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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSSINESS AND ECONOMICS
SCHOOL OF COMMERCE**

**ASSESSMENT OF GENDER DISPARITIES IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP: A
CASE STUDY MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MoE)**

BY

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APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, guided by a feminist theoretical framework, delves into the assessment of gender disparities in leadership positions within the Ministry of Education (MoE). Through a comprehensive examination of data collected from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of federal government policies and legislation, this research sheds light on the underlying causes of these disparities and presents valuable insights into strategies to address them. The study's findings bring to the forefront the stark underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within the MoE. Women encounter a multitude of challenges, including the delicate balance between family responsibilities and professional aspirations, the pervasive influence of societal perceptions and stereotypes, the impact of supervisors and subordinates on career progression, and the significant role played by confidence and self-perception. While policies aimed at supporting women's leadership exist within the MoE, their practical implementation reveals areas that require improvement. The study underscores the importance of creating inclusive work environments that foster diversity and provide equal opportunities for career growth. Furthermore, targeted mentorship programs tailored to women's unique needs, as well as leadership development initiatives, are crucial for empowering women and enhancing their leadership potential. Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed to address gender disparities within the MoE and similar organizations. These recommendations encompass targeted interventions aimed at dismantling existing barriers, capacity-building programs designed to enhance women's leadership skills and resilience, clear policy implementation guidelines, and the establishment of robust accountability mechanisms.

Keywords: gender disparities, leadership positions, women's representation, career progression.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender disparities are a persistent issue that hinders progress towards gender equality globally. These disparities begin in childhood, limiting the lifelong potential of children, especially girls. Research consistently highlights the impact of gender disparities on leadership positions and their implications for organizational performance and social justice.

According to a study by Eagly and Carli (2007), there are gender gaps in leadership jobs, and that action has to be taken to close them. The authors contend that cultural expectations and gender prejudices are just two of the challenges women encounter while trying to hold leadership roles. In a similar vein, Koenig, Eagly, and Mitchell (2011) found gender stereotypes affecting how people view leadership. According to the study, leadership positions are frequently linked with masculine characteristics, which might provide challenges for women who want to hold executive positions.

Organizational performance and the promotion of social justice significantly increases with more women involvement in leadership. There is consistent result from research showing positive organizational outcome when there is gender diversity in leadership. A McKinsey & Company (2018) report found to be 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability for companies with greater gender diversity in their executive teams. This is a demonstration of tangible benefits when women are included in decision-making roles.

In the context and focus of this research, education supervising institutions, such as ministries or departments of education, benefit in core social issues like addressing gender disparities and promotion of social justice with the involvement of women in leadership positions. A UNICEF study found a statistically significant outperformance of women led schools in reading and mathematics compared to men led schools. The study also shows that women leaders are better equipped to understand and address the unique challenges faced by women in education (Brossard & Bergmann, 2022).

When women are included in leadership institutions, education supervising institutions like MoE benefit from a new and wider range of perspectives, experiences, and ideas. This diversity of thought can lead them to provide new perspectives and strategies that address the specific needs and concerns of women in education. Furthermore, it fosters an inclusive and equitable organizational culture that reflects the principles of social justice.

Overall, the inclusion of women in leadership roles within public institutions, particularly in education supervising institutions, not only enhances organizational performance but also advances social justice by addressing gender disparities and promoting equal opportunities for all.

The MoE plays a crucial role in the educational development of Ethiopia. In 2018, the government appointed a cabinet consisting of 50% women, which increased women's participation in ministerial-level leadership positions. However, despite these top-level efforts, there are still significant barriers preventing women from assuming leadership roles within public institutions and enterprises, including the MoE. The purpose of this study is to conduct assessment of gender disparities in leadership positions within the MoE.

To achieve this goal, a literature review was conducted to understand the theoretical issues on leadership, impact of gender inclusiveness on organizations, companies with success stories and experiences of Ethiopian public institutions on women leadership. The research delves into the topic using qualitative interviews with MoE and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) employees, focus group discussions and desk review of federal government policies were to examine the specific barriers women face in accessing leadership positions within the ministry. Potential interventions were also explored to help the ministry address its gender disparities in leadership positions. The results and recommendations will contribute to the literature on gender disparities in public institutions leadership and provide insights for policymakers and organizations seeking to promote gender equality in leadership.

1.2. Background of Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education in Ethiopia holds a crucial role in the governance and development of the country's education system. It is responsible for overseeing all levels of education, from elementary schools to universities, and plays a significant role in shaping policies and regulations

in the sector. Additionally, the ministry oversees the Ethiopian National Exams and has the authority, as stipulated by Ethiopian law, to regulate educational institutions to a certain extent.

Within the Ministry of Education, which is the focus of my study, the headquarters office employs approximately 600 individuals, of which only 238 are found to be women. Among these women, only 120 hold professional positions that provide them with the potential for career advancement and leadership roles. The current leadership structure of the ministry consists of a Minister, two State Ministers responsible for higher education and general education sectors, and a separate Chief Executive Officer (CEO) overseeing the corporate governance of the office. Under the State Ministers, there are several directorates led by directors, who in turn supervise desk leaders. Furthermore, the CEO oversees multiple directors, who are responsible for leading various teams.

The ministry is composed of a total of 21 directorates, 44 desks, and 13 teams, each playing a crucial role in the education system's functioning and development. At present, the ministry has women leaders solely at the directorate, desk and team leader levels, with 4 directors, 11 desk leaders and 2 team leaders being women.

These statistics highlight the gender disparity within the ministry's leadership positions. Despite efforts to increase women's participation in leadership roles, the representation of women remains significantly low, especially at higher levels of authority. This gender imbalance poses challenges to achieving gender equality and inclusive decision-making processes within the ministry.

In the following sections, the findings of the research will be presented, which aimed to assess gender disparities in leadership positions within the Ministry of Education. Through qualitative methods of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of existing policies and manuals, the factors hindering women's advancement to leadership positions, the extent of support provided by policies and legislation, efforts to encourage women to take on leadership roles, and the challenges faced by women leaders were explored.

By understanding the underlying causes and barriers, valuable insights to inform strategies and interventions aimed at promoting gender equality in leadership positions within public institutions and enterprises, particularly within the Ministry of Education were provided

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Gender equality initiatives have been an integral part of Ethiopia's national policy, aimed at promoting equality and women's participation across various sectors, including education. These policies, supported by the federal constitution, emphasize the importance of equal opportunities and women's involvement in political, social, economic, and institutional domains (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution). To address historical inequalities and discrimination faced by marginalized ethnic groups and women, affirmative measures have been implemented to enable their equitable participation and competition (Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2019).

Despite these government efforts to bridge the gender gap, challenges persist, particularly in the realm of leadership positions within public institutions and enterprises. The underrepresentation of women and historically marginalized ethnic groups in leadership roles hamper the effective implementation of gender policies and impede progress towards achieving gender equality (Kassa, 2015; Melese, 2019) It is crucial to ensure increased representation of women in leadership positions to foster diverse perspectives, inclusive decision-making processes, and address the specific needs and concerns of all stakeholders (Hailemariam and Yang, 2023).

The Ministry of Education (MoE) plays a pivotal role in shaping Ethiopia's educational landscape, making gender-inclusive leadership within the ministry crucial given its far-reaching mandate. However, gender inequality persists in leadership positions within the MoE. Although recent improvements have been noted, women remain significantly underrepresented at high-level positions. The data researcher of this study gathered from the ministry office show that out of the top 71 leadership positions, including ministerial, CEO, and advisory roles, only four director-level positions were held by women, with even fewer women represented at lower leadership levels. This glaring underrepresentation of women in MoE's leadership positions hampers the achievement of gender equality at the national level and has a direct effect on educational

outcomes. It limits women's participation in crucial decision-making processes, weakens the development of inclusive educational policies, and perpetuates systemic gender disparities within the education sector (Moorosi, 2006).

Hence, it is imperative to study the factors that contribute to this gender gap in leadership positions and recommend effective strategies to promote gender diversity and inclusivity within the MoE. The primary focus of this research is to explore the barriers that hinder women from attaining high-level leadership positions in the Ministry of Education. By comprehensively conducting an assessment of the root causes of this gender disparity in leadership roles, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for fostering gender equality in leadership positions within the MoE. Ultimately, the research seeks to foster an inclusive and equitable educational system in Ethiopia that harnesses the potential of women leaders, addresses the specific needs of diverse stakeholders, and enhances educational outcomes for all.

1.4 Research Objectives - General and Specific

General Objective:

The general objective of this study is to assess the gender disparities in positions of leadership within the MoE.

Specific Objectives:

- 1 To assess the effectiveness of programs, manuals, and policies implemented in the Ministry of Education (MoE) in promoting women's leadership.
- 2 To explore and analyze the influence of discrimination, gender-based stereotypes, and the organizational culture within the MoE on women's opportunities for advancement into leadership positions.
- 3 To identify and examine the facilitating and barrier factors that impact women's promotion to leadership roles within the MoE.
- 4 To investigate the impact of work-life balance, family responsibilities, and societal expectations on women's aspirations for leadership and their opportunities for advancement within the MoE.

- 5 To examine the challenges faced by women leaders within the MoE, and to understand their strategies for navigating and overcoming these challenges in order to achieve their current positions.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions aim to explore the existing initiatives put in place to promote women's leadership, and the associated barriers, and challenges in the MoE. The questions address how discrimination, gender stereotypes, work-life balance, family responsibilities, and organizational policies affect in guiding the MoE women's career advancement and access to leadership roles. By investigating employees and other stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes and examining the role of mentorship and professional development programs, this research aims to provide valuable insights and recommendations for bringing gender equality and increase women's leadership opportunities within the MoE.

1. How do programs, manuals, and policies implemented in the Ministry of Education (MoE) contribute to the promotion of women's leadership?
2. In what ways discrimination, gender-based stereotypes, and organizational culture within the MoE influence women's opportunities for advancement into leadership positions?
3. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder women's promotion to leadership roles within the MoE?
4. How do work-life balance, family responsibilities, and societal expectations impact women's aspirations for leadership and their opportunities for advancement within the MoE?
5. What challenges have women leaders encountered within the MoE, and how have they navigated and overcome these challenges to attain their current positions?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study addressed the lower rate of women's representation in leadership roles within the MoE by employing a qualitative approach with a feminist theoretical framework. The findings of the research benefits policymakers and organizations with the aim of promoting gender equality in leadership positions public institutions and enterprises.

Outcomes of the research provided important insights into the causes of gender disparities in the ministry's leadership positions and provided recommendations for gender equality. The study contributed to the existing literature on gender disparities in leadership, highlighting systemic challenges, power dynamics, and gender biases that affect women's career path to leadership.

By challenging traditional gender cultures and promoting gender inclusion, the study aimed to bring a more equitable and inclusive leadership environment within the institution. The gaps identified and suggested recommendations can help guide national policymakers and public institutions in advancing gender equality, increasing the representation of women in leadership roles, and advancing the implementation of gender policies.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The proposed study is limited geographically and conceptually. First, geographically, it is limited to headquarters of the MoE, located in Addis Ababa. Conceptually, it mainly focuses on facilitating factors or barriers and strategies for women's promotion to leadership positions. It evaluates existing national and institutional policies, initiatives, and identified stakeholders' perceptions.

