



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

School of Commerce

Women and Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities

The Case of Ethio telecom

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Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for The Degree of Master of
Business Leadership**

By

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Declaration

I, Yalemfiker Girma, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

There is a growing momentum among government and organizations to foster and ensure women's participation in leadership by deploying some incentives and initiatives. Despite these efforts, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in the country. This fact holds for Ethio telecom. To support women's advancement in Ethio telecom, it is important to gain insight into the challenge's women in leadership roles encounter, and the opportunities and support necessary to overcome those challenges. This study investigated the major challenges and opportunities of Ethio telecom women leaders in their career advancement. The study was carried out within the framework of a qualitative exploratory research design. Accordingly, the study employed in-depth interviews and document analysis. The study consisted of 17 female participants who are currently serving at the middle and top management level in Ethio telecom. The findings confirm that female leaders face internal and external challenges for career advancement despite having some opportunities and support systems. The external challenges are managing multiple roles at home, and the office, fewer opportunities for delegation, lack of access to informal networks, limited education, and fewer role models and mentors. It also includes gender bias, socio-cultural attitude, male-dominated corporate culture, women held to higher standards than men, and discrimination. The internal challenges are through which the women resist their advancement including hesitation to take on additional responsibilities, lack of ambition, and less self-advocacy. The study has also identified major opportunities and supports to overcome those challenges, incorporating both internal and external opportunities, as well as traits of the women themselves. The internal opportunities comprise the rising recognition for women's leadership benefits, delegation, and special assignments, mentoring and coaching as well as training and networking opportunities, supportive work environment, exceptional advancement opportunities, recognition and value, and incentives including support for further education, limited affirmative action, and long maternal leave. External opportunities mainly incorporate family support and strong family background. The major catalysts for women's career advancement are their empowered mindset and commitment to work. The findings of the study call for a holistic approach to enhance women's participation in leadership positions in Ethio telecom, taking the concerted effort of the company management and the female staff themselves into consideration.

Keywords: women, leadership, under-representation, opportunities, support, challenges

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Acronyms

AWiB: Association of Women in Business

NEWA: The Network of Ethiopian Women’s Associations

UN: United Nations

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Promoting a richly diverse group of women into leadership positions helps to make institutions, businesses, and governments more representative (Northouse, 2016). Company success for the long term is also dependent on the full realization of its human resource potential (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). Especially, gender gaps in IT career appear to be affecting the competitiveness of companies globally (Ahuja, 2002). It is also believed that the combined output of women and men in leadership will be greater than either gender could have produced on its own (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). Besides, the contemporary transformational leadership style encompasses traditionally feminine behaviors such as being considerate and supportive, which are strongly associated with leadership effectiveness (Northouse, 2016).

Thus, equal participation of women in leadership is essential to materialize human development (Gell & Hoare, 2009). Considering this, efforts have been made globally to ensure women's equal participation in leadership through various legal instruments and institutional reforms. Governments have also designed different initiatives for this effect. In recent times, women number in the workforce has increased and they are going up on the corporate ladder to the top. However, their number in a leadership position is still significantly less compared to men (Powell & Graves, 2003). Especially women in IT fields are concentrated at the lower and middle levels and are under-represented at the higher levels (Ahuja, 2002). Therefore, understanding the challenges the women leaders pass through and the opportunities they employed for tackling those challenges is critical to advancing women's representation in leadership positions (Glass & Cook, 2016). By identifying challenges that limit female leaders' success, it is also possible to inform policy and practice in ways that limit bias and support women's upward mobility and success (ibid).

In line with this, according to research carried out in western countries; attitudinal and structural barriers to women's full participation and the widespread acceptance of gender inequality and gender violence that underpin them is the main reason for women's underrepresentation at the

leadership level (Gell & Hoare, 2009). Similar research findings also include factors such as the absence of female role models, lack of opportunity for effective mentoring, lack of opportunity to gain experience and visibility in types of positions that would facilitate advancement, exclusion of women from informal networks that aid advancement, higher standards of performance for women than for men, difficulties created by competing family demands and lack of strong action by top management to ensure equal opportunity (Ykul, 2013). Other researchers also incorporate reasons closely related to the women themselves such as the absence of strategic tools, low qualification, absence of qualified women, ambivalence in ambition, peer pressures, and fear or avoidance of competition (ibid). These factors are not mutually exclusive, and they may combine to create an unwelcoming corporate climate for female leaders.

