

Women's Perceived Participation in Leadership Position and the Perception of Academicians in Ethiopian Higher Learning Institutions

Amina Ahmed¹

Abstract

Given the fact that the involvement of women in leadership position is minimal, The objectives of the study is to assess the participation of women in leadership position in selected higher learning institutions as well to compare the level of agreement to the barriers identified gender wise . To do so descriptive and explanatory research design and mixed research approach was applied. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to a sample 383 men and women academicians of four public universities found in Addis Ababa. In depth interview was made with gender focal persons and women office holder academicians while secondary data was gathered from the human resource management of the universities. The finding of the study shows that the participation of women in leadership position is minimal though improved from time to time.to this end personal, Institutional and traditional barriers are believed to contribute to the perceived participation of women in leadership position. The result of the Mann-Whitney U test shows that the perception of men academicians toward the factors affecting women's participation in leadership position is significantly different from the perceptions of the women counterparts.

Key word: leadership; participation; women

1. Introduction

Every human being has the right to participate in decisions that define her or his life. This right is the foundation of the idea of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. Since women know their situation best, they should participate equally with men to have their perspective effectively incorporated at all levels of decision-making, from the private to the public spheres of their lives, from the local to the global (Miranda, 2005).

To this end, Ethiopia has passed through a series of policy reforms for decades. The Key reform areas ranged from improving quality and relevance of programs to promoting equality in access to and success in Higher Education. This is due to the reason that Women and men have different needs, interests and priorities arising from their specific roles and situations. Women's needs, interests and concerns reflects their primary roles as mothers, caregivers and wives.

¹Asst. Professor, PhD Candidate, College of finance, management and development, Ethiopian Civil Service University, email address: aminaecsu@gmail.com
ISSN 2519-5255(print) ISSN 2957-9104(online)



This is an open access article licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Incorporating woman's perspective in decision making result in better decisions that adequately reflect the needs and interests of families and children thereby foster sustainable development. (Ademe & Singh, 2015)

Although women turn up in large numbers whereby they constitute more than half of the population in many countries, yet they are visibly absent in positions both in government organization and private companies. As a result women remain concentrated in the so-called “female professions” and at the very best in the middle management positions, and hence miss the decision-making processes at higher levels. Opportunities for women in the formal sector are very limited due to different reasons including but not limited to historical, social, cultural and political factors. As a result, most women are forced to find employment in the informal sector (Losindilo, Mussa & Akarro, 2010).

There are three main western feminist theoretical frameworks that focus on the gender inequality: the radical feminist theory, liberal feminist theory and socialist feminist theory (Acker, 1987). The study is mainly based on these theories and previous works related with gender disparity to assess the factors contributing to the perceived participation of women in leadership position.

2. Statement of the Problem

Though the Ethiopian government policy advocates equal opportunities for both men and women to participate in the democratization of the country, women have not been adequately represented at all levels of decision-making positions. Given the nominally equal status of men and women in laws of most countries, it is only right that both sexes participate in decision making over matters that affect them. But unfortunately the involvement of women in decision making positions is low as compared to their male counterparties. Specifically women are under-represented both in education and leadership in higher learning institutions (Ademe & Singh, 2015).

There are different empirical works that are studied to analyze factors that hinders women from assuming higher level leadership positions in different parts of the world. Among these the study conducted by Nyirenda, 2015 identifies lack of ambition, poor qualifications, timidity, family commitment, lack of experience, company policies and practices, and public and personal perceptions of women as well as financial benefits as contributing factors to the low participation of women in decision making roles in Zambia Revenue Authority. Losindilo, Mussa & Akarro (2010) explore some factors that hinder women participation in social, political and economic activities in Tanzania and found factors such as level of education, type of place of residence, marital status, religion, region of residence and age groups, with different levels of magnitude contribute differently to their poor participation of women.

Higher learning institutions are full of individuals who are highly educated and a center to produce the next generation. So it is expected that the participation of women in leadership position in higher learning institutions is high so that the next generations will look at their role models. Unfortunately the findings of the study conducted by Ademe & Singh, 2015 conducted revealed that women form a minority of university teachers (11.9%). They are also resentfully under-represented in leadership position; they constitute only 7.1% which is far behind the critical mass standard that women must constitute at least 30% of those in decision making. The current number (as per the report of MoSHE, 2020) of female academicians shows that there are only 4993 from the total of 32,992 academicians in the higher learning institutions in Ethiopia that constitutes 15% of the total. Though there is undeniable improvement still the involvement of women academicians is minimal.

As discussed above the studies confirmed that there is high gender disparity in all sectors and all levels of decision making. So many factors may be responsible for the gender disparity like historical, cultural, religious, environmental and political conditions. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying the factors that contribute to the low representation of women in leadership position especially in public higher learning institutions found in Addis Ababa (area gap) by incorporating both women and men academicians as well as the gender focal person of the universities. Men academicians are incorporated in the study so that their perception towards the women involvement in leadership position and the responsible factors towards the low participation of women in leadership position can be analyzed and compared with their women counterparts, which is totally ignored by the previous studies reviewed. Specifically the current study addressed the following research question: a) what is the current status of women in higher learning institutions? b) What are the Personal, institutional and traditional barriers to the women participation on leadership positions in the selected Ethiopian higher learning institutions? And c) is there a significant difference in perception between men and women academicians to the barriers in the case area?