1.8 Potential Limitations of the Study

The qualitative approach limits generalizability, focusing on the lived experiences of women within the MoE. Self-reported data from the employees may potentially introduce recall and social desirability biases. The study's scope is specific to gender disparities in leadership positions in the MoE, probably overlooking other organizational factors. Other external factors, like ethnic, religious dynamics and historical contexts, were not analysed comprehensively. The researcher of the study didn't find local research work on MoE with indicated topic and forced to base the research on other institutions with related topic. In spite of the listed limitations, the discoveries of the research provide crucial insights for promoting gender equality in the MoE and guide future research on the institution and other public sector organizations.

1.9 Definition of key terms

Gender Disparities: The gender-based uneven distribution of opportunities, resources, and power between men and women (Kabeer, 1994).

Leadership: The ability to inspire, influence, and direct people to reach a specific goal or set of goals in an organization (Yukl, 2013).

Ministry of Education (MoE): The Ethiopian government ministry with responsibility for the formulation and implementation of federal policies, developing curricula for schools, managing educational institutions, and providing oversight for the education system (FDRE Ministry of Education, 2011).

Feminist Theory: A framework that puts focus on the social, cultural, and political factors that cause gender inequality and aims to challenge patriarchal structures that perpetuate such inequality (hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1988).

Qualitative Methods: A research approach that uses non-numerical data to arrive at an understanding of human behavior, attitudes, and experiences, through interviews, focus group discussions, and observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2015).

Policies, Legislation, and Manual: Formal rules, regulations, and guidelines established by the federal government or specific institutions to provide guidance during decision-making and to take action related to a particular issue or topic (Peters, 2017).

Gender Equity: The principle of treating men and women in a fair and just way, without regard to their gender, and the acknowledgment of their varied needs, experiences, and contributions (United Nations, 1995).

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background and Context

2.1.1 Gender and Leadership

Understanding the background and context of gender in leadership is essential for comprehending the dynamics and challenges associated with gender disparities in leadership positions. This subsection provides an overview of key concepts and historical perspectives related to gender in leadership.

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, expectations, and behaviors associated with being male or female. It is a social construct that influences the opportunities, experiences, and perceptions of individuals in society. In the context of leadership, gender plays a significant role in shaping access, representation, and influence within leadership positions.

Historically, leadership has been predominantly viewed through a gendered lens. Traditional societal norms and expectations have often assigned leadership roles and attributes to men, perpetuating gender disparities in leadership positions. This historical perspective has created a gendered leadership landscape that disadvantages women and limits their opportunities for advancement.

The history of gender in leadership reveals the gradual progress made in challenging gender stereotypes and biases. Women's suffrage movements and feminist movements have played pivotal roles in advocating for gender equality and expanding opportunities for women in leadership roles. Over time, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of diverse leadership and the benefits of gender equality in driving organizational success and societal development.

Studies have examined the impact of gender on leadership effectiveness and behaviors. Eagly and Karau (2002) proposed the role congruity theory, which suggests that people tend to perceive men as more competent and suitable for leadership roles due to societal expectations and gender stereotypes. This bias has created barriers for women seeking leadership positions and has perpetuated gender disparities.

Research has also explored the leadership styles and behaviors associated with men and women. Eagly and Johnson (1990) introduced the concept of communal and agentic leadership styles. Communal leadership behaviors, characterized by traits such as nurturing, collaboration, and relationship-building, are often associated with women. Agentic leadership behaviors, characterized by traits such as assertiveness, confidence, and task-oriented focus, are often associated with men. These gendered expectations of leadership behaviors can shape perceptions and evaluations of leaders based on their gender.

The shift towards inclusive and gender-responsive leadership has gained momentum in recent years. Organizations and societies recognize the importance of promoting gender diversity in leadership to harness a broader range of perspectives, experiences, and talents. Initiatives such as gender quotas, diversity programs, and inclusive leadership training aim to address gender disparities and create more equitable opportunities for women in leadership positions.

Understanding the historical and societal context of gender in leadership is crucial for examining the specific challenges and barriers faced by women in leadership roles within the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia. It provides a foundation for analyzing the factors contributing to gender disparities and informs the development of strategies to promote gender equality in educational leadership.

2.1.2 Leadership and Organizational Culture

Culture of an organization plays an important role in the shaping of leadership dynamics and result within an organization. This topic explores the relationship between leadership and organizational culture, shedding light on how leaders influence and are influenced by the culture of their own organizations.

Leadership and organizational culture are tangled and mutually influence one another. Scholars argue that effectiveness of a leader is measure by ones the ability to shape and influence the culture of organization they lead, while the existing organizational culture also molds the leadership behaviors and practices within it.

Research has explored the different leadership styles that align with various types of organizational cultures. For instance, transformational leadership, characterized by visionary and charismatic

leadership behaviors, is often associated with organizations that have a creative and adaptive culture. Studies by Bass and Avolio (1994) have shown that transformational leaders can create a positive organizational culture that fosters creativity, collaboration, and employee engagement.

On the other hand, transactional leadership, due to its focus on conditional rewards and clear performance expectations, may be more prevalent in organizations with a hierarchical and rule-oriented culture. This leadership style focuses on adhering to established norms and procedures. Research by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) suggests that transactional leaders are effective in providing stability and ensuring compliance with organizational norms.

Furthermore, studies have discussed the impact of different leadership styles on shaping and changing organizational culture. For example, Kouzes and Posner (1992) argue that leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors can influence the culture by fostering a climate of innovation, encouraging risk-taking, and promoting a shared vision among employees. Through their inspirational and charismatic actions, transformational leaders can shape the beliefs, values, and behaviors of their followers, ultimately influencing the culture of the organization.

Conversely, the organizational culture can also influence behaviors and practices of leaders. Research by Denison (1990) highlights how organizational cultures characterized by high levels of trust, collaboration, and employee empowerment tend to foster leadership practices that are participative, supportive, and empowering. In contrast, cultures that are more hierarchical or bureaucratic may encourage more autocratic or directive leadership styles.

Leadership and organizational culture are also interconnected in terms of organizational change and adaptation. Research by Schein (2010) suggests that leaders play a critical role in managing cultural change within organizations. Effective leaders understand the existing culture and can align their leadership practices with the desired cultural values and norms. By modeling and reinforcing the desired behaviors, leaders can facilitate the transformation of organizational culture to support strategic goals and enhance organizational performance.

In conclusion, the relationship between leadership and organizational culture is complex and reciprocal. Effective leaders have the ability to shape and influence the culture of their organizations, while the existing organizational culture also shapes leadership behaviors and

practices. Different leadership styles align with various types of organizational cultures, and leaders can influence cultural change within their organizations. Understanding and managing the interplay between leadership and organizational culture is crucial for creating a positive work environment, promoting employee engagement, and achieving organizational goals.

2.1.3 Feminist Framework

Feminist theories provide critical frameworks for understanding and analyzing gender disparities and power dynamics within society. This subsection reviews various feminist theories that have been employed to examine gender inequalities.

Liberal feminism, as a prominent feminist theory, emphasizes equal rights and opportunities for women within existing systems through legal and political reforms (Mill, 1869; Friedan, 1963). While liberal feminism has made significant contributions to advancing gender equality, its focus on individual rights and opportunities may not fully address the systemic and structural barriers that perpetuate gender disparities in leadership (Hooks, 1984).

Radical feminism, on the other hand, critiques and challenges the patriarchal foundations of society, emphasizing the need for fundamental social transformation (Firestone, 1970; MacKinnon, 1989). Radical feminism recognizes that gender inequality is deeply ingrained in social, economic, and political structures, and it calls for radical change to dismantle oppressive systems (Rich, 1980). By highlighting the patriarchal systems and gender-based oppression, radical feminism provides valuable insights into the dynamics of gender disparities in leadership roles.

Intersectional feminism, developed by scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasizes how gender intersects with other social identities, such as race, class, and sexuality, to shape individuals' experiences and opportunities (Crenshaw, 1991). This theoretical approach acknowledges that gender inequalities are interconnected with other forms of oppression, and it recognizes the importance of considering the unique experiences of women from diverse backgrounds. While intersectionality is not the primary focus of this analysis, it is important to acknowledge the potential intersections of gender disparities with other marginalized groups in future research.

Standpoint theory, rooted in the works of feminist scholars such as Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, and Dorothy Smith, provides a valuable lens for understanding gender disparities in leadership roles (Harding, 2009; Hartsock, 1983; Smith, 1987). Standpoint theory highlights the importance of marginalized individuals' perspectives in understanding social structures. It argues that those positioned at the margins of society, such as women, possess unique knowledge and insights due to their lived experiences of oppression. By centering the experiences and perspectives of women in leadership positions within the Ministry of Education, standpoint theory allows for a more nuanced analysis of their agency, resistance, and strategies for effecting change within patriarchal systems.

Mix of radical and standpoint theories are particularly relevant in examining gender disparities in leadership roles within the Ministry of Education because they recognize the valuable knowledge and perspectives that women leaders bring from their experiences of challenging gender-based barriers and the need to change the system at family, organization and society level to effect change. They provide a framework to explore how women's standpoint shapes their understanding of power dynamics, organizational cultures, and societal norms. By centering women's voices and experiences, the theories allow for a deeper analysis of their agency, resistance, and strategies for bringing change to patriarchal systems.

2.2 Empirical Review

Although there is a lack of literature specifically focusing leadership issues in the Ministry of Education (MoE), I draw from studies conducted on other institutions with similar institutional behavior to identify the factors contributing to gender disparities in leadership positions. In this section, I review empirical studies that have examined women's leadership initiatives, companies with successful gender-inclusive stories and women's representation in leadership positions within governmental institutions in Ethiopia. These studies shed light on the challenges, barriers, and opportunities that influence gender disparities in leadership roles. By analyzing the findings of these studies, I aim to gain insights into the specific factors affecting women's participation in leadership positions within the MoE and propose strategies for promoting gender equality in educational leadership.

2.2.1 Women's Leadership Initiatives

Various initiatives for promoting role of women in organizational leadership have gained significant attention in recent years as organizations and societies recognize the need for greater gender diversity and inclusion in leadership positions. This section examines the literature that have explored various initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting women's leadership development.

Numerous studies have explored effectiveness of various women's leadership initiatives across different circumstances and contexts. The initiatives follow a range of approaches to women empowerment, including mentorship programs, leadership training and development programs, networking opportunities, and the implementation of gender quotas or affirmative action policies.

Research by Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) shed light on the positive impact of mentorship programs on development of women's leadership skills. Mentorship provides women with clear guidance, crucial support, and role models from experienced leaders, which helps them build their confidence, skills, and networks. Several studies, including those by Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016), Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011), and Meng and Nail (2022), have demonstrated that successful mentorship initiatives significantly enhance women's advancement in leadership positions and increase their representation.

Empirical research has also examined the role of training and development programs specifically designed for women in advancing gender representation in leadership positions. Such programs aim to address the unique challenges and barriers that women encounter in leadership roles. Studies by Grantham, Pidano, and Whitcomb (2014) and Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) suggest that such programs can enhance women's leadership skills, self-efficacy, and overall effectiveness as leaders. By providing targeted training and support, these initiatives empower women to overcome gender-related obstacles and assume leadership roles.