In Africa, various legal instruments and systems are designed to promote women's leadership, both at the continental and country level. In Ethiopia, there are legal instruments in place and some institutional arrangements to this effect. Yet, the ratio of women in a leadership position is comparatively significantly less. With this purpose in mind, researches that carried out on African countries, identify major challenges African women leaders face, including biases in societal culture, male-dominant corporate cultures, work-family responsibility, discrimination, sex stereotypes, and lack of access to education (Amayah & Hague, 2017).

Other factors such as higher expectations for women as compared to men and perceived incongruity between female gender roles and the leadership role are also identified (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). Some researchers argued that women do not have what it takes to be a leader as they do not have the necessary traits for the same (Amayah & Hague, 2017). In the context of Ethiopia, based on 13 pieces of research in the area, lack of academic qualification, gender stereotyping, over-burden of domestic responsibility, lack of confidence, lack of support at home and workplace, religious practice and lack of experience are identified as the main factors that hindered women advancement in leadership positions in Ethiopia (Nigest, 2019).

Even though the challenges are many, several women go up the career ladder by deploying the opportunities available for them such as organizational incentives and institutional safeguards. Moreover, it is presumed that these women leaders deploy their strategies to overcome the challenges they face on their journey to middle and top-level management. Understanding the

opportunities that make up the women's journey in leadership and tactics they use to address the wide-ranging barriers will make it easier for aspiring females to reach the top positions. Hence, this study aims to identify the types of interventions and support mechanism that is adapted to enhance the progression of females into leadership positions.

Therefore, the focus of this paper is to identify the challenges encountered by the women leaders in their career advancement, and the opportunities they utilized to tackle these challenges, by taking Ethio telecom as a case study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women's participation and leadership are not only essential prerequisites for tackling gender inequality but also a basic human right (Gell & Hoare, 2009). In Ethiopia, women roughly constitute half of the population, and the development of the country is dependent on the fair participation of women in every sphere of life (United Nations [UN], n.d.). Men's and women's collaboration will also have a synergetic effect to bring about the true advancement of the country that she is longing for. Despite these commitments and benefits, women continue to be under-represented in all areas of decision-making and face significant barriers to their full and equal participation in the workforce (ibid, p.56). Especially there are still very few women rising to executive or managerial level positions in organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa (Amayah & Hague, 2017).

Ethio telecom, a telecom provider in the country and a major employer and entryway of women in ICT careers, currently has 16,232 employees from which 4,545 are females. Although 28% of the 16,232 employees are women, they are concentrated in the lowest levels. Women only comprise 16% of the supervisory positions, 10% of the managerial position, 7% of the director positions, 18% of the Chief Officers (CxO) position, and a CEO. Generally, when we compare the numbers of males and females in leadership positions, the ratio is roughly 33%. When the chief executive position is taken out, the ratio goes down to 11.6%. From this figure, it is observed that there was a disproportionately low number of women in the managerial ranks. This strengthens the finding of research that women in IT fields are concentrated at the lower and middle levels and are under-represented at the higher levels (Ahuja, 2002).

The company data also show that, at the functional level, the ratio of female managers has variation. As of December 2019, from a total of 64 female managers, support fields such as finance, human resources, and legal cumulatively have 27% women leaders, whereas technical and commercial fields' leadership positions have respectively 17% and 56% women leaders. On department level, information systems had 168 female employees, while the network department, which perhaps requires the most important technical skills in the technology sector had only 572 female employees. The department in which women are most highly concentrated is in customer service, accounting for 50% of the total employees in the unit. Although the concentration of women in customer service is part of the long-term strategy to move women into other jobs within Ethio telecom, few women are currently found at the highest levels of the organization (Helina, 2015). Therefore, it is important to investigate this issue further to close the gender gap.

Any intervention for increasing women's participation needs to start with identifying the real challenges from the women leaders themselves, and opportunities available in overcoming the challenges. In this regard, there are some researches carried out on the challenges encountered by women leaders in Ethiopia, however, these researches did not capitalize on the opportunities that are available for the women in their career advancement (Nigest,2019). Moreover, the lived experiences and perceptions of women leaders in Ethio telecom, more specifically, the factors they perceived to be contributors or barriers to career advancement to the managerial position was not explored by previous research. Accordingly, this study identifies the major challenges of the women leaders in their career advancement and shed some light on how to overcome the challenge based on the opportunities available for the women from their practical strategies and the company's ongoing effort.