3. Literature Review

There are different theories dealing with gender disparity. Among these radical feminism is one of the theories created by women. This theory names all women as part of oppressed group, that is no women can leave in her home and walk in the street safely without fear of violation by men. This theory insists that woman as a social group is oppressed by men both individually as well as a social group who continue to benefit from that exploitation. The relationship between men and women is determined by the power rather than the difference. As a result it calls for revolutionary movement for the liberation of women from the patriarchal social system (Rowland & Klein, 1996).

By patriarchy social system, it refers to the historic system of male dominance in all aspects. That is men oppress women through patriarchy, a system of structures, institutions and ideology which are created by men to sustain and create male power as well female subordination (Gunew, 2013).

Socialist feminism was the second theory in relation to gender disparity. This theory rejects radical feminism's main idea that patriarchy is the main and only source of female oppression. Rather this theory believes that the main source oppression of women is their financial dependence that is due to the uneven balance in wealth. This theory focuses on how the capitalist economic system (economic injustice) contributes to the women oppression and struggle against capitalism and male supremacy (patriarchy) (Armstrong, 2020).

Liberal feminism as the other wing of feminism believes that legal and political reforms are necessary within the democratic framework to achieve gender equality. Since the main obstacles to equality is the denial of equal legal and political rights (Happel, 2012). They argue that society falsely believe that women are less intellectually and physically capable naturally than men. Such believe leads to the discrimination of women in the academy, forum and market place. Therefore the main cause of female subordination is rooted in the set of customary and legal constraints which block women's entrance and success. The advocates of liberal feminism fought for women's civil liberty and right. And argue that women should have the same freedom and right as men (Musgrave, 2003). Therefore these theories were used as a base to conduct the study and modify existing questionnaires to collect the primary data.

Empirically there are different studies conducted in different parts of the world and in different sectors of the economy. The following section will discuss about the existing

literatures. The study of Nyirenda, 2015 on Factors Determining Women's Participation in Decision Making in Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) employs a descriptive case-study research design utilizing qualitative analysis of factors that contribute to low participation of women in decision making in ZRA headquarters in Lusaka district, Zambia. The result of his study shows that women do not play a major role in decision making roles in ZRA which was shown by the occupation of most executive positions by men. The governing board had no female members at the time of the study. The senior management members were comprised customarily of men and virtually with no women have ever occupied the top position of commissioner general. In addition to the above findings; cultural, economic, political and social factors contributing to the low participation of women in decision making roles in ZRA.

Ghanbari & Ansari (2015), conducted a study on 'Identify and Explaining the Social and Economic Factors Affecting Rural Women Empowerment (Case Study: Rostam County)'. The findings of the study shows that the variable of low education level (179), familiar bigotry (175), lack of legal supports (134), lack of appropriate communicative web (123), respectively, have the most effects on the obstacles of social and economic empowerment of rural women in Rostam town. And recommend as the solutions, to pave the way for rural women to raise their motivations, make their skills blossomed and finally, paying more attention to them as the laborer stratum of the society.

Losindilo, Mussa & Akarro (2010) explore some factors that hinder women participation in social, political and economic activities in Tanzania and found factors such as level of education, type of place of residence, marital status, religion, region of residence and age groups, with different levels of magnitude contribute differently to their poor participation. Cross-tabulation is used to establish the relationship between "participation" as the dependent variable and the aforementioned factors. Multiple logistic regressions were used to determine the relative importance of the factors. Results indicate that place of residence; age group and region of residence are significant while education and religion are insignificant factors.

The study conducted by Etagegne (2019), entitled as Factors That Affecting Participation of Women's In Leadership Position in Public Sectors: In Case Of Menzlalo Woreda North Shoa Zone. It aimed to identify the major factors that hinder women participation in leadership position and to evaluate the effect of gender gap in leadership position. The findings indicate that women are highly underrepresented in leadership position due to some factors like organizational factors and work place policies which are major cause. Due to these factors women participation in leadership and decision making position was insignificants and get less confidence for the position.

Birikti, (2014), conducted a study entitled "An Assessment of Factors Affecting Participation of Women in Management Position: The Case of Ethio telecom Company" by using a qualitative research methods, her findings showed that women are highly underrepresented in higher level positions due to educational gap, sociocultural attitude; organizational culture and company recruitment and promotion practice as a result women are unable to get role model and less confidence for the position.

The study conducted by Sileshi, 2015 is dealt with the assessment of the factors affecting women's participation in leadership positions. The analysis was conducted based on a descriptive survey research method applied to employees of Dashen Bank. The main findings of the research are the following: majority of the women's are assigned in non-clerical and clerical positions and the status of women in the Bank is very minimal, the promotion criteria were not strictly followed and it has been very uncertain how some employees have been promoted in the

Bank. The perception of top management that men are better leader than women, highly linked male networks and alliance with the management, attitudes of top management, inconsistency or unfair promotional policies and inhospitable and discouraging corporate cultures are the most listed factors. Similarly Mhired, (2019), conducts a study on factors affecting women's participation in high leadership positions in the case of Bank of Abyssinia. The main findings of the research are majority of the women's are assigned in customer relation in the bank of Abyssinia ,education gap between men and women has a positive correlated and significant effect with women participation in leadership. Similarly the status of women in the bank is very minimal.

The study of Laura, 2016 confirmed that the participation of women in higher learning institutions in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is minimal both in the number of graduates as well as the number of women academia participating in leadership position in the STEM specifically. The findings of the study shows that family obligations, discrimination and biases, and the lack of mentors and role models were also identified as factors hindering participation of women Leadership in in United States of America.