Networking opportunities have also been found to be crucial for women's leadership advancement. Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2012) discussed how men and women network and provided guidance on how women should address the disparities in their networking compared to their male counter parts and building social capital for career progression. They argue that a leader's identity is closely

intertwined with interpersonal connections, and these informal networks play a significant role in the journey toward leadership. These networks shape career trajectories by regulating job access, facilitating information flow and recommendations, establishing influence and reputation, providing emotional support, feedback, and political guidance, as well as expediting career advancement. Women's leadership initiatives that facilitate networking events, conferences, and forums create platforms for women to connect, share experiences, and access resources and opportunities. These initiatives contribute to expanding women's networks, fostering collaborations, and enhancing their visibility within professional communities.

Studies have also examined the employment of gender quotas and affirmative action policies affect women leadership positions. The purpose of these initiatives is to address gender imbalances in leadership positions by legally mandating or encouraging the appointment of women to leadership roles. Research by Morgenroth and Ryan (2018) and Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006) indicates that gender quotas can lead to a significant increase in women's representation in leadership positions. However, the success of these initiatives may vary depending on several factors, such as the extent to which the policies are enforced, organizational culture, and societal attitudes toward gender equality.

While many studies highlight the benefits of women's leadership initiatives, it is important to understand the persistence of challenges and barriers affecting women's professional careers. Research by Schwanke (2013) indicates that women still face gender biases, stereotypes, and structural obstacles that hinder their advancement into leadership positions. It is, therefore, important for the women's leadership initiatives to comprehensively address not only individual development but also broader systemic and cultural factors contributing to gender disparities in leadership positions.

In summary, the literature provides important perspectives into the effectiveness and impact of women's leadership initiatives. Initiatives like mentorship programs, leadership training and development, networking opportunities, and gender quotas have shown promise in promoting women's leadership development and increasing their representation in leadership roles. These initiatives contribute to greater diversity, improved organizational performance, and enhanced opportunities for women to succeed in leadership positions.

2.2.2 Women Leadership Issues in Public Institutions in Ethiopia

Women's empowerment and representation in leadership positions in governmental institutions is an important aspect of gender equality in Ethiopia. Alemu et al. (2022) studied the implementation, successes, and challenges of affirmative action policies in bridging gender gaps in governmental institutions in the Dabat district of Ethiopia. The findings show that affirmative action policies have not yet bridged the gender gaps without discrimination based on age, education, religion, and level of income. Although affirmative action policies have been effective in increasing cognition, their implementation is often hampered by a lack of follow-up training, an absence of monitoring and evaluation processes, and a lack of training for women and institution leaders. The study's policy implications can help mitigate difficulties in closing the gender gaps in governmental institutions by providing information for intervention initiatives.

In Ethiopia, Weldeyesus (2013) identified the barriers that hinder women from becoming secondary school principals and the opportunities that promote women's participation in secondary school leadership. The study revealed that policies, strategies, and recruitment criteria in selected governmental secondary schools encouraged the participation of women in educational leadership. Despite these policies and strategies, the low participation of women principals was due to less commitment from officials to implement gender-sensitive policies and strategies, negative stereotyping, the absence of a network of women, and informal networks of men in schools. To address these barriers, gender-sensitive policies and strategies need to be improved, awareness needs to be created to reduce the impact of cultural influences on women, networks of women in schools need to be created, and role models need to be provided for female leaders to learn and share experiences. The study suggests that providing support to women to balance professional and family life, improving access to mentors and educational qualifications, and promoting affirmative action policies can encourage the participation of women in educational leadership.

Kassa (2015) discusses the issue of women's underrepresentation in decision-making positions in Ethiopia. The study found that various economic, religious, social, and cultural factors contribute to women's poor political participation in the country. Although the government of Ethiopia has declared its commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women, women are still in a subordinate position, and their involvement in policy formulation and decision-making processes

has been minimal. The study concludes that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality.

Firisa (2018), in his study, examined the factors affecting women's participation in leadership positions in Jimma town administration, Ethiopia. The study revealed that male leaders dominated the leadership positions, and women were not attracted to the positions due to personal, socio-cultural, and institutional factors. Personal factors included women's attitudes towards themselves, lack of self-confidence, underestimation of their abilities, poor risk-taking, and family responsibilities. Socio-cultural factors were a traditional culture that does not favor women in leadership positions, societal rejection of women in leadership, and appreciation of women more for their outward show rather than intellectual skills. Lack of training and educational opportunities, low level of educational qualification, and lack of access to advanced education were the institutional factors identified. The study recommended improving women's hope, awareness creation programs, bringing perceptual and attitudinal changes, affirmative action, and monitoring and evaluating policy implementation.

Hailemariam and Yang (2023) investigated the obstacles and challenges preventing women from taking leadership roles in decision-making processes in Ethiopia. The research showed that women are still largely underrepresented in leadership positions despite legal and policy frameworks designed to support their participation due to various factors, including socio-cultural and religious values, attitudes towards women's leadership, fear of victimization, and economic status. Internal psychological factors that hinder women's participation in decision-making positions included fear of geographical mobility and separation from family, fear of raising women's voices, fear of speaking out in public due to victimization, and inability to express their opinions freely in public. External factors that push women from participating in leadership positions include socio-cultural, traditional, and religious values that consider women as house managers rather than human leaders. The study emphasized the need for practical and attitudinal changes, education, and affirmative measures to motivate women to increase their participation in leadership positions.

Hora (2014) examined the factors hindering women's participation in public leadership and decision-making positions in Bedele town administration. The study found that women mostly hold lower non-decision-making and leadership positions with an educational status of diploma

and lower. Socio-cultural attitudes, lack of necessary experience, overburdened of domestic responsibilities, negative attitudes regarding women's ability to lead and govern, and lack of role models of women leaders for young women and girls were the identified barriers. The study suggested providing education and training programs, creating awareness of women's rights and capabilities, eliminating socio-cultural barriers, providing mentorship and coaching, and strengthening policies and strategies that promote gender equality to address the gender gap in leadership positions.

Melese (2019) summarized the findings of 13 empirical studies conducted in different parts of Ethiopia to explore the hindrances and prospects for women in leadership positions. The studies revealed that the lack of educational opportunities, inadequate support, gender bias, low self-confidence, gender stereotypes, cultural constraints, and limited access to resources hinder women's participation in leadership positions. The paper recommended increasing the number of women in leadership positions, providing education and training programs, promoting gender mainstreaming, and creating awareness of gender inequality to address the challenges.

The studies reviewed revealed gaps in the literature, which point to a need for gender-sensitive policies and strategies to be implemented, awareness to be created to reduce the impact of cultural influences on women, networks of women in institutions to be created, and role models to be provided for female leaders to learn and share experiences. Additionally, support needs to be provided to women to balance professional and family life, improve access to mentors and educational qualifications, and promote affirmative action policies to encourage the participation of women in leadership positions.

The Ethiopian Civil Service Commission, which the Ministry of education is also governed under, has a significant responsibility to review national and local legislation and change policies and procedures of governmental and non-governmental organizations to create a conducive environment for those whose voices are marginalized. The active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of gender equality in Ethiopia. The studies also highlighted the need for practical and attitudinal changes, education and training programs, awareness creation, affirmative action, mentoring and coaching, and

strengthening policies and strategies that promote gender equality to address the challenges that prevent women from taking leadership positions in Ethiopia.

In conclusion, the literature review provides valuable insights into the causes of gender disparities in leadership positions within government civil service institutions and public enterprises in Ethiopia. The review identifies gaps in the literature and provides potential strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in leadership positions.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Research Approach

In this study, a qualitative research approach was employed to explore the factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions in the MoE. Qualitative research approach seeks to understand social phenomena through the collection of rich, in-depth data, assisting a nuanced understanding of the selected research topic.

3.2 Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional descriptive research design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions within the Ministry of Education (MoE). This research design facilitated a systematic and detailed exploration of the current state of women's leadership, barriers and facilitators they encounter, and strategies employed to overcome challenges. By collecting qualitative data through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, this study provided valuable insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of women leaders in the MoE.

3.3 Description of study variables

The research approach refers to the theoretical framework or perspective that provides guidance to the study and shapes the research process. In this study, a feminist theoretical approach was utilized. A feminist perspective acknowledges and explores gender-related power dynamics, inequalities, and social constructions that influence women's experiences and opportunities in leadership positions. By adopting a feminist perspective, the study seeks to critically analyze the gender disparities in leadership positions within the MoE and explore the existing social, cultural, and systemic factors that contribute to these disparities.

3.4 Description of the study area and target population

The study was conducted at the MoE headquarters. The target population include women leaders and employees in the MoE, men employees, women and social affairs leaders, human resource managers, gender experts, men employees and other relevant stakeholders. The inclusion of diverse participants allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the gender gap in leadership involvement and the factors that contribute to it.

3.5 Sampling technique/methods and sample size

The study employed purposive sampling to choose participants who possess knowledge and experience regarding the research topic in leadership positions in the Ministry of Education (MoE). The initial sample size for interviews and focus group discussions was determined.

For the interviews, an initial sample size of 10 (ten) participants were selected. After conducting the interviews and analyzing the data, the researcher assessed after conducting 2 (two) more interviews that data saturation has been reached.

Regarding focus group discussions, an initial sample size of 3 groups consisting of 6 participants, was formed. The researcher assessed the emerging themes and insights from the focus group discussions and found three groups were enough.

The selection of participants was based on their expertise, experiences, positions and relevance to the research topic.

3.6 Data collection

Data collection in this qualitative study involved the following methods:

- ⌚ In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants to delve into their experiences, perspectives, and insights regarding women's participation in leadership positions. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to provide detailed and rich responses.

- ⌚ Focus Groups: Focus group discussion was organized to facilitate interactive conversations and generate collective insights on the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics of women's leadership participation. These group discussions encouraged participants to share their views, engage in dialogue, and explore differing perspectives.
- ⌚ Document Analysis: Relevant documents, such as the federal constitution, government national women policy and other legislations were analyzed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the institutional context, initiatives, and existing practices related to women's leadership.

3.7 Data analysis

The collected data was analyzed using NVivo software to identify themes, patterns, and interpretations. The analysis involved coding, categorization, and thematic analysis, aiming to uncover the underlying meanings and explore the complex relationships and influences related to women's leadership participation.

3.8 Reliability and validity analysis

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, several measures were taken. First, the study employed multiple data sources (document review, interview and focus group discussions) and methods to triangulate the findings. Second, the study used a feminist theoretical framework appropriately for the research questions and study variables. Finally, the study ensured that the privacy and confidentiality of participants is protected and obtained their informed consent before data collection.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the following ethical principles:

1. Informed Consent: Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and rights. Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw without consequences were ensured.

2. Confidentiality and Anonymity: Data treated confidentially, with personal identifiers removed or pseudonyms used to maintain anonymity. Only authorized researchers have access to the data.
3. Protection of Participants: Measures were taken to minimize harm or discomfort to participants. Privacy and data security are maintained to ensure participant safety.
4. Respect for Diversity and Inclusion: Participants of the study were selected without discrimination on their gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc.
5. Researcher Integrity: The researcher upholds professionalism, integrity, and objectivity throughout the study, adhering to ethical guidelines.
6. Beneficence and Social Justice: The study aimed to promote gender equality and social justice. Findings inform policies and strategies to enhance women's leadership opportunities within the MoE.
7. Transparency and Accountability: The research process was transparently documented. Findings were reported objectively, acknowledging limitations. The researcher will be accountable for ethical conduct and responsible dissemination of results.