Therefore, this study attempts to pinpoint the major challenges encountered and the opportunities seized by women leaders in Ethio telecom. Based on this major point, the research questions include:

1. What major challenges women leaders encounter in their career advancement?
2. What factors discouraged their efforts to reach their current positions?
3. What major opportunities facilitate women leaders in achieving leadership positions?
4. What type of support systems did they utilize to attain leadership positions?

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to identify the major challenges women leaders face in their upward mobility and the opportunities they seize to overcome those challenges, in order to gain insight into what should be done to increase women's participation in leadership positions at Ethio telecom.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

- Identify the main challenges the women face in their leadership role
- Describe the major challenges the women leaders encounter in their career advancement to a leadership position
- Pinpoint the opportunities they had for career advancement
- Explore the women leaders' coping mechanisms and support systems to overcome the challenges
- Identify the incentives and institutional safeguards utilized by the women leaders to attain a leadership position
- Provide some insight on how to increase women's participation in leadership in Ethio telecom

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its ability to clearly show the challenges encountered by women leaders in their journey to leadership positions and opportunities they utilized to tackle those challenges. Besides, the women leaders lived experience helps to understand the strategies they applied for overcoming the challenges they face in their career advancement.

Understanding of the actual challenges and opportunities of women leaders in the company allows aspiring women to control some of the barriers and succeed in their leadership journey. Through identifying the real causes, the barriers can be addressed and appropriate solutions to overcome them can be found for future women leaders. These research findings can also help women to raise their voices and companies may consider the research findings when they think of their strategies.

Accordingly, the study helps to come up with common leadership development lessons that could serve as models for women now entering, progressing, and leading in the workplace.

Moreover, in Ethiopia, there are only a few studies carried out on women leaders. Hence, the study aims at contributing to this under-researched area by shedding some light on understanding the challenges females in positions of leadership face in the country and the opportunities they can employ for overcoming such challenges. In doing so, it attempts to address a gap in the literature on the experiences of female leaders in the Ethiopia context.

The suggestions from the study will also lead policymakers to formulate strategies that could enhance women's participation in leadership, in general, and increase the number and influence of women leaders in Ethio telecom, in particular. The study can also be used as a reference for further studies in the area.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to the major challenges and opportunities of women leaders in Ethio telecom context. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be fully transposable to other women leaders' situations in Ethiopia or elsewhere. The result however provides insights on the challenges and opportunities that women in leadership face in general.

The study is also limited to women in leadership positions only thus it may not consider challenges and opportunities that are encountered by women in non-leadership positions, or an entry point to the company.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The major limitation is the lack of sufficient literature on the subject area in Africa, in general, and in Ethiopia, in particular, that limits the transposability of the lessons in the relevant literature to the context or the case study at hand.

The other limitation of the study is the time constraint and the difficulty in collecting the data in full and on time due to the current pandemic. The accessibility of relevant data from the company was also limited because of COVID-19. Moreover, as the main source of the primary data was the company's employees who are at the top and middle management, and most of them are working

fully from home or working in a shift, it is challenging to collect the data through uninterrupted phone or in-person interviews.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study consists of a total of five chapters. The first chapter is an introductory part which comprises the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, the significance of the study as well as scope and limitation of the study. A review of the literature part is included in the second chapter. The third chapter deals with the research design of the study consisting of all methods and tools which are employed for the study. Chapter four is entirely about data presentation, analysis, and discussions of key findings. Based on the findings, the last chapter presents conclusions and recommendations.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Gender: Gender is a social attribute ascribing some characteristics or norms and modes of behavior to the female and other to the male sex.

Gender Mainstreaming: is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs, in any area and at all levels (UN 1997).

Leadership: is the combination of characteristics or personality traits in an individual that compels that person to inspire others to achieve goals that, without the leader's motivation, would not normally be accomplished.

Leadership positions: The leadership positions in Ethio telecom are CEO (Chief Executive Officer), CxO (Chief Officers), Directors and Managers

Quota: is a system that allocates a given percentage of seats in the higher office for women.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Meaning and concept of Leadership

Leadership is a broad concept and generally it consists of three different elements: people, goals, and influence. According to Richard, leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes. (Daft, 2008) Organizations leaders have a clear mental picture of the organization present and future as well as how to connect the present with the future (David, 2009).