Ademe & Singh, 2015 conducted a study regarding the 'Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Leadership and Management in Selected Public Higher Education institutions in Amhara Region. By applying a mixed research approach the finding of their study revealed that women form a minority of university teachers (11.9%). They are also resentfully under-represented in leadership position; they constitute only 7.1% which is far behind the critical mass standard that women must constitute at least 30% of those in decision making.

As shown above, there is only one study conducted dealing with women participation in higher learning institutions found in Amhara region. And the finding confirmed the absence of women in leadership position in the area of the study. Therefore this study will contribute in filling the literature gap.

4. Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Research Design

To achieve the objectives both descriptive and inferential research design was employed. The descriptive research design is employed to assess the status of women in the higher level institutions and identify the contributing factors to the perceived participation of women in leadership position. Inferential research design is applied to compare the perception of men and women academicians in the selected higher learning institutions towards barriers contributing to the low perceived participation of women in leadership position.

4.2 Research Approach

To obtain the advantage of both the qualitative and quantitative research approach and at the same time to achieve the objectives of the study, the mixed approach have been used to analyze women's perceived participation in leadership position in Ethiopian public higher learning institution.

4.3 Target Population and Sample Size Determination

- **Study area**

The study area is selected based on convenience i.e. public universities found in the capital city of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) are considered. Therefore Ethiopian Civil Service University; Addis

Ababa University; Addis Ababa Science & Technology University and kotebe metropolitan university, have been used as a case study.

- **Target Population**

The target population of the study was the academic staff of the selected universities. Both male and female academicians as well as gender focal persons of the selected universities were taken into consideration. Based on the information from MoSHE (MoSHE report, 2020) and human resource management of the universities the total number of academic staff is 3628 and considering 4 gender focal persons of the universities (one from each university) the total target population of the study were 3632.

- **Sampling Techniques and Sample Size Determination**

For the women academicians (office holders) and gender focal persons censes method was applied since they are small in number as well as manageable while for the other academicians Using Cochran (1963:75) formula; taking 95% confidence interval the sample size is calculated as 385 by incorporating the correction for finite population this sample size is adjusted to 348 and considering a non-response rate of 10% the final sample size is 383. This sample size was proportionally distributed to the male and female academicians of the selected universities; then simple random sampling was applied.

$$no = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2} = no = \frac{1.96^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{0.05^2} = 385$$

To adjust for finite population size

$$n = \frac{no}{1 + \frac{(no - 1)}{N}} \quad n = \frac{385}{1 + \left(\frac{385 - 1}{3628}\right)} \quad n = 348.1$$

Considering non-response rate of 10% the final sample size is: $348 + 10\%(348) = 383$

4.4 Data Collection Instrument

To collect data from different sources Self-administered questionnaire, in- depth interview and document analysis was used. The **questionnaire** included both open ended and closed ended questions that have been adopted with some modification, in a way to achieve the objectives of the study, from Brenda Nyirenda (2015) and Denton & Zeytinoglu,(1993). To check the validity and reliability of the instruments a pilot test and cronbach's alpha were conducted. Based on the pilot test appropriate corrections and professional comments from the administrative staff of the Ethiopian civil service university were considered. **In-depth interview** was conducted with gender focal persons and women academicians (office holders) of the sample universities. The secondary data were used to assess the status of women in the universities.

4.5 Method of Data Analysis

The data Collected through the administered questionnaire have been edited, coded, and entered into the computer and analyzed using stata version15. Data analyses were conducted through a descriptive statistics and comparative analysis tool for ordered data (Mann-Whitney U test) to provide details regarding the factors affecting women's participation in leadership positions in the selected Ethiopian higher learning institutions. Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test if there is a difference between men and women participants to the factors that can contribute to the

level of perceived participation of women in leadership position. The data from documents and in-depth interview were transcribed and presented so that it can be knotted with the quantitative data to further enrich and enhance the information collected as well as to triangulate the findings with the questionnaire.

4.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

- **Response rate, reliability test and mean decision rule**

The objective of the study was to assess women participation in leadership position in public higher learning institutions found in Addis Ababa. Questionnaires, in depth interview and document analysis were made to achieve the objectives of the study. 384 questionnaires were distributed to the academicians of the universities out of these 292 were properly filled and returned constituting 76% response rate. The in depth interview was conducted with the universities gender focal persons and women academicians who are office holders in the universities. To assess the reliability of the instrument used, the cronbach's alpha test was conducted. As shown below, it is above 0.7 which is good indication of the consistency.

Table 4.1 Reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Personal factors	.890	.891	11
Institutional factors	.871	.872	13
Traditional factors	.889	.888	11
Other factors	.833	.833	6
Perceived level of participation	.873	.877	8

Source: Field Survey, 2021

To make easy interpretation, the following ranges of values were reassigned to each scale:

Table 4.2 Mean analysis base

Mean level	Decision rule
1-1.8	strongly disagree
1.81-2.6	Disagree
2.61-3.4	Neutral
3.4-4.20	Agree
4.21-5	Strongly Agree

Source: Best, 1977 (as cited inYonas, 2013).