By upholding these ethical considerations, this study ensured participant protection, respected diversity, and contributes valuable insights to the field of gender equality and leadership.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION

4.1. Demography of research participants

Characteristics		No of Respondents	Percentage
Sex	Female	12	75%
	Male	4	25%
Age	Below 25	0	0
	26-35	5	31.3%
	36-45	9	56.2%
	46-55	2	12.5%
Education qualification	Diploma	2	12.5%
	Degree	5	31.3%
	MA/MSC	9	56.2%
Job positions	Desk leaders	2	12.5%
	Team leader	1	6.25%
	Senior experts	7	43.75%
	Employees	6	37.5%

The participants were selected based on their relevance to the research topic and their willingness to contribute to the study. This section provides an overview of the participant's sex, age, education qualification, and job positions, highlighting the diversity within the sample.

Sex: Among the participants, 12 were female, representing the majority of respondents. On the other hand, 4 participants were male. This distribution allows for a balanced perspective, ensuring diverse viewpoints from both genders.

Age: The age range of the participants varied across different categories. There were no participants below the age of 25. Five respondents fell into the age bracket of 26-35, representing the younger segment of the sample. The largest group consisted of participants between the ages of 36-45, comprising 9 individuals. The next age category, 46-55, included 2 participants, who provided valuable insights from a more experienced perspective.

Education Qualification: The participants' education qualifications reflected a range of academic achievements. Two participants held a diploma, showcasing a diverse educational background. Five respondents had completed a degree program, contributing knowledge from a broader academic foundation. The majority of the participants, 9 in total, possessed an MA/MSc qualification, indicating a higher level of expertise and specialization in their respective fields.

Job Positions: The participants' job positions encompassed various roles within their respective organizations. Two individuals held desk leader positions, providing insights from a supervisory standpoint. There was 1 team leader among the participants, bringing a unique perspective from a managerial position. The majority, 7 respondents, were senior experts, lending their extensive experience and expertise to the discussions. Additionally, 6 participants were employees, offering valuable input from the operational level.

4.2. Data Presentation

The research involved a comprehensive investigation that included a document review of federal government policies, legislations, and proclamations, as well as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In the subsequent data presentation section, results obtained from these two distinct methodologies will be presented. The first subsection will focus on the outcomes of the document review, providing an analysis of the existing national legislations and policies, as the policies used in public institutions are reflections of the national policies. The second subsection will present the findings derived from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, allowing for a deeper exploration of the research topic through the perspectives and experiences of qualified participants.

4.2.1. Policy and Legislation Review

Government Policy Frameworks for Women's Empowerment

This desk review provides an in-depth analysis of the existing policies and legislation related to women's empowerment and leadership positions in Ethiopia.

Achievements in Advancing Women in Leadership

Affirmative Action Measures: Ethiopia has acknowledged the significance of using affirmative action strategies to reduce gender inequality. Although not directly addressed as standalone policy, a number of proclamations include clauses that support women's right to affirmative action. Affirmative action for women is supported by the 2007 Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515, the Labor Proclamation No. 1156/2019, and the Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003. These initiatives seek to boost the number of women in underrepresented fields including work and education. For instance, the Directive on Recruitment and Promotion of Civil Servants expressly stipulates that candidates who are female, from emerging regions, or who have a disability will be hired using affirmative action if their overall grade during the competition is less than 3%.

Capacity Building Initiatives: The federal government has made it a priority in its national policies to improve the abilities and skills of women in leadership roles. Initiatives to increase capacity typically target women in lower-level leadership positions, enticing them to apply for higher-level ones. To help female employees develop the necessary knowledge and abilities, options for short-term training and long-term educational subsidies are offered. For women in leadership, capacity-building initiatives have been institutionalized through the implementation of programs like the Women's Capacity Development Program (WCDP) implemented as part of the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) emphasizes institutionalizing capacity-building efforts for women in leadership. In addition, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) works in partnership with other organizations to mentor women in low-level leadership roles, enhancing their leadership potential and empowering them.

Promoting Women's Participation in Higher Education: The federal government has a number of initiatives to encourage women to pursue higher education. Women, people with disabilities, and students from developing regions are given special support under provisions in the Higher Education Proclamation No. 351/2003 and the Revised Ethiopian Federal Higher Education Proclamation No. 650/2009. Furthermore, the Directive on Training and Scholarship of Civil Servants Abroad reserves 30% of the available scholarships for female applicants, leaving the remaining 70% of the slots free for applications. These policies seek to reduce historical inequalities and promote higher female enrollment. Across undergraduate, master's, and doctorate

degrees, there has been an encouraging rise in female participation, indicating a favorable trend in recent years.

Gaps in Advancement of Women in Leadership:

Legal and Policy Gaps: Despite successes in advancing women's leadership and empowerment, there are still a number of legal and legislative loopholes that hinder further development. These gaps include a lack of precise indicators and monitoring procedures to gauge the efficacy of policy, a lack of institutional support for initiatives promoting gender equality, insufficient accountability procedures to ensure compliance, a lack of staff members with the necessary expertise to implement gender-responsive strategies, and insufficient funding for programs promoting women's empowerment. To foster an environment that supports women in leadership and to successfully execute laws that advance gender equality, it is imperative to close these inequalities. Ethiopia should continue to support women's leadership and empowerment while promoting gender equality and inclusive development by building on past achievements and tackling current issues.

4.2.2. Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion

As part of the project research, key informant interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data. A total of twelve interviews and three group discussions involving six individuals were conducted with individuals from various departments within the MoE and MoWSA. The findings of the interviews shed light on several key factors contributing to the gender disparities. The interviews were transcribed and coded to identify key themes for further analysis, helping gain deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of participants regarding women's leadership. The coding process involved systematically categorizing the interview data based on recurring topics, ideas, and perspectives that emerged from the discussions.

The interviews were classified into several major themes, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections. These themes encompassed a range of factors and dynamics influencing women's leadership within the ministry, including lack of representation, challenges faced, and social barriers.

Following the discussion of research findings, the next sections will delve into each of the identified themes, providing in-depth analysis and interpretation of the interview data. The

research will shed light on the complexities surrounding women's leadership within the ministry and discuss the implications of the current state and offer actionable recommendations.

Lack of Representation

The findings from the interviews shed light on the clear lack of representation of women in leadership positions within the Ministry of Education (MoE). The interviewees voiced concerns about the limited presence of women in decision-making roles. One employee expressed her disappointment, stating,

"It is disheartening to see such a low number of women in leadership positions within the MoE. Out of eleven team leaders, only two are women. This disparity sends a strong message that women's voices and perspectives are not adequately represented at the decision-making level."

Another employee highlighted the challenges arising from this underrepresentation, noting,

"When there is a lack of representation of women in leadership, it becomes challenging to address the specific concerns and issues that women face within the organization. Having more women in leadership roles would bring diverse perspectives and enable a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women employees."

Furthermore, another employee pointed out the broader implications of the absence of women in leadership positions, stating,

"The absence of women in leadership positions not only hampers women's career progression but also perpetuates gender stereotypes. When young women see a lack of representation at the top, they may feel discouraged and doubt their own potential for advancement within the organization."

These statements underscore the importance of promoting gender diversity in leadership roles within the MoE. The interviewees recognized that achieving a more equitable representation of women in leadership positions would not only enhance diversity but also foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women employees. By addressing this issue, the MoE can

harness the diverse perspectives and experiences of women, leading to more effective decision-making processes and ultimately benefiting the organization as a whole.

Work-Life Balance

The interviewees highlighted several challenges that women face in their pursuit of leadership positions within the Ministry of Education (MoE). These challenges contribute to the perpetuation of gender disparities and hinder women's career advancement. The following paragraphs provide a comprehensive overview of balancing work and life challenge based on the interviews conducted.

Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities: Most women mentioned that their family responsibilities, including caregiving and household duties, act as a barrier to assuming leadership positions. Balancing work and family obligations creates additional challenges and limits the availability, time, and energy women can dedicate to their career advancement.

One employee expressed the impact of family responsibilities on women's career progression, stating,

"I believe the main challenge for women to assume leadership positions starts from home. The responsibility at home, taking care of children, and so on, even the husband is not happy to see his wife in a better position." Another interviewee shared their experience, saying, "It is challenging to manage a demanding job and also fulfill expectations as a mother and wife. Often, sacrifices are made on the personal front, which affects career growth."

Lack of Support from Life Partners: Some interviewees mentioned the lack of support from their life partners as a hindrance to their career progression. The absence of understanding, cooperation, and shared responsibilities at home created additional challenges for women seeking leadership positions. This lack of support from life partners affected their ability to manage work and family responsibilities effectively.

Political Factors and Perceptions

Political affiliations and perceptions were identified as additional factors influencing women's career progression within the Ministry of Education.

Role of Political Affiliations in Career Progression: Some interviewees highlighted the role of political affiliations, connections and ruling party membership in securing higher positions and career advancement. They mentioned that women without political connections or affiliations faced greater challenges in accessing promotion opportunities and securing leadership roles. One employee stated,

"Political affiliations and membership of the ruling party significantly influence career progression, making it challenging to reach higher positions without political backing."

Limited Promotion Opportunities without Political Connections: Women without strong political connections and ethnic group affiliation expressed frustration at the limited opportunities available to them for promotion and career growth. They felt that their qualifications, skills, and achievements were not adequately considered in the promotion process. An interviewee highlighted this issue, stating, "lack of political connections makes it challenging to advance and receive recognition for one's work, as merit alone appears insufficient for promotion, particularly for individuals belonging to ethnic groups with a substantial pool of qualified candidates."

Policy Implementation Gaps

The interviews conducted with MoE employees revealed significant findings regarding the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment policies. The employees provided valuable insights into the challenges and perspectives related to policy implementation within the organization.

One recurring concern was the lack of clarity and support within the MoE's policies. One employee stated,

"The existing policies lack specific strategies or programs aimed at empowering and supporting women in their pursuit of leadership positions."

This lack of clarity and concrete support mechanisms hindered the effective implementation of gender equality policies. Another employee emphasized,

"The policy is good, but more work needs to be done to bring what is on paper into practice."

Inefficiency of existing empowerment programs was also highlighted during the interviews. Some employees mentioned that the current programs for women within the MoE were not sufficient or adequately developed. One employee mentioned,

"Due to the lack of empowerment and development programs, there might be inefficiency among women who exercise higher-level positions."

The absence of targeted training and capacity-building initiatives hindered the advancement and professional growth of women within the organization.

Insufficient budget allocation emerged as another significant finding. Multiple interviewees raised concerns about the lack of allocated budget for implementing gender equality policies and programs. One employee expressed,

"The absence of dedicated financial resources limits the capacity of the MoE to effectively execute initiatives aimed at promoting women's leadership and addressing gender disparities."

This constraint further hampered progress towards achieving gender equality in leadership positions.

The gap between policies on paper and their practical application was a common theme among the interviewees. Despite the sense of the presence of gender equality policies, employees perceived that little had been done to translate them into tangible changes in the workplace. One employee stated,

"The policy is on paper, but we don't see any practical things that will help women come to leading positions."