Leadership is inherently different from management as it is beyond authority and power for its base on a certain level of voluntary support from group members (Volicila, Ghinea & Filculescu, 2018). A leader typically provides a vision of what needs to be done and how it is going to be accomplished that drives the performance of the organization in accomplishing its goals (David, 2009). This suggests that anyone at any level can play a leadership role and there is no need to be at the top management position to make a leadership contribution (David, 2009). Therefore, middle managers and even team leaders and ordinary members can have leadership contribution.

2.2 Women and Leadership

A consideration of the effects of gender on leadership has important implications for a comprehensive understanding of leadership (Northouse, 2016). In the last decades, researchers and organizations have demonstrated an increasing interest towards women in leadership roles for various reasons. One of the reasons is gender being an integral part to contemporary notions of effective leadership styles (Samantha, Lisa & David, 2014).

The contemporary notion of leadership style has been adapted from a traditional masculine or autocratic style to the more feminine or genderless styles of democratic and transformational leadership (Northouse, 2016). It is argued that developing a more gender-neutral conception of leadership will enhance leadership effectiveness by giving people the opportunity to engage in the best leadership practices (ibid). Study on women and leadership is also crucial in shedding light on aspects of the gender barriers that are subtle and therefore are often ignored (ibid, p.408). It is

argued that it is only when we are aware of these often subtle and disguised prejudices that the changes needed to overcome these problems within organizations and society can happen (ibid, p.409).

2.3 Challenges and Opportunities of women in Leadership

Each career progression stage or transition represents a set of opportunities and obstacles to attaining a powerful position in organizations and builds upon the previous ones (Ahuja, 2002). In this section of the study, literatures regarding the challenges and opportunities of women in leadership are discussed in detail.

2.3.1 Challenges of Women in Leadership

Women are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions (Northouse, 2016). In general, international research shows that women are experiencing their route to the top differently than men (Visser, 2011). Consequently, extensive studies have been done to understand the forms of discrimination and the barriers that continue to pervade the progression of women (Glass & Cook, 2016).

Research from many different countries reveals some general factors implicated in women's absence from leadership. Some of these affect women from all socio-economic backgrounds, while others are experienced only by women living in poverty (Caroline, 2008). It is suggested that it is not enough to examine these challenges in isolation from one another. To develop a rich understanding of the challenges, it is crucial that interactions among them be considered (Ahuja, 2002). In the following section, attempt is made to consider challenges that women encountered in leadership, and particularly in information technology field as it closely related to the case study at hand.

2.3.1.1 Socio-Cultural Attitude

There are social and cultural biases that incorporate both the internal view that women have of themselves and the external view of women that is held by society in general (Northouse, 2016). A study by Steady (2007) observed the positive and negative effects of culture in defining the societal roles of women in Africa (Latchanah & Singh, 2016).

Similarly, research by Kobia (2012) found that traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes influence the construction of the role and status of women within society (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). For example, Sheinin and others have suggested that one factor that explains gender differentials in salary and promotions is the variety of roles that women assume – wife, mother, and caretaker – during peak periods of their professional and academic careers (Ahuja, 2002). These social factors often result in self-selection into gender-typed professions and positions within professions (Ahuja, 2002). Another research also revealed that women comply with cultural tradition for fear of being ostracized; such that women's roles have been that of homemaker and child-bearer and are considered of lesser value and are not taken seriously (Kobia, 2012).

Traditional attitudes and beliefs about women's role in society such as women being dependent, unskilled, and not suitable for institutional leadership and strategic decision-making continue to prejudice both men's and women's preconceptions regarding women's ability to participate fully in public life (Gell & Hoare, 2009). Sometimes, people may even question the 'morality' of women seeking leadership positions (ibid). Particularly, many Sub-Saharan African countries are patriarchal societies (Amayah & Haque, 2017). In patriarchal societies, all women are under the control and authority of the senior man (ibid). Those patriarchal beliefs define women as subordinate to men, which creates a challenge to women who seek leadership and/or managerial positions (ibid).