- **Background of the respondents**

As per the above table majority (45%) of the respondents are from Ethiopian Civil Service University followed by academic staff of Addis Ababa University (30%) then by kotebe Metropolitan university (19 %) and Addis Ababa science and technology (6%). As well the 72% of the respondents are male while 28% are women. While analyzing the secondary data collected

from the university the worst case is displayed that is the proportion of the women academicians in all the universities ranges from 15% to 20 % starting from 2008 (2016) to 2013 (2020). Majority of the respondents are in the age bracket of 36 to 49 years and 88% of the respondents are married while analyzing gender wise majority of the women participants are below 35 years and none of the women participants are above 50 years old implying that women are currently involving in the higher learning institutions.

Table 4.3 Background information of respondents

		Freq.	Percent	Cum. Percent
Name of university	AAU	90	30.8	30.8
	ECSU	132	45.2	76.0
	AASTU	16	5.5	81.5
	KMU	54	18.5	100.0
	Total	292	100.0	
sex of respondent	Man	210	71.9	71.9
	Woman	82	28.1	100.0
	Total	292	100.0	
age of respondent	below 35	101	34.6	34.6
	36-49	148	50.7	85.3
	above 50	43	14.7	100.0
	Total	292	100.0	
Marital status	Single	26	8.9	8.9
	Married	256	87.7	96.6
	Divorced	10	3.4	100.0
	Total	292	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire, 2021

Regarding the participation of the academicians in the leadership position, 39 % of the men respondents are position holders as department head, college dean, vice president and other positions while 24% of the women participants are position holders as a department head and other position notice that none of the participants are college dean or vice president. This is also evidenced from the secondary data collected from the respective universities. Most of the positions are hold by men academicians in the universities under study. Women academicians are mostly bounded in the teaching learning process and confined to some extent as a department head, program coordinator and to the extreme limited as a college dean and directors. Exception is just in Addis Ababa University having two women vice presidents starting from 2011 till 2013 E.C. Regarding the work experience of the respondents majority of the men (65%) respondents have working experience of more than 10 years while majority of the women counter parts (84%) have less than ten years of work experience.

Regarding the academic rank of the participants 63.3% of the men participants are assistant professor and associate professor while 34% of women participants are assistant professor and associate professor. While analyzing the secondary data collected from the universities, the number of men academic staff with academic rank of assistant professor and above ranges 22%

in Ethiopian Civil Service university to more than 40% in Addis Ababa university in the periods ranging from 2008 to 2013, while the women counter parts ranges from less than 1% in Ethiopian Civil service university to 26% in Addis Ababa University in the same time coverage. As well the academic qualification also depicts that 47.4% of the men participants are PhD holders while the women counter parts are only 16%. While reviewing the secondary data collected from the case universities more than 85% of all the academic staff of the universities have second degree and above.

Table 4.4 Respondents characteristics based on gender

		sex of respondent	
		man	woman
		Column N %	Column N %
Age of respondent	below 35	24.3%	61.0%
	36-49	55.2%	39.0%
	above 50	20.5%	0.0%
Marital status	Single	8.6%	9.8%
	Married	88.6%	85.4%
	Divorced	2.9%	4.9%
	Separated	0.0%	0.0%
Please indicate your current position in your organization (if any)	department head	14.3%	7.3%
	college dean	3.3%	0.0%
	vice president	1.0%	0.0%
	Other	20.0%	17.1%
	None	61.4%	75.6%
How long have you been working with in university?	0-5	15.7%	20.7%
	6-10	18.6%	63.4%
	11-15	37.6%	15.9%
	16-20	17.1%	0.0%
	21 and above	11.0%	0.0%
Current academic rank?	full professor	0.0%	0.0%
	associate professor	9.5%	2.4%
	assistant professor	53.8%	31.7%
	Lecturer	34.8%	54.9%
	Other	1.9%	11.0%
Your highest academic/ professional qualification?	PhD	47.4%	15.9%
	Masters	50.7%	75.6%
	Bachelor	0.0%	0.0%
	Other	1.9%	8.5%
Number of children	None	13.3%	23.2%
	One	16.2%	8.5%
	Two	41.0%	41.5%
	Three	20.0%	26.8%
	four and above	9.5%	0.0%

Source: Questionnaire, 2021

To analyze the barriers contributed to the minimal participation of women in leadership position personal barriers were analyzed. To do so, both men and women participants were asked the level of agreement to the following; Lack of self-esteem, Lack of self-confidence, Lack of motivation, Women's low potential for leadership, Less assertiveness, Less emotional stability, Lack of ambition to accept challenges, Lack of Interpersonal skills, Lack of administrative skills, Low academic qualification and Fear of isolation. With Cronbach's alpha of .89 the findings shows those personal barriers (with mean of less than 3.24) were not agreed as barriers hindering women to participate in leadership positions.

