31.5, SD=6.65). Furthermore, they say that the recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures in universities do not make discriminations between men and women (M=22.49, SD=5.41). Women academicians in this study also perceive that there is a favorable policy environment in support of women (M=21.50, SD=4.22); and they have a feeling of job satisfactions at universities (M=3.16, SD=0.76).

Inter-correlations among Research Variables

Table 11 below shows the correlation matrix between independent variables and women instructors' perception about gender bias. As depicted in the table, women academicians' perception about gender bias in the universities is significantly correlated with their perception about performance expectation and evaluation ($r = .56, p < .01$), resource and mentoring support they receive ($r = .50, p < .01$), and their feeling about recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures ($r = .46, p < .01$).

Table 11: Inter-correlations among the six research sub-scales

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender Bias	1.00					
2. Performance Expectation and Evaluation	.56*	1.00				
3. Resource Support and Mentoring	.50*	.49*	1.00			
4. Recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures	.46*	.55*	.41*	1.00		
5. Favorable Policy Environment	.14	.31*	.45*	.14	1.00	
6. Job Satisfaction	.16	.09	.46*	.14	.11	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

These correlations suggest that women academicians who receive resources and mentoring supports from male colleagues perceive less gender bias. Women academicians also perceive less gender bias when there are the same performance expectations set and when there are no discriminations in recruitment, appointment and promotion procedures. On the other hand, the more women academics perceived their universities as evaluating women fairly as to their performance, the less they perceived gender bias in their universities.

The correlation matrix, however, shows that there is no significant relationship between women's perceptions about gender bias and their perceptions about the existence of favorable policy environment in

universities. There is also no significant relationship between perceptions about gender bias and feelings of job satisfaction.

Discussion

This study shows a number of important findings. Findings show that women are generally underrepresented in the three oldest and largest universities in Ethiopia. It also shows the absence of women in senior administrative positions and a very few are in the highest academic ranks. This is the reflection of the status that women have in the society, essentially issues of fairness and equality. An enlightened view, in fact, sees the underrepresentation of women as a factor mitigating the effective accomplishment of the very goals of the universities themselves. It is argued elsewhere, for example, that “colleges and universities are not taking advantage of the widest talent pool when they discriminate on the basis of gender hiring or promoting women” (West and Curtis, 2006:4).

One cannot stop lamenting the disproportionate number of women in senior administrative positions in the universities. Though few number of women academician is given an explanation for the underrepresentation of women in the universities, one can still ask an explanation for the few number of women academicians in the universities with democracy and good governance. Currently, none of the public universities in Ethiopia is headed by a woman president. This raises questions related to the fairness of selections and appointments of university leaders in Ethiopia’s higher education system. This study does not answer questions related to the absence of a women university president in the country, and the underrepresentation of women in senior administrative positions, as they are beyond the scope of the present investigation. However, we can ask if Rathgeber’s (2003) observation is also true of Ethiopia, which reads:

In many African countries, vice-chancellors at public universities are directly appointed by the government, sometimes directly by the head of the state. Consequently, the possession of expertise, management skills, and academic prominence may be overshadowed by political considerations. Appointment to head a University or college often is a reward for supporting the political goals of the government. Those recommending the appointments are almost always men, and they are likely to recommend other men, thus effectively eliminating women from consideration (p.89).

Similarly, in Ethiopia's Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009 states:

The president [of a public university] shall be appointed by the Minister [of Education] or by the head of the appropriate state organ, as the case may be, from a short list of nominees provided by the board [which, in the current arrangement, is the supreme governing body of the university](FDRGE, 2009, Article 52 No.1: 5015).

Such a state of affairs inescapably reflects the deeply entrenched masculine values of universities because "universities have tacitly endorsed some of the most conservative thinking about the role of women" (Rathgeber, 2003, p. 89). Although there is no doubt that systematic solutions solve the problem, it is suggested here that universities should stand at the forefront of the struggle, as they are mandated by society to produce and disseminate knowledge that empowers and emancipates citizens.

This study has also shown that women are not in senior academic ranks, which might be attributed to the few number of women academicians in universities and the previous exclusion women from higher education, especially from graduate programs (West & Curtis, 2006). In Ethiopia for the first times full professorship rank was given to a woman in March 2009 by Addis Ababa University. This has wide-ranging ramifications for policy

making in higher education as Ethiopia has managed to produce only two women full professors in its 60 years of higher education history.

With regard to women academicians' perceptions about gender bias, the findings of this study do not agree with the findings previous research outputs. For example, Almaz (2003) stated:

the prevalent ones are those associated with gender discrimination and the stereotyping of women as incompetent, weak, and whose ideas are not to be taken seriously. It seems that the age-old [Amharic] saying that goes "Set yabokatchew lerat aybekam" (i.e., "the dough that a woman prepares is not going to be enough for supper"), is still alive and well even among educated colleagues (p. 31).

Two possible explanations can be given for the differences. Firstly, women academicians' perception about male colleagues' gender bias is different from that of their perception about managers' gender bias in the universities. Thus, the women in this study generally perceived that their male colleagues' and managers' had positive attitudes towards gender issues. Secondly, gender discrimination is, so subtle that it is hard to explore fully by means of pre-constructed questionnaire items. Thus differences in the findings could be attributed to the very design of the present study itself. Had women's academic perceptions been explored using in-depth qualitative study, the results could have been different.

This study has several implications for future research. The domestic literature on gender discrimination has largely marginalized women academic status in universities. Findings of this study do not only show the disproportionately low number of women academicians, but also indicate that they are at disadvantageous status in the universities. More research is, therefore, warranted to explore in depth the day today personal challenges and struggles of women in universities. An exploratory research on views of women academicians about gender bias and discrimination in the universities would more likely disclose the pervasive hurdles along their

career paths, and would indicate effective mechanisms for clearing the hurdles to overcome gender inequalities.

In conclusion, it should be noted that this study has several limitations, as it is involved a small sample size of women academicians in universities, and based largely on self-reported data. Moreover, the very design of the study was not exploratory. Thus, this study reports a subjective perception of women academics about gender bias and institutional hurdles (related to gender issues in the universities). Therefore, the findings of this study are neither not to be taken as conclusive by them, nor to be generalized to show women's status in Ethiopian higher education system. However, this study has underscored the women's representation in academic and administrative positions, their ranks across disciplines, and women's own perceptions about gender bias and discrimination in the universities.

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