Furthermore, a writer also described the effect of fewer women leaders on the societal attitude as 'scarcity creates unfamiliarity' (Visser, 2011). As women rise in the hierarchy, they become increasingly scarce; as women become scarce, they become more visible and subject to greater scrutiny (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). Some men become slightly uncomfortable with having to deal with women in the workplace as they may have so few experiences or so few positive experiences with women leaders (Visser, 2011). Consequently, their lack of positive experiences with female managers may result in less appreciation and even lower expectations of them altogether and may even develop some form of resistance (ibid). The same phenomenon occurs with female employees who have female managers (ibid). As a leader in one of the African Countries described in an

interview when a woman attains a leadership position, other women try to find flaws in her that aimed at damaging her image and destroying her confidence (Amayah & Haque, 2017).

This attitude of women may also reflect their personal beliefs that they themselves do not possess leadership qualities, and consequently, they will be convinced that women are simply not leadership material (Visser, 2011). This common belief that women cannot be competent leaders has made the discussions on how to promote more women to top management increasingly difficult and severely limits the development of individual female leadership potential (ibid).

2.3.1.2 Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotypes both describe stereotypic beliefs about the attributes of women and men and prescribe how men and women ought to be (Northouse, 2016). Generally, women are stereotyped with communal characteristics such as concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness, and nurturance, whereas men are stereotyped with agentic characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality, and decisiveness (ibid). Accordingly, gender stereotypes assume that masculine and feminine traits are intertwined with leadership in that participation in leadership needs masculine traits (Amayah & Haque, 2017). Thus, it is considered that femininity inherently produces weak leadership (ibid).

Institutional gender bias represents a challenge to all women seeking equal participation and competing for leadership positions (Gell & Hoare, 2009). Skepticism and mistrust of women's ability to lead, and the stereotypes and prejudices about their role in society and their lack of suitability for leadership roles and decision-making, are major challenges for all women (ibid). Notably, when women enter a career path that is more male oriented by society, they are challenged to prove their capability (Latchanah & Singh, 2016).

Schein found that successful middle managers are perceived to possess characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). In another finding, although there are no significant differences in job performance ratings, it is reported that women are perceived to have less favorable chances for promotion than men (Ahuja, 2002). Also, in a survey on information systems (IS) demographics,

salaries and job satisfaction reveal that the ‘glass ceiling’ keeps women in midlevel jobs in the IS Department (Ahuja, 2002).

More recently, the filtering of women at high levels of organizations has been attributed to their decisions to “opt out” to care for children and elders. However, mounting evidence also suggests that even in the face of a woman’s unequivocal success in male gender-typed work, she faces career-hindering problems in work settings—such as being disliked and personally derogated (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). This prejudice against female leaders helps explain the numerous findings indicating less favorable attitudes toward female than male leaders, greater difficulty for women to attain top leadership roles, and greater difficulty for women to be viewed as effective in these roles (Northouse, 2016).

One of the findings of a survey done by the South African Commission on Gender Equality indicates that over 30 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that women are too emotional to be able to handle high level leadership positions (Gouws & Kotzé, 2017). This resistance to female leadership can lower evaluations of women’s personalities and skills, undermine their performance, and even lead to sexual harassment (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014).

Gender biases can be particularly detrimental in the decision-making processes for selecting elite leaders, given that the generally unstructured nature of those decisions allows biased decisions without accountability (Northouse, 2016). Overall, substantial empirical evidence reveals that gender stereotypes can significantly alter the perception and evaluation of female leaders and directly affect women in or aspiring to leadership roles (ibid). Working to encourage men to be more receptive to the idea of women occupying positions of power is also critical in challenging the gender bias that women face (Gell & Hoare, 2009).

2.3.1.3 Organizational Factors

Organizational Culture: Organizational or corporate culture relates to the way we work, the way we interact with each other, and the way we get things done in an organization (Visser, 2011). Thus, a lack of supportive workplace practice can directly inhibit women’s progress (Singh & Prasad, 2014).

Most organizational cultures bear the mark of their predominantly male creators because of historical reasons (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). Particularly, the high-technology industry represents a traditional concentration of male power and dominance (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). One of the challenges experienced by the women interviewed, particularly those in male-dominated fields, is a gender-related workplace hostility and lack of support from peers. Some of the terms used to describe this challenge are ‘sexism’ (Amayah & Hague, 2017). In a research carried out in Africa, one interviewee felt that the organizational culture is not only made difficult by men, but also by fellow women (Latchanah & Singh, 2016).