- **Personal barriers to perceived participation of women in leadership position**

Table 4.5 Personal Barriers Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of self-esteem	292	3.13	1.302
Lack of self-confidence	292	3.18	1.299
Lack of motivation	292	3.24	1.325
Women's low potential for leadership	292	1.74	1.126
Less assertiveness	292	2.60	1.244
Less emotional stability	292	2.35	1.241
Lack of ambition to accept challenges	292	2.53	1.304
Lack of Interpersonal skills	292	2.00	1.206
Lack of administrative skills	292	2.08	1.176
Low academic qualification	292	2.38	1.293
Fear of isolation	292	2.45	1.202
Valid N (listwise)	292		
Composite mean of personal factors	292	2.5140	.86165

Source: Questionnaire, 2021

Table 4.6 Average means, median and Mann-Whitney test of personal barriers

Report					Test Statistics ^a	
Composite personal barriers					Personal factors	
sex of respondent	Media n	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	6735.000
Man	2.5455	2.5847	152.81	31478	Wilcoxon W	10138.000
woman	2.2727	2.3459	123.63	10138	Z	-2.685
Total	2.4545	2.5167			Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
					Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
					Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.004
					Point Probability	.000

Source: Questionnaire, 2021

a. Grouping Variable: sex of respondent

The **Mann-Whitney Test** was conducted to test if there is a difference between men and women towards the the personal barriers on the level of women's participation in leadership position; the finding shows that there is a significant difference (p value of 0.007) between men (median = 2.5455, n= 206) and women (median= 2.2727, n= 82) towards the effect of personal factors on the level of participation of women in leadership positions in the case higher learning institutions. This implies that the personal barriers are believed to affect the level of participation by men participants than the women counterparts.

The interview conducted with the director gender, youth, transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS prevention and control directorate shows that as a personal factor she mentioned that the high level of commitment of the women, lack of network though they are multi task by nature, prevented them to assume leadership position especially in higher learning institutions.

- **Institutional barriers to the perceived participation of women in leadership position**

Table 4.7: Institutional barriers Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. deviation
discriminatory appointment practices	292	3.21	1.309
maternity leave	292	3.21	1.176
Discriminatory promotion practices	292	2.96	1.314
male resistance to women in management positions	292	3.20	1.313
policies and legislation to ensure participation of women	292	2.82	1.361
opportunities for leadership training	292	3.59	1.116
opportunities demonstrating of competence as a result of power structure in the work place	292	3.60	1.106
gender biased policies	292	2.90	1.301
mentoring and coaching systems	292	3.96	1.006
proper staff development programs for women	292	3.89	1.044
Support services for women	292	3.68	1.096
access to information technology	292	2.83	1.161
flexible work schedule	292	3.46	1.230
Valid N (listwise)	292		
composite institutional factors	292	3.3309	.75233

Source: questionnaire, 2021

As shown in the above table, Institutional barriers were also assessed to see if these could contribute to the limited participation of women in leadership position in the higher learning institution. With Cronbach's alpha of .87 mentoring and coaching systems (mean of 3.96), proper staff development programs for women (3.89), Support services for women (3.68), opportunities demonstrating of competence as a result of power structure in the work place (3.6), and opportunities for leadership training (3.59) has been agreed by the respondents as institutional barriers that hinder the participation of women in leadership position in higher learning institution. While the other items in the Likert scale are not agreed as institutional factors that hinder the participation of women in leadership position.

Table 4.8 Average means, median and Mann- Whitney test of institutional barriers

Report						Test Statistics ^a	
Institutional factors						Composite institutional factors	
sex	N	Median	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	3648.000
man	206	3.1538	3.1288	121.21	24969.00	Wilcoxon W	24969.000
			8			Z	-7.529
woman	79	3.9231	3.8583	203.01	16647.00	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
			3			Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Total	285	3.2308	3.3365			Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
			5			Point Probability	.000

a. Grouping Variable: sex of respondent

Source: questionnaire, 202

To see if there is a difference between men and women on the institutional barriers on the level of participation in leadership position in higher learning institutions the mean as well as the median was calculated taking in to consideration gender and Mann-Whitney Test was conducted. Accordingly, the men academicians are neutral regarding the institutional barriers with a mean of 3.1288 and median of 3.1538 while the women participants agreed to the effect of institutional barriers with a mean of 3.8583 and median of 3.9231.

The **Mann- whitney U test** also depicts the same result that is there is a significant difference (p value of 0.000) between the men and women as institutional barriers have a contribution to the level of women's participation in leadership position. This is an indication of the situation that the women academicians highly and significantly believed that institutional factors are hindering them from participating in leadership position while the men counterparts are neutral towards the same. This difference could result from the view point that since the existing situation in the higher learning institutions is comfortable (conducive) to the men academicians they didn't recognize whether the institutional policies, strategies as well as the current situation may pose a difficulty for the women counterparts.

The interview conducted with the director gender, youth, transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS prevention and control directorate of the universities and women position holder academicians of the universities shows that as an institution there are different factor hindering participation of women in higher learning institution. Among this though the policies from country level to institution level are highly supportive, there is a great gap in implementing it. There is no special training provided for women that could help enhance the leadership ability. The requirements requested to assume leadership position didn't take the current status of women into consideration. The only special thing mentioned by the interviewee of Addis Ababa University was currently there is a special fund provided for women researchers and sometimes there is a discussion panel prepared by inviting men and women panelists. In addition to this the gender policy was revised at university level.

- **Gender Stereotyping and Traditional Barriers**

The gender stereotyping or traditional barriers were also assessed to see the effect on the level of participation of women in leadership position especially in the higher learning institutions. As it is mentioned in Kiamba (2009), it is not uncommon in rural villages in Africa to find the man literally walking ahead of the woman. Different reasons may be advanced for this but ultimately it illustrates the deeply held notion of leadership as masculine, which signifies the effect of tradition on the level of participation in leadership position.