This lack of practical application undermined the effectiveness of the policies and underscored the need for more tangible measures to bridge the gap between policy intentions and actual implementation.

These findings highlight the need for clearer guidelines and support mechanisms, comprehensive empowerment programs, increased budget allocation, and a stronger focus on practical implementation to effectively address gender disparities and empower women in leadership positions within the Ministry of Education.

Personal and Social Barriers

In addition to policy implementation challenges, the interviews highlighted several personal and social barriers that hindered women from assuming leadership positions within the MoE. These barriers arise from deep-rooted gender biases and societal perceptions. The following findings were identified regarding personal and social barriers:

Self-Perception and Lack of Confidence: Many interviewees noted that women themselves often internalized beliefs and perceptions that they were not capable of assuming leadership positions. They highlighted the lack of self-confidence and a tendency to underestimate their own abilities. This self-perception barrier held women back from actively pursuing leadership roles and contributing their full potential.

Gender-Based Biases and Stereotypes: Interviewees consistently highlighted the influence of societal stereotypes, gender perceptions, and biases on women's ability to advance in leadership roles. The perception that women are less capable or suited for higher positions hinders their career progression, undermines their confidence, and affects how they are perceived by colleagues and superiors.

One employee expressed the challenge posed by gender stereotypes, stating,

"The perception of men that women are incapable of leading or taking such higher positions is another challenge."

Another interviewee shared their perspective, saying,

"There is a general belief that women are not as assertive or authoritative as men, which creates obstacles for us when seeking leadership positions."

Gender biases and stereotypes were identified as persistent obstacles for women in leadership positions. Interviewees noted that men often held biases regarding women's capabilities and suitability for higher positions. These biases created additional challenges and barriers to women's advancement. Stereotypes associating women's competence with their gender were mentioned, which undermined women's professional credibility.

Supervisor and Subordinate Influence

The interviews highlighted the significant influence that supervisors and subordinates can have on women's advancement to leadership positions. The following findings emerged regarding the influence of supervisors and subordinates:

Suppression of Information: Some interviewees mentioned that their supervisors intentionally withheld important information from them, hindering their ability to perform effectively in their roles. This deliberate withholding of information created a power imbalance and undermined women's capacity to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to their teams and departments.

Subordinates' resistance to Female Leadership: Interviewees noted that subordinates, both male and female, sometimes exhibited resistance to being led by a woman. This resistance stemmed from societal biases and stereotypes that cast doubt on women's leadership abilities. Such resistance created additional challenges for women in leadership positions, as it impeded their efforts to gain cooperation and establish authority within their teams.

Limited Mentoring and Sponsorship: Some interviewees expressed the lack of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities from their supervisors, which limited their professional growth and career advancement. The absence of guidance, support, and advocacy from supervisors reduced women's access to valuable resources and opportunities for skill development and promotion.

Confidence and Self-Perception:

Confidence and self-perception emerged as crucial factors influencing women's pursuit of leadership positions within the MoE. The following findings were identified regarding confidence and self-perception:

Self-Doubt and Underestimation: Interviewees mentioned that women often underestimated their own capabilities and doubted their suitability for leadership roles. They cited a lack of self-belief and confidence as significant barriers to stepping forward and actively pursuing leadership positions. This self-doubt and underestimation limited their willingness to take on challenges and assert themselves in their careers.

Fear of Stereotyping: Some interviewees expressed concerns about being stereotyped or judged based on their gender if they pursued leadership positions. They feared that any mistakes or failures would be attributed to their gender, further exacerbating the pressure and scrutiny they experienced. This fear of being negatively labeled and the associated consequences deterred some women from seeking leadership roles.

Impact of External Factors: External factors, such as societal expectations and cultural norms, played a role in shaping women's self-perception. The prevailing gender roles and norms within the broader society influenced how women viewed themselves and their potential for leadership. Societal pressures and expectations regarding women's roles and responsibilities created additional hurdles for women aspiring to assume leadership positions.

Performance and Recognition:

The interviews shed light on the performance and recognition of women in leadership positions within the MoE. The following findings were identified regarding performance and recognition:

Strong Performance of Women Leaders: Several interviewees mentioned that women in leadership positions performed exceptionally well. They highlighted qualities such as dedication, focus, attention to detail, and a strong work ethic that women leaders brought to their roles. Women were perceived to be more honest and focused on their jobs compared to their male counterparts.

Limited Recognition, Opportunities and Acknowledgment: Women leaders within the MoE expressed a sense of being overlooked or undervalued compared to their male colleagues. Their achievements and contributions were sometimes ignored or undermined, creating a barrier to their career advancement. An employee shared their experience, stating,

"Women leaders perform better, but due to the influence of or plot of their immediate boss, they are not recognized."

Another interviewee highlighted the scarcity of promotion opportunities for women, saying,

"The promotion opportunities for women are scarce, and we often see men being favored for higher positions, even if they are less qualified."

Despite their strong performance, women leaders faced challenges in receiving recognition and acknowledgment for their contributions. Some interviewees noted that women's achievements were often overshadowed or overlooked, with credit being attributed to male colleagues. This lack of recognition further perpetuated gender disparities and undermined the motivation and morale of women leaders. These obstacles not only hindered their professional growth but also contributed to a broader gender imbalance within the organization.

Gender Bias in Evaluation and the Need for Objective Evaluation:

Interviewees highlighted the presence of gender bias in the evaluation of women's performance in leadership roles. They noted that women often face more scrutiny and are subjected to higher expectations compared to their male counterparts. Small mistakes made by women are sometimes exaggerated and attributed to their gender, reinforcing the perception that women are less competent or suited for leadership roles.

One employee shared their experience of this bias, stating, "If you are a woman, small mistakes will be exaggerated, and it will be associated with your gender." Another interviewee emphasized the unequal evaluation system, saying, "Women leaders have to prove themselves repeatedly, while men are given the benefit of the doubt."

In light of these challenges, interviewees stressed the importance of fair and objective evaluation criteria for performance assessments and promotions. They emphasized the need for transparent and merit-based processes to ensure that women's achievements and capabilities are properly recognized and rewarded. Objective evaluation mechanisms would help mitigate biases and create equal opportunities for women to advance in their careers.

Addressing these findings requires creating a supportive and inclusive work environment that promotes gender equality, challenges biases, provides mentoring and sponsorship opportunities, and recognizes and rewards women's achievements. Encouraging confidence-building initiatives, such as leadership training and mentorship programs, can also help women overcome self-doubt and realize their leadership potential. Additionally, fostering a culture of fair evaluation and recognition will contribute to a more equitable and empowering workplace for women within the MoE.

4.3. Analysis and Interpretation

In order to gain deeper understanding of the causes of gender disparities in leadership positions in MoE, the interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study were put to analysis using qualitative analysis software, NVivo. After conducting coding and thematic analysis, the software facilitated the identification and organization of key themes and patterns within the interview data. The following section provides an overview of the major findings derived from this systematic analysis.

Lack of Representation

One of the themes identified in the analysis of interview results lack of representation of women in leadership positions within the MoE. This outcome aligns with previous study on leadership gender disparities, within the public institutions and other industries.

Numerous studies have documented the lack of representation of women in leadership positions, putting emphasis on the need to address this disparity to promote gender equality and utilize the benefits of diverse leadership. The researchs show that women hold a small proportion of top leadership positions globally ("Women CEOs of the S&P 500," 2023). This lack of representation demonstrates the existence of societal and systemic barriers hindering women's career progression and limiting their access to leadership roles.

Within the MoE, interviewees consistently reported a low percentage of women in leadership positions. One interviewee stated that,

“out of eleven team leaders, only two were women, and out of forty-four desk leaders, only eleven were women.”

This clear lack of representation in the institution is concerning and indicates that the ministry needs to conduct targeted efforts to address gender disparities in leadership.

Moreover, the finding of underrepresentation aligns with the broader context of gender disparities in leadership positions in Ethiopia. Research by Kassa (2015) found that women face significant challenges in assuming leadership roles in the public sector. This research pointout patriarchal norms and cultural beliefs that perpetuate gender inequalities as the main obstacles to leadership positions.

The implications of lack of representation of women in MoE leadership roles is far-reaching. It limits diversity of perspectives and experiences in decision-making processes and hinders the Ministry's ability to address gender-related issues at a national-level effectively. Studies have demonstrated the benefits of gender-inclusive leadership, including improved organizational performance, enhanced creativity and innovation, and more inclusive policies and practices (Catalyst, 2018).

To address the lack of representation, the MoE needs to implement targeted strategies that promote gender equality in leadership positions. Research by Meng and Nail (2022) suggests that employee mentorship programs, targeted leadership training and development initiatives, and gender quotas can be effective in increasing women's representation in leadership roles. These strategies can help reduce systemic barriers and social biases that hamper women's career progression.

Furthermore, the MoE can learn from successful gender-inclusive practices implemented in other countries. For example, research by Gardiner, Tiggemann, Kearns & Marshall (2007) on gender representation in educational institutions in the United States found that proactive measures such as mentoring and training programs increase representation of women in academia.

In conclusion, the analysis of interview results shows a clear lack of representation of women in leadership positions within the MoE. This finding aligns with previous research and highlights the need for targeted interventions to address gender disparities in leadership. By implementing the strategies discussed, the MoE can foster a more inclusive and diverse leadership landscape that benefits both the organization and the individuals involved.

Work-Life Balance and Stereotypes

The interviews and discussions revealed two significant challenges that hinder women's career progression in assuming leadership positions within the Ministry of Education (MoE): the struggle to balance work and family responsibilities and the lack of support from husbands. As they are close to home, these challenges significantly impact women's ability to advance in their careers and contribute significantly to the perpetuation of gender disparities within the organization.

The analysis of my research findings show that the interviewees found the responsibility of balancing work and family to be significantly challenging, with most of the time choosing family responsibility over work hence further perpetuating the gender gap. The study aligns with previous conducted in South Africa, which found that although 93% of husbands support their wives' careers, only 27% of women have clear division of daily household tasks, and a concerning 10% have to shoulder all of the household duties (Naidoo & Jano, 2003). These statistics highlight the prevailing gendered division of labor within households, wherein women continue to bear primary responsibility for childcare and household duties on top of their workplace responsibilities.

As a consequence of these gendered expectations and societal norms, many women in the study reported choosing to downgrade their leadership roles to expert-level positions to manage their household duties effectively. This finding supports the argument put forth by Naidoo and May (2005), who assert that women often reassess their personal lives when planning for a long-term career. They face concerns regarding the longer duration of working hours than expected (Mooney & Ryan, 2008). Moreover, the increasing infringement of job demands into family life leads to conflict in the household, which ultimately impacts women's career paths (Voydanoff, 2005).

This double burden that women face, where they are expected to fulfill professional duties while shouldering the majority of caregiving and household duties, is a manifestation of deeply ingrained gender biases and power imbalances within relationships. This burden not only hampers women's ability to fully engage in their career choices but also limits their dedication of time and energy to professional advancement (Bahiru & Mengistu, 2018).