Gender discriminations in organization are usually subtle. As one writer indicated discrimination has been so integrated with company cultural norms and organizational status quo, most people do not notice it (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). Despite this, professional success largely requires understanding different organizational cultures and to apply methods to operate effectively within these parameters (Visser, 2011). Moreover, researchers find that employers often sort similarly qualified men and women into different occupational positions (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). A research finding indicates that such differential sorting may be attributed to a perceived lack of fit between the stereotypical attributes of women and the supposed requirements of some jobs (ibid). This finding suggests that somehow the perceived and real demands on leaders in larger, more complex institutions creates an impediment to hiring or promoting women to top leadership positions (ibid, p.13).

Even though there are efforts to promote gender balance in the top levels of organizations and institutions, they are still relatively new and have barely begun to change organizational and institutional cultures from male-only to male and female (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). Hence, male-dominant corporate cultures, while slowly and seemingly adjusting to increasing numbers of women in the workforce, continue to be a barrier for women leveraging their talents within the corporate setting (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005).

Work Culture: This is also highly related with organizational culture. High-tech working cultures is often perceived as competitive and one that requires substantial personal sacrifice and effort to

be assertive to be heard and be impactful. (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). For many women, this work ethic may conflict with their safety concerns and family responsibilities (Ahuja, 2002). Particularly, occupational segregation of women into certain industries affects the pipeline of women for leadership positions (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). These barriers relate primarily to a long-hours culture and networking beyond traditional work hours. Findings suggest that this leads some women to exclude themselves from working in certain parts of industry, such as Information Technology (ibid). Further, this aspect of the industry culture tends to permeate even those areas of the industry where such activities are less important for fostering client relationships (ibid, p.15).

Structure and job design: Organizations seem to perpetuate and maintain a gendered hierarchy. (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Studies reveal that fields that are predominantly occupied by males, women tend to occupy the lower level positions and not represented in senior management positions and have limited access to power and authority to influence policy (ibid). Likewise, a research contended that the void of female leadership in male dominated fields cannot simply be attributed to a generalized pipeline issue, as there are significant numbers of women in the industry. (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). Due in part to educational self-sorting, the tracks that lead to the upper echelons of some service sectors may in fact have fewer women in the pipeline despite women's prevalence in the broader employee population (ibid).

Processes that Produce Inequality: Many companies, hiring and promoting processes favour men and adopt inflexible working program that affect women who tend to accept more family duties than men (Fernandez & Campero, 2017). Acker (2006) reasoned that an ideal worker represents total dedication to the work and no responsibilities for children and family demands other than earning a living. This conceptualization also applies to managers and most professionals that are expected to work long hours, arrange their outside responsibilities around their paid work, and are willing to relocate or travel as requested. (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). These expectations and conceptualization of the ideal worker reinforces and perpetuates gender inequality in organizations (ibid). In these processes, negative stereotypes and perceptions influence the decision-making processes of who is considered more suitable for a particular position (ibid). A

study also found that in the organizational processes of recruitment, selection and promotion, gender stereotypes and negative perceptions of African women reinforce gender and class (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014).

Organizational/Institutional Structure: Another factor that has a life-long effect on women's professional careers is the structural forces at work within organizations. Some researchers have tried to examine the reasons behind lack of women in corporate boards. The finding indicated that personality traits that are perceived as feminine were found to be detrimental to advancement of men, as well as women (Ahuja, 2002).

Pipeline Challenge: This states that if there are only few women at the top of the organization, there could be various reasons for this insufficiency and, it is reasonable to assume that there is leakage on the pipeline (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). According to a writer:

The leaks in the pipe may be related to competent women leaving the company, or are not returning after maternity leave, or are being deterred by something – the risks they perceive in seeking high office, or the pressure, the work load, the impoverishment of their family life that they fear would accompany promotion to high office (ibid).

At present time, it is generally accepted that there are key areas or assignments that are stepping-stones to high office (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). For instance, if young executives are to stand any chance of reaching the top, they must go through key areas or assignments, such as crucial projects, or external training courses for high-potential employees. In so far as these key areas or assignments are reserved for either gender, there is sure to be a majority of that favored gender later at the top of the organization (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). There is also a research finding which indicate that women receive less formal training and have fewer developmental opportunities at work than men, both of which likely are related to limit women leaders progress. (Northouse, 2016).