Table 4.9: Gender stereotyping and Traditional barriers Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Men are seen as decision makers	289	3.72	1.199
Society condemns women to subordinate status	289	3.50	1.214
Men get social support	289	3.77	1.101
Women in authority are not recognized	289	3.33	1.185
The perception by others that 'Women lack social networks'	289	3.38	1.222
The perception by others that 'Women leaders are less aggressive enough than men'	289	3.31	1.152
The perception by others that 'Women leaders are low decision makers and risk takers'	289	3.60	1.111
The perception by others that 'Women leaders are more kind enough than men'	289	3.21	1.139
The perception by others that 'Women leaders are more relational enough than men'	289	3.16	1.062
The perception by others that 'Women leaders are unable to coordinate organizational activities'	289	3.10	1.269
The perception by others that 'Women leaders are not competitive enough to be successful in the higher learning institutions'	289	3.20	1.321
Valid N (listwise)	289		
composite traditional factors	289	3.389	.81437

Source: questionnaire, 2021

As depicted in the above table, With cronbach's alpha of 0.889, Men are seen as decision makers, Society condemns women to subordinate status, Men get social support, Women in authority are not recognized, The perception by others that 'Women lack social networks'; 'Women leaders are less aggressive enough than men'; 'Women leaders are low decision makers and risk takers'; 'Women leaders are more kind enough than men'; 'Women leaders are more relational enough than men'; 'Women leaders are unable to coordinate organizational activities' and 'Women leaders are not competitive enough to be successful in the higher learning institutions' have been agreed as barriers to the participation of women in leadership position in the higher learning institutions.

Table 4.10: Mean, median and Mann-Whitney test of gender stereotyping and traditional factors

Report						Test Statistics ^a	
Traditional barriers						Traditional factors	
sex	N	Median	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	3933.500
man	206	3.3182	3.2079	122.59	25254.50	Wilcoxon W	25254.500
woman	79	4.0000	3.8930	196.21	15500.50	Z	-6.758
Total	285	3.4545	3.3978			Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
						Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
						Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
						Point Probability	.000

a. Grouping Variable: sex of respondent

Source: Survey, 2021

While analyzing the level of agreement of both men and women to the effect of institutional barriers on the level of leadership position, the men were neutral with a mean of 3.2079 and median of 3.3182, while the women participants agreed with a mean of 3.8930 and median of 4.0000.

The **Mann-Whitney U test**, as shown above, shows a significant difference (p value of 0.000) between the men and women regarding the traditional and gender stereotyping barriers on the level of participation in leadership position in the selected study area. This implies that women highly and significantly believe that traditional and gender stereotyping barriers have an effect on the level of participation in leadership position that the men participants.

The interview conducted with the director gender, youth, transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS prevention and control directorate and women position holder academicians of the universities shows that as a tradition, women in Ethiopia is not considered as a decision maker and is confined to domestic works that are totally unvalued by the women themselves and the community as a whole. This all contributed to the low participation in leadership position. In addition they mentioned religious beliefs as an obstacle.

- **Other barriers to perceived level of women participation in leadership position**

Table 4.11 Other barriers Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Not Attending conferences and training	289	3.28	1.217
women role models	289	3.28	1.162
Experience in working with diverse	289	3.40	1.063
support from husband/ family/ friends	289	3.68	.929
Financial support	289	3.46	1.139
work load at home/ being a mother or/ and wife	289	4.15	1.018
Valid N (listwise)	289		
Composite external factors	289	3.5438	.80663

Source: Questionnaire, 2021

To assess the contribution of other barriers to the limited participation of women in leadership position, respondents were asked to express the level of agreement to the other barriers listed. As shown in the above table, With Cronbach's alpha of .833 Heavy work load at home/ being a mother or/ and wife (4.15), lack of support from husband/ family/ friends (3.68), Lack of Financial support (3.46), Lack of Experience in working with diverse (3.40), were agreed as other barriers that could hinder the active participation of women in leadership position by the respondents. The overall mean of the other barriers (3.5438) also confirmed that the respondents believe that these factors are hindering the participation of women academicians from leadership positions in the higher learning institutions.

While comparing the level of agreement to these barriers on gender basis, there is a significant difference between men and women. The men academicians were neutral with these factors with mean of 3.4207 and median of 3.5000 while the women participant agreed that the barriers listed above do have an effect on the level of women participation in leadership position in the case higher learning institutions with a mean of 3.9219 and median of 3.8333.

Table 4.12 Mean, median and Mann- Whitney U test of other barriers

Report						Test Statistics ^a	
Other factors						Other factors	
sex	N	Median	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	4956.500
man	20	3.5000	3.4207	127.56	26277.50	Wilcoxon W	26277.500
	6					Z	-5.123
woman	79	3.8333	3.9219	183.26	14477.50	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
						Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Total	28	3.6667	3.5596			Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
	5					Point Probability	.000

a. Grouping Variable: sex of respondent

Source: Questionnaire, 2021

The **Mann- Whitney U test** shows that there a significant difference (.000) between men and women participants regarding the effect of Not Attending conferences and training; women role models; Experience in working with diverse; support from husband/ family/ friends; Financial support as well as work load at home/ being a mother or/ and wife. Women participants highly and significantly believe that the above barriers are hindering women from participating in leadership position in higher learning institutions than the women counterparts.

The interview conducted with the director gender, youth, transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS prevention and control directorate and women position holder academicians of the universities shows that as other barriers to the low participation of women in leadership position was the level of poverty and underage wedding that results in a high burden to the women especially.