The lack of support the interviewees mentioned from husbands on their work duties significantly compounds the challenges they face in their career progression. Research on marital relationships highlights that one of the major obstacles for working women is the lack of support from their husbands regarding their careers (Vannoy-Hiller & Philliber, 1991). Conversely, women who manage to advance in leadership positions often attribute their success to strong emotional support from their partners (Halpern & Cheung, 2008). Therefore, the absence of understanding, cooperative partner, and shared responsibilities at home not only adds an extra burden to women but also hinders their full engagement in professional pursuits.

These challenges that women face have their roots in patriarchal structures and cultural norms that perpetuate male dominance and preserve gender inequalities in the workplace. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes limit women's opportunities for advancement, reinforcing the idea that leadership is a masculine domain. The prevailing belief that women are inherently less capable of assuming higher positions of leadership reflects deeply entrenched biases that undermine women's career prospects (Kassa, 2015).

Addressing these social biases and structural challenges necessitates a feminist approach that challenges existing power dynamics and works towards gender equality. The MoE must adopt comprehensive strategies that promote work-life balance, challenge traditional gender roles, and create an inclusive and supportive work environment. Flexible working arrangements, and family-friendly policies can help alleviate the burden of work-life balance for women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gardiner et al., 2007).

Additionally, it is crucial for the ministry to promote gender equality within households and encourage shared responsibilities. By challenging and transforming traditional gender norms and expectations, the MoE can help create a supportive environment where women's career aspirations are valued and actively supported. Male advocacy and allyship are essential in challenging the existing power structures and dismantling systemic barriers that hinder women's career advancement (Campbell, 2023).

Performance and recognition were identified as additional challenges faced by women in the MoE. Interviewees feel that women leaders often outperform their male counterparts, demonstrating their competence and dedication to their roles. However, their achievements and contributions are systematically overlooked or undermined. This aligns with research by Eagly and Karau (2002), which highlights the "think manager-think male" bias that associates leadership qualities with masculine traits and undermine women performance. The lack of recognition for women's contributions perpetuates gender disparities and discourages women from aspiring to leadership positions.

In conclusion, the analysis of interview results reveals a range of challenges faced by women in assuming leadership positions within the MoE. These challenges reflect broader societal

perceptions, biases, and systemic and structural barriers that hinder women's career progression. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, the MoE can foster a more inclusive and equitable leadership landscape that values and supports the contributions of women, ultimately leading to enhanced organizational performance and gender equality.

Political Factors and Perceptions

The interview results reveal that political factors, specifically political affiliations and perceptions, play a significant role in women's career progression within the Ministry of Education (MoE). These findings correspond with existing research that emphasizes the influence of political connections on professional advancement.

Political affiliations and membership in the ruling party were identified as crucial factors in securing higher positions and career advancement. Women without political connections faced greater challenges in accessing promotion opportunities and securing leadership roles. This indicates that political backing is a significant determinant of career progression within the MoE. Furthermore, the limited promotion opportunities for women without strong political connections and ethnic group affiliation highlight the barriers they face in their career growth. These women expressed frustration at the lack of consideration given to their qualifications, skills, and achievements during the promotion process. This suggests that merit alone may not be sufficient for promotion, particularly for individuals belonging to ethnic groups with a substantial pool of qualified candidates.

A study by Asse (2017) show that civil servants without ruling party membership face slower promotion trajectories and limit the level of leadership one can go. Conversely, party affiliation significantly influences the appointment to influential posts. This emphasizes the importance of political connections and highlights the potential role of party affiliation in shaping career advancement opportunities within the Ministry of Education.

In summary, the interview results highlight the influence of political factors, including political affiliations and perceptions, on women's career progression within the MoE. Women without political connections or affiliations face challenges in accessing promotion opportunities and

securing leadership roles. This underscores the need for systemic changes to ensure fair and merit-based career advancement within the organization.

Policy Implementation Gaps

The analysis of interview results shed light on the implementation of policies and strategies aimed at promoting gender equality and women's leadership within the Ministry of Education (MoE). The findings revealed both positive aspects and areas of improvement in policy implementation. Examining the effectiveness of policy implementation is crucial for understanding the mechanisms through which gender disparities can be addressed and women's leadership can be enhanced.

The interviewees expressed mixed views regarding the effectiveness of policies supporting women's leadership within the MoE. Some interviewees understand and acknowledge the presence of policies that aimed to empower and support women, appreciating their potential to create an enabling environment for women's advancement. This finding resonates with the research by Heymann et al. (2019) who emphasized the importance of policy frameworks in addressing gender disparities and promoting women's health and leadership. These policies, when effectively implemented, can provide a roadmap for organizations to create inclusive and supportive environments for women.

However, a common concern raised by the interviewees was the lack of practical implementation of these policies. Despite the existence of supportive policies on paper, interviewees expressed disappointment with the lack of tangible actions and resources to translate these policies into practice. This finding echoes the research by Creegan et al. (2003), who highlighted the gap between policy intent, implementation and employees' perception, stressing that policy implementation should be accompanied by concrete actions and resource allocation to effectively support women's fair and just representation.

Furthermore, interviewees identified the need for more targeted and comprehensive programs to empower and develop women leaders within the MoE. They emphasized the importance of training programs, mentorship initiatives, and leadership development opportunities tailored specifically to women's needs. This finding aligns with the research by Mwangi (2019), who

emphasized the significance of targeted interventions and capacity-building programs to enhance women's leadership skills and overcome gender-based barriers.

The interviewees also raised concerns about the lack of budgetary allocations and resources dedicated to implementing policies supporting women's leadership. They emphasized that policy implementation requires financial commitments and resource allocation to effectively address gender disparities. This finding is consistent with the research by Grown et al. (2006), who stressed the importance of financial investments and resource mobilization to support gender equality initiatives and promote women's leadership.

To improve policy implementation, the MoE should focus on several key areas. Firstly, the ministry should invest effort on translating policies into actionable strategies and providing clear guidelines for implementation. This can be achieved through developing implementation plans, establishing accountability mechanisms, and providing resources to support the execution of policies. Secondly, targeted capacity-building programs and training initiatives should be developed to enhance women's leadership skills and provide them with the necessary tools for career advancement. Additionally, the MoE should consider allocating adequate budgetary resources to support the implementation of policies and ensure the availability of resources necessary for their effective execution.

In conclusion, the analysis of interview results highlights the importance of effective policy implementation in promoting gender equality and women's leadership within the MoE. While positive steps have been taken in terms of policy development, there is a need for further efforts to bridge the gap between policy intent and practical implementation. By addressing the concerns raised by the interviewees, including translating policies into actionable strategies, providing targeted programs and resources, and allocating adequate budgets, the MoE can enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation and create a more supportive environment for women's leadership to flourish.

Personal and Social Barriers and Supervisors

The analysis of interview findings revealed various personal and social barriers that hinder women's advancement to leadership positions within the Ministry of Education (MoE). These

barriers encompass both internal factors related to women themselves and external factors shaped by societal norms and expectations. Understanding and addressing these barriers are essential for creating an inclusive and equitable environment that enables women to overcome obstacles and reach leadership positions.

One significant personal barrier identified by the interviewees is the perception and self-confidence of women themselves. Most interviewees mentioned that women often underestimate their abilities and lack confidence in their leadership potential, often hesitated to pursue opportunities to leadership positions due to self-doubt. This finding aligns with the research by Eckel et al. (2021), who emphasized that women tend to exhibit lower self-confidence compared to men, leading to self-imposed limitations on their pursuit of leadership positions. A study by Kay and Shipman (2014), who coined the term "the confidence gap" also explain the tendency of women to underestimate their capabilities and waver from taking leadership opportunities. These internal barriers cannot merely be addressed through individual self-reflection but also requires concerted organizational support and empowerment initiatives.

Overcoming these barriers require targeted interventions that promote self-esteem, self-efficacy, and assertiveness among women, empowering them to embrace leadership opportunities.

In addition to self-perception, societal norms and expectations emerged as a significant social barrier affecting women's advancement. Interviewees mentioned that traditional gender roles and expectations place a disproportionate burden on women, particularly in terms of family and domestic responsibilities. These expectations can limit women's availability, time, and energy to devote to their professional careers and pursue leadership positions. Research by Barkhuizen, Masakane, & Sluis (2022) emphasizes that societal expectations of women as primary caregivers often impede their career progression and hinder their access to leadership roles. Addressing this barrier requires both individual and systemic changes, including the promotion of work-life balance and challenging gender stereotypes that perpetuate traditional gender roles.

Another social barrier identified by the interviewees is the presence of gender biases and stereotypes in the workplace. Women reported experiencing biased perceptions from colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates, which undermined their credibility and hindered their advancement.

This finding is consistent with the research by Tabassum and Nayak (2021) who emphasized the existence of gender biases and stereotypes that negatively impact women's leadership opportunities. Overcoming this barrier necessitates implementing strategies such as bias training, inclusive leadership development programs, and fostering a culture of gender equality within the organization.

Furthermore, the influence and support of supervisors and subordinates emerged as critical factors affecting women's leadership journeys. The interviewees mentioned instances where supervisors undermined women's authority or withheld crucial information, inhibiting their ability to perform effectively. Subordinates, too, sometimes displayed resistance to being led by women, creating additional challenges for women leaders. Research by Eibl, Lang, and Niessen (2020) underscores the importance of supportive leadership in fostering women's career advancement, emphasizing the need for managers to challenge biases and provide equal opportunities for women to lead. Addressing this barrier requires creating awareness among supervisors and subordinates about the value and capabilities of women leaders, fostering inclusive and supportive relationships, and holding individuals accountable for promoting gender equality in the workplace.

In conclusion, the analysis of interview findings highlights the personal and social barriers that hinder women's advancement to leadership positions within the Ministry of Education. Overcoming these barriers requires a multi-faceted approach that encompasses empowering women to overcome self-doubt and build their confidence, challenging societal norms and expectations through supportive policies and programs, combating gender biases and stereotypes, and fostering inclusive leadership practices at all levels of the organization. By addressing these barriers, the MoE can create an environment that recognizes and harnesses the talents and potential of women, enabling them to thrive in leadership roles and contribute to the advancement of the organization and the broader goal of gender equality.

4.4. Result and Discussion

The findings from the interviews conducted within the Ministry of Education (MoE) shed light on the causes of gender disparities in leadership positions and the challenges faced by women within the organization. This discussion section will provide an overview of the key findings and their

implications, followed by recommendations for addressing these issues and promoting gender equality in leadership positions within the MoE.

The interviews revealed that despite some improvements, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions within the MoE. This lack of representation is a persistent issue that requires attention and action. Previous research supports the notion that gender disparities in leadership positions are a pervasive problem worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2022). The underrepresentation of women in leadership can have significant consequences, as it limits diverse perspectives, stifles innovation, and perpetuates gender inequalities within the organization.

The analysis of the interviews identified various challenges faced by women in their pursuit of leadership positions. These challenges encompass personal, social, and organizational barriers. Personal barriers include self-perception and confidence issues, where women tend to underestimate their abilities and hesitate to pursue leadership roles. This finding aligns with previous research that highlights the impact of self-confidence on women's career progression (Eckel et al., 2021). Addressing personal barriers requires interventions such as leadership development programs, mentoring, and coaching, aimed at empowering women and enhancing their self-belief and assertiveness.