• Perceived level of participation

To see the perception of the academicians' participation in the university affairs from department level to university level, participants were asked to display the level of agreement to the questions raised. Accordingly I have been a member of important decision making committees in the Department with mean of 3.93 and I feel my voice is heard in Department and Committee

meetings of the Department with mean of 3.92 scored the highest mean followed by I feel my voice is heard in Faculty level committee meetings with mean of 3.62 I have been a member of important decision making committees in the Faculty with mean of 3.55; I would have as equal an opportunity as my colleagues to acquire an administrative role in the University if desired. With mean of 3.54; My point of view is given at least equal consideration to that of my colleagues concerning important decisions mean of 3.43; I have been a member of important decision making committees at the University level with mean of 3.07 and I feel my voice is heard in University level committee meetings with a mean of 3.04. From this the perceived level of participation is highly agreed at department and faculty level than at university level. To some extent the perception towards participation in decision making in high level of leadership is limited among the academicians of the case universities.

Table 4.13: Perceived participation level of respondents Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have been a member of important decision making committees in the Department.	289	3.93	1.080
I feel my voice is heard in Department and Committee meetings of the Department	289	3.92	.842
I have been a member of important decision making committees in the Faculty.	289	3.55	1.235
I feel my voice is heard in Faculty level committee meetings	289	3.62	1.058
I have been a member of important decision making committees at the University level	289	3.07	1.339
I feel my voice is heard in University level committee meetings.	289	3.04	1.223
My point of view is given at least equal consideration to that of my colleagues concerning important decisions	289	3.43	1.119
I would have as equal an opportunity as my colleagues to acquire an administrative role in the University if desired.	289	3.54	1.118
Valid N (listwise)	289		
composite perceived participation	289	3.5130	.82597

Source: survey, 2021

Generally the overall mean of the level of perceived participation in leadership position among the academicians of the university is good; they have agreed that with a mean of 3.5, they feel that they are participating in the affairs of the universities.

Table 4.14 Mean, median and Mann- Whitney U test of perceived level of participation

Report						Test Statistics ^a	
Perceived participation						perceived participation	
sex	N	Median	Mean	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks		
Man	206	3.5000	3.5055	138.33	28496.50	Mann-Whitney U	7175.500
Woman	79	3.8750	3.6535	155.17	12258.50	Wilcoxon W	28496.500
Total	285	3.5000	3.5465			Z	-1.547
						Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.122
						Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.122
						Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.061
						Point Probability	.000

a. Grouping Variable: sex of respondent

Source: survey, 2021

While analyzing the level of agreement gender wise, both the men (with a mean of 3.4601 and median of 3.5000) and women (mean of 3.6535 and median of 3.8750) participants agreed that they are participating in the university affairs.

To analyze the significance of the median difference The Mann- Whitney U test was conducted. The test shows that though there is a slight difference between men and women academicians in the perceived level of participation, the difference is not significant at 5% (p value of .122).

• Discussion

In line to the above result the finding of the study conducted by Sileshi, (2015) Shows that The major challenges and factors affecting women from participating in leadership and decision making positions are, the perception of Top Management that men are better leader than women, highly linked male networks and alliance with the management, attitudes of Top Management, inconsistency or unfair promotional policies and inhospitable and discouraging corporate cultures are the most listed factors. But, lack of women role model, breaks in maternity and non-availability of qualified women are, less impact in affecting women's participation in leadership position.

In addition to this the current finding is in line to the findings of Peebles, Darwazeh , Ghosheh & Sabbagh,. (2007) underlines the main obstacle that hinders women advancement are social attitudes and perceptions about women role and acceptable behavior. In addition to this the women are often not perceived as being as serious about their jobs as men due to their family responsibility.

Etagagne, (2019) also found that organizational factors as the core factors that affect the participation of women's in leadership position. To this end lack of supportive policies and practices in workplace have a significant effect on the participation of women in leadership position.

5. Conclusion

The objective of the study was to assess the participation of women in leadership position in selected higher learning institution. The overall finding of the study shows that the proportion of

women academicians is minimal even not more than 20% (vs. the 30%.... 50% goal). In addition to this the academic rank of the women academicians are far behind the men counterparts. This can be an implication of the past but needs an attention to improve the current status of the women in higher learning institutions.

Institutional barriers do have a significant effect on the level of participation of women in leadership position in higher learning institutions. The policies of the institutions, recruiting and promoting practices as well the working environment do have a significant effect.

Traditional and gender stereotyping practices do have a significant effect on the level of participation of women in leadership position in higher learning institutions. So what the community, the family and even the spouses and colleagues perceive the women do have an effect on the level of participation in leadership position.

In higher learning institutions the personal barriers are not found as hindering factors for participation of women in leadership position in the case area. While the institutional and cultural factors are found to have a significant effect on the level of participation in the case public higher learning institution.

The other interesting finding of the study is that, these barriers are perceived by the men and women academicians differently. So since majority of the policy makers are men; due care should be made while policies are framed and appropriate study should be made in consultation with women to identify area of interest.

6. Recommendation

To enhance the proportion of women in the academia in higher learning institutions visible efforts should be made that can help to enhance the level of female students at lower level of education and made an effort to retain them so that it can help to increase the number of female students that can join the higher learning institutions.

Appropriate policies should be framed to help female students in higher learning institutions which can help them successfully accomplish their education so that they can be a candidate to join the labor force. In addition to this supportive environment should be provided so that existing women academicians could be retained and empowered and potential competent women can be attracted to the sector. This is also possible by providing housing opportunity for the women academicians specifically, establishment of day care and related favors that can help to help play their double role (family and work) easily.

The universities should create opportunities for tailored women training and awareness programs to develop their leadership capacity thereby boost their confidence that they are capable of executing any role leadership position requires. In addition to this Still there is a need to provide affirmative action to women in line with education as well as need based trainings that could be a basis of giving chance for leadership position. But Rather than making women guilty of support, let them work hard to change the status quo.

Creating public awareness could also help to improve the image of women to others. Personal barriers (like lack of self-confidence, skill, assertiveness.....) are not found the main barriers hindering the participation of women in leadership position while most of the misperception of the policy makers and societies at large is as if the women doesn't have personal capacity to be a leader, therefore, awareness should be created for the society and policy makers should take in to consideration while setting different policies and strategies.

Above all The gender issues shouldn't left to one ministry at country level and directorate at a university level, rather cooperation should be made among all members of the community since

ignoring half part of the community the development and growth of one country as well as creation of successful family is impossible.

Family, friends, spouses and colleagues should play their role to let the women to contribute her level best from different perspectives. Since family commitment, responsibility, work overload are the main factors that gets back the women from participating in different tasks that can contribute to her success.

Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges Ethiopian Civil Service University for provision of funding to collect the data for this study.

Reference

- Acker, S. (1987). Feminist theory and the study of gender and education. *International review of education*, 33(4), 419-435.
- Ademe, G., & Singh, M. (2015). Factors affecting women's participation in leadership and management in selected public higher education institutions in Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 7(31), 18-29.
- Ali, M. A. (2014). An assessment of factors affecting women participation in Nigeria labour congress. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(8), 220-223.
- Armstrong, E. (2020). Marxist and Socialist Feminisms. *Companion to Feminist Studies*, 35-52.
- Birikti, G. (2014). An Assessment of Factors Affecting Participation of Women in Management Position: The Case of ethio telecom Company. *Addis Ababa University*, 1-94.
- Bullough, Amanda M., 2008, "Global Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Leadership". FIU Electronic Thesis and Dissertations. Paper 184.
- Chernet, H. (2016). Factors Affecting Female Teachers Participation in Educational Leadership: The Case of Secondary Schools in Addis Ababa Kirkos Sub City (Doctoral dissertation, St. Mary's University).
- Denton, M., & Zeytinoğlu, I. U. (1993). Perceived participation in decision-making in a university setting: The impact of gender. *ILR Review*, 46(2), 320-331.
- Etagagne, F. (2019). *Factors That Affecting Participation Of Women's In Leadership Position In Public Sectors: In Case Of Menzlalo Woreda North Shoa Zone* (Doctoral Dissertation).
- Ghanbari, Y. & Ansari, R. (2015). Identify and explaining the social and economic factors affecting rural women empowerment (Case study: Rostam County). *Journal of Research & Rural Planning*, 4(3), 1-10.
- Gunew, S. (2013). *Feminist Knowledge (RLE Feminist Theory): Critique and Construct*. Routledge.
- Happel, A. A. (2012). "Practicing Gender: A Feminist Ethnography of an All Girls' After-School Club." Dissertation, Georgia State University, doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/2363077>
- Hora, E. A. (2014). Factors that affect women participation in leadership and decision making position. *Asian Journal of Humanity, Art and Literature*, 1(2).
- Kiamba, J. M. (2009). Women and leadership positions: Social and cultural barriers to success. *Wagadu Volume 6 Journal of International Women's Studies Volume 10: 1*, 89.
- Laura, M. (2016). Women's Leadership in Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics: Barriers to Participation, *Forum on Public Policy*, vol. 2011, no. 2.
- Losindilo, E., Mussa, A. S., & Akarro, R. R. J. (2010). Some factors that hinder women participation in social, political and economic activities in Tanzania. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 4(1), 1-10.

- Mhired Gebre-Mariam, 2019, Factors Affecting Of Women's Participation In Leadership Positions In The Case Study Of Bank Of Abyssinia, A Research Project Submitted To Addis Ababa university, School Of Commerce In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For The Degree Of Masters Of Arts In Business Leadership
- Musgrave, L. R. (2003). Liberal feminism, from law to art: The impact of feminist jurisprudence on feminist aesthetics. *Hypatia*, 18(4), 214-235.
- Nyirenda, B. (2015). *Factors determining women's participation in decision making in Zambia Revenue Authority* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Zambia).
- Rowland, R., & Klein, R. (1996). Radical feminism: History, politics, action. *Radically speaking: Feminism reclaimed*, 9-36.
- Sidelil, L. T. (2015). The Ethiopian Higher Education Equity Policy and its Flaws. *Bahir Dar Journal of Education*, 15(2).
- Peebles, D., Darwazeh, N., Ghosheh, H., & Sabbagh, A. (2007). Factors affecting women's participation in the private sector in Jordan. *National Center for Human Resources Development*. Available on: <http://www.almanar.jo/AlManarWeb/Portals/0/PDF2/Mayssa%20Gender%20report.pdf>.
- Sileshi, W. (2015). Factors Affecting Women's Participation In Leadership Position At Dashen Bank In Addis Ababa (Doctoral dissertation).
- Tedrow, B., & Rhoads, R. A. (1999). A qualitative study of women's experiences in community college leadership positions. *Community College Review*, 27(3), 1-18.
- Winnie, W. (2007). An Investigation of Factors Influencing Women Progression to Leadership Positions In Kenya.