Social barriers, including societal norms and expectations, emerged as significant challenges for women in leadership positions within the MoE. Traditional gender roles and responsibilities place a disproportionate burden on women, particularly in terms of family and domestic obligations. These expectations limit women's availability and hinder their career advancement. Research emphasizes the need for organizations to create a supportive work-life balance and provide resources to alleviate this burden. Additionally, challenging societal norms and stereotypes through awareness campaigns and gender equality initiatives can help shift attitudes and foster a more inclusive work environment.

The analysis also revealed the influence of supervisors and subordinates on women's leadership journeys. Women reported instances where supervisors undermined their authority or withheld crucial information, while subordinates displayed resistance to being led by women. This aligns with previous research highlighting the impact of bias and stereotypes on women's leadership opportunities. To address this challenge, it is crucial to provide training and development programs

for supervisors to raise awareness of unconscious biases and promote inclusive leadership practices. Additionally, fostering a culture of gender equality and holding individuals accountable for their behavior can help create a supportive environment for women leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Summary

The research findings and analysis within the Ministry of Education (MoE) highlight several key challenges faced by women in assuming leadership positions. These challenges are indicative of broader societal perceptions, biases, and systemic barriers that hinder women's career progression. The lack of representation of women in leadership roles within the MoE limits diverse perspectives and experiences in decision-making processes, hampering the organization's ability to address gender-related issues effectively.

One prominent challenge identified is the struggle to balance work and family responsibilities, coupled with the lack of support from husbands or life partners. These challenges significantly impact women's career advancement and contribute to gender disparities within the organization. They stem from patriarchal structures and cultural norms that prioritize male dominance, necessitating a feminist approach to challenge existing power dynamics and strive for gender equality.

Political factors, such as political affiliations and perceptions, were found to influence women's career progression within the MoE. Political backing was identified as a crucial determinant of career advancement, highlighting the need for systemic changes to ensure fair and merit-based opportunities within the organization.

The implementation of policies aimed at promoting gender equality and women's leadership within the MoE showed room for improvement. While positive steps have been taken in policy development, there is a gap between policy intent and practical implementation. Concrete actions, resource allocation, and targeted programs are necessary to translate policies into effective practices and empower women leaders.

Overall, the findings emphasize the existence of multiple challenges hindering women's advancement to leadership positions within the MoE. Addressing these challenges requires

targeted interventions, policy implementation, and support mechanisms to create an inclusive and equitable environment that enables women to overcome obstacles and reach leadership positions.

5.2. Conclusion

The study highlighted the causes of gender disparities in leadership positions within the MoE and has provided possible solutions for addressing these disparities. The analysis of the research findings has highlighted several key themes, including the lack of representation of women in leadership positions, the challenges faced by women in balancing work-life duties and lack of spousal support while assuming leadership roles, the gaps in implementation of policies supporting women's leadership, and the personal and social barriers that hinder women's advancement.

The study revealed a significant lack of representation of women in leadership positions within the MoE. This lack of representation is reflection of broader societal and systemic barriers that hinder women's progression to leadership positions. The analysis of the study found that targeted strategies are needed to address this issue, including mentorship programs, targeted leadership development initiatives, and affirmative actions and gender quotas.

Several other challenges faced by women in assuming leadership positions were also identified, including societal perceptions and stereotypes, supervisor and subordinate influence, confidence and self-perception, and performance and recognition. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive strategies that address both external and internal barriers. The analysis further found that creating inclusive work environments, implementing mentorship programs, and providing leadership development opportunities tailored to women's needs can help overcome these challenges and empower women to take on leadership roles.

The analysis of policy documents and their implementations revealed both positive aspects and areas of improvement within the MoE. While there is perception and understanding of the existence of national policies and institutional strategies supporting women's leadership exist, their practical implementation and resource allocation remain areas of concern for the interviewees. To enhance policy implementation, the MoE should focus on translating policies into actionable strategies, providing clear guidelines for implementation, developing capacity-building programs, and allocating adequate resources to support the execution of policies.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis of this research, the following is my recommendations to address the gender disparities and challenges faced by women in leadership positions within the MoE:

1. Implement targeted leadership development programs: Develop and provide specialized programs aimed at building the leadership skills, self-confidence, and assertiveness of women within the organization. These programs should focus on addressing the personal barriers identified in the study and empowering women to pursue leadership roles.
2. Raise awareness and challenge biases: Conduct bias training for leaders and employees to increase awareness of unconscious biases and stereotypes that hinder women's career advancement. Create a culture of inclusivity and gender equality within the organization by challenging biased behaviors and fostering respectful and supportive relationships.
3. The MoE has already set up a daycare service to assist and lessen the burden of its female employees who are new mothers. To lessen the household responsibilities placed on women, these amenities should be increased. 'Ampare care work' is another excellent idea that MoWSA intends to put into practice in order to redistribute duties by raising awareness among those in the woman's immediate circle, such as her life partner and coworkers, through various channels, such as trainings. In order to accomplish this, MoWSA should make use of its authority to oversee the work of each office related to women, fortify its ties with all government agencies, including MoE, and collaborate to find solutions to the problem of women's household responsibilities, which is a significant impediment to women achieving higher positions.
4. Policy implementation and monitoring: Ensure that existing policies, initiatives and institutional strategies promoting gender equality are effectively implemented and regularly evaluated. Monitor the progress and impact of these policies, and make necessary adjustments based on feedback and outcomes.
5. Establish accountability mechanisms: Hold individuals accountable for promoting gender equality and inclusive practices. Implement measures to address any discriminatory behavior or practices, and ensure that performance evaluations and promotions are conducted in a fair and unbiased manner.

6. Create affinity networks: Provide women with a place and platform to connect, advocate for their professional advancement, and mentor one another. Additionally, support female role models by showcasing their accomplishments through internal communication channels, conferences, and events. A supportive and empowering environment will be fostered by these initiatives, encouraging more women to pursue leadership positions and increasing gender diversity and representation in positions of authority.

The MoE can build an environment that encourages gender equality, supports women's advancement to leadership roles, and makes use of the different skills and viewpoints of women by putting these ideas into practice on top of continuing the existing initiatives. The ministry must adopt a proactive and comprehensive strategy to address the difficulties experienced by women, promote an inclusive organizational culture, and pave the path for a more equal future in the public sector.

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Appendix I: Interview and Focus Group Discussion Questions:

MoE Employees:

1. What is your educational background, and how has it influenced your career within the Ministry of Education (MoE)?
2. How long have you been working in the MoE, and what roles or positions have you held during your tenure?
3. Have you ever aspired to become a leader within the MoE? If yes, what motivated this aspiration? If no, what factors influenced your decision?
4. What do you perceive as the main challenges or barriers for women to assume leadership positions within the MoE? Can you provide specific examples or instances where you have observed or experienced these challenges?
5. In your opinion, do women or men tend to perform better as leaders within the MoE? What factors contribute to your assessment?
6. How do you perceive the existing policies and strategies within the MoE regarding women's leadership development? Do you believe they effectively encourage and support women to compete for leadership positions?

Questions for Women Leaders at MoE:

1. What were the major challenges you encountered on your journey to leadership within the MoE? How did you overcome these challenges?
2. As a current leader, what ongoing challenges or obstacles do you face within your leadership role at the MoE? How do you navigate and address them?
3. From your perspective, what are the key barriers that hinder women from holding leadership positions within the MoE? How can these barriers be addressed and mitigated?

4. In your view, do the existing policies and strategies within the MoE effectively encourage women to compete for leadership positions? Are there any specific initiatives or practices that you believe have been successful in empowering women?
5. Are there any practical women's empowerment activities or programs in place within the MoE? If so, how do you evaluate their impact and effectiveness?
6. How would you assess the recruitment policy of the MoE in terms of promoting gender equality and providing equal opportunities for women to enter leadership positions?
7. How do you evaluate the performance of women leaders within the MoE compared to their male counterparts? Are there any notable differences or trends you have observed?

Questions for Policy Makers:

1. In your opinion, what are the major challenges that women face when assuming leadership positions within the MoE? How can these challenges be addressed at a policy level?
2. Do you believe the current policies and strategies in place within the MoE effectively encourage women to compete for leadership positions? If not, what improvements or changes would you suggest?
3. Are there any practical women's empowerment activities or initiatives that have been implemented within the MoE? How do you assess their effectiveness and impact?
4. What do you perceive as the main barriers that prevent women from reaching leadership positions within the MoE? How can these barriers be dismantled or mitigated through policy measures?
5. How would you evaluate the recruitment policy of the MoE in terms of promoting gender equality and providing equal opportunities for women to assume leadership roles?
6. How do you assess the performance of women leaders within the MoE compared to their male counterparts? Are there any notable differences or trends you have observed?

Focus Group Discussion:

1. What do you believe are the underlying causes of the disparity in leadership positions for women within the MoE? Are these causes shared among the participants, or do they vary based on individual perspectives and experiences?
2. From your collective viewpoint, what expectations or requirements are placed on women who aspire to reach leadership positions within the MoE? Are these expectations different from those for men?
3. In your opinion, what efforts should the MoE make to encourage and facilitate more women to assume leadership positions? Are there any specific strategies or initiatives that could be implemented?
4. How can policies and strategies within the MoE effectively encourage and support women's participation and advancement

Male Employees and Leaders at MoE:

1. How do you perceive the current gender dynamics in leadership positions within the MoE?
2. What are your thoughts on the challenges faced by women in assuming leadership positions?
3. Have you observed any gender-related biases or barriers that may hinder women from advancing into leadership roles?
4. How can male colleagues support and contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in leadership?
5. What strategies or initiatives do you think would be effective in encouraging more women to pursue leadership positions within the MoE?
6. Have you personally witnessed any successful examples of women leaders within the MoE, and if so, what factors do you think contributed to their success?

Human Resources Personnel:

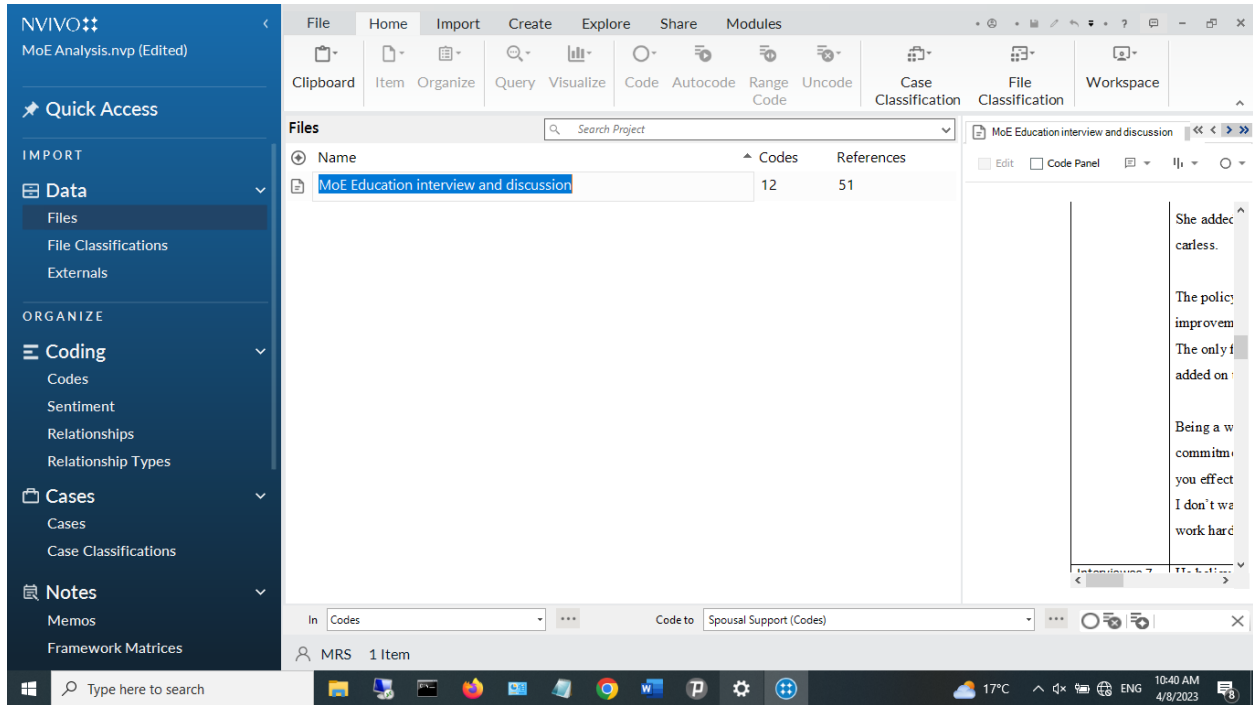
1. Can you provide insights into the recruitment, selection, and promotion processes within the MoE and how gender considerations are taken into account?
2. What measures, if any, are in place to address gender disparities and promote equal opportunities for women in leadership positions?
3. How do you identify and mitigate potential biases in the hiring and promotion processes to ensure a fair and equitable assessment of candidates?
4. Are there any specific programs or initiatives designed to support the career development and advancement of women within the MoE?
5. How do you measure the effectiveness of gender-inclusive policies and practices within the organization?

Professional Associations or Networks:

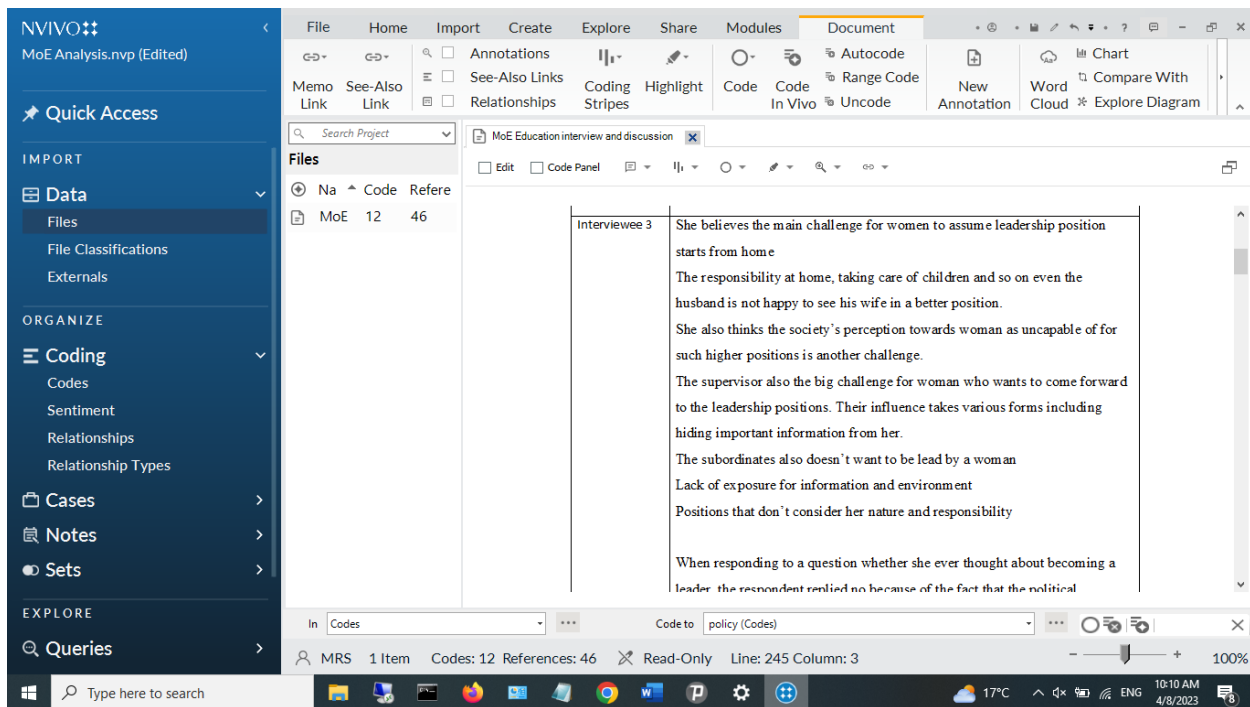
1. What initiatives or best practices have been successful in promoting women's leadership within the education sector / civil service in general?
2. Are there any specific programs or resources that the MoE / public institutions could consider implementing to support women in leadership positions?
3. How can collaboration between professional associations, networks, and the MoE / public institutions contribute to advancing gender equality in leadership roles?

Appendix II: NVivo Software Screenshots

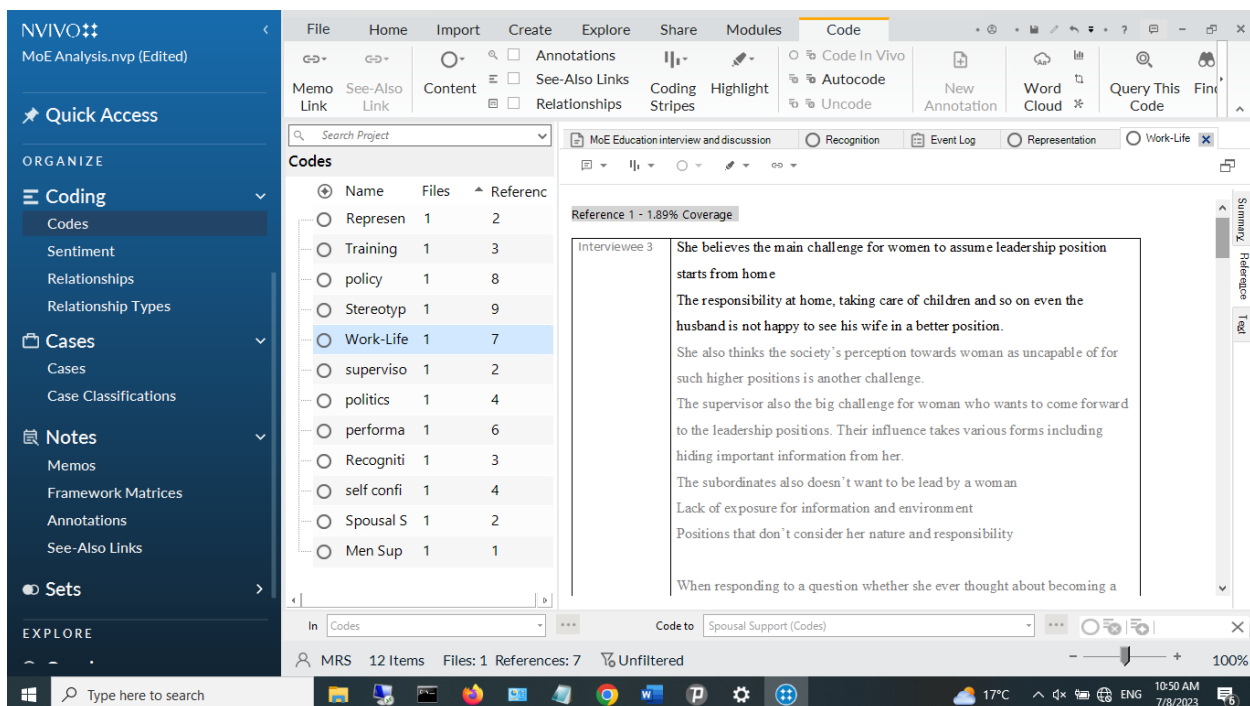
This appendix section provides screenshots of the NVivo software, which was used for coding and analysis of the interview transcript. The screenshots demonstrate the application of qualitative data analysis techniques to organize and analyze the data.



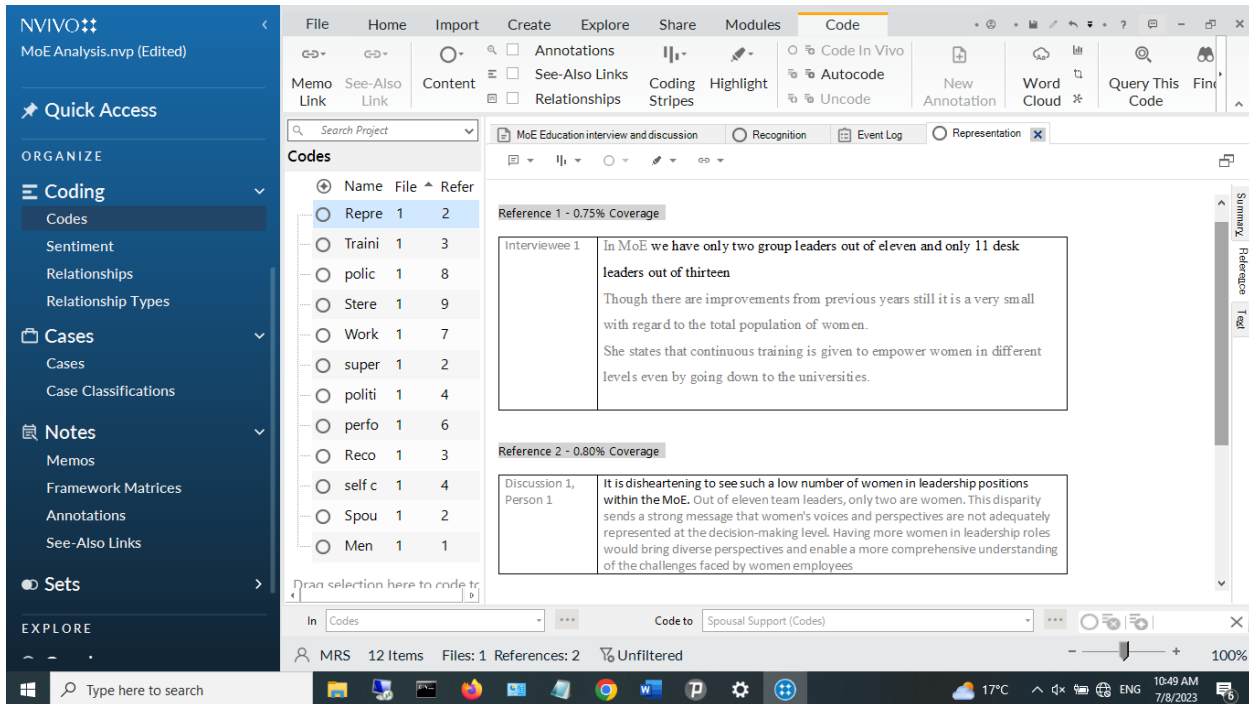
Screenshot 1: Interview and Group Discussion were transcribed into one file, written in table form and imported to NVivo



Screenshot 2: The interview transcript was imported to the software and structured like this



Screenshot 3: Coding Structure. This screenshot highlights the hierarchical organization of codes, demonstrating the coding process



Screenshot 4: Coded Text. Shows one example of the transcript when filtered with specific code