2.3.1.4 Double Burden at Work and Home

Work – family conflict can be defined as: *“a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect”* (Locke, 2009). Models of work–family conflict suggest that conflict arises when demands of participation in one domain of life are incompatible with demands of participation in another domain and that this conflict can have an important effect on the quality of both work and family life (Ahuja, 2002). Work-life balance challenges can greatly affect women advancement (Akpinar-Sopsito, 2013).

A key variable for this work family conflict is time. In the work domain, both the number of hours and overtime worked ,and/ or the workloads and responsibilities in one ’s job can increase an individual ’s stress that can then be carried over to his or her family life. (Locke, 2009). Besides, previous research has demonstrated both the number and age of children play a role in the level of family work conflict experienced by parents (ibid). This places women at a distinct disadvantage, as women are expected to undertake the majority of domestic and child-care work, often in addition to paid work outside the home; younger married women in particular are likely to experience ‘time poverty’(Gell &Hoare, 2009). At this stage in their lives, professional women are faced with trying to manage a career, a home and child-care which results in greater conflict between work and family (Ahuja, 2002). In addition to this, more recently, increasing number of employees are also dealing with elders’ care which can contribute to family work conflict. (Locke, 2009).

As a result, women continue to be the ones who interrupt their career and take more days off (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). Consequently, these actions result in women having fewer years of job experience and fewer hours of employment per year, interruptions that slow their career progress and reduce their earnings (ibid). Those who take advantage of workplace leave and flexibility programs are often marginalized, and those who take time off from their careers often find reentry difficult, returning at a lower level than the level they left (Northouse, 2016).

As cited in Brown pressures to balance work and family causes professional women to decide to take a less challenging position or seek alternative career options following childbearing. A number of these women even resort to being stay-at-home mothers and even abandoning the corporate working world entirely (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Family responsibilities also limit

women from geographical advancement which is substantiated by empirical research which revealed that married women report a lower probability than their husbands to move for better job opportunities (Ahuja, 2002). Because of this, compared to women, there is a chance to have a large pool of more qualified and experienced male professionals (ibid). Empirical evidence suggests that family related work interruptions faced by women, does to large extent impact the opportunities for promotion, and pay among these women (Latchanah & Singh, 2016).

Having a supportive supervisor has been shown to reduce the extent to which work can interfere with family life (Locke, 2009). This is because supervisors can provide instrumental aid to their employees, which can reduce workload and work stress, and emotional support and advice (ibid). Overall, it is considered that men and women have to follow different paths to get to leadership positions (Gouws & Kotzé, 2017). While men's career paths are often linear and uninterrupted, women's career paths are often interrupted because of caring for children, leading them to reach managerial positions much later in life (ibid).

2.3.1.5 Lack of Network Opportunities

A much-discussed problem area for some women, as they endeavor to reach the top strata of organizations is 'networking' (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). A network is a collection of contacts linked through a common characteristic such as values, vision, or the exchange of information or sharing of experiences. Networks can be formalized in a legal structure or informal (Visser, 2011).

Network seems discretionary, but it is essential for career development (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). Women's network according to O'Neil, Hopkins, and Sullivan (2011) and (Armstrong et al., 2012) is a key technique to the advancement of women's careers into senior leadership roles within organizations (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Earlier studies also show that effective organizational networking has a positive impact on career progression, as it allows for easier access to information, social and professional expert advice, and increased job opportunities, promotions and career satisfaction (ibid).

Moreover, informal networks can serve several purposes, ranging from obtaining information regarding opportunities in the organization to socialization in the organizational culture (Ely,

Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). Especially for positions that are considered training grounds for future top management, the informal networks play a crucial or decisive part in the procedures (Visser, 2011). However, the influence of informal networks depends on a country's culture, the company's culture, and the culture of the business sector it operates in (ibid).

Concerning this, women are less likely than men to have the networks, contacts, and social and professional experience expected of public leaders (Gell & Hoare, 2009). Moreover, women are said to be less adept at networking than men, to dislike it or to find it distasteful, to have no time for it as it takes much time (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). In fact, networking consumes out-of-working hours' time. In relation to this, a study revealed that women are unable to attend informal and evening meetings because of domestic responsibilities. Also, restrictions on women's mobility, be the cultural, legal, or the result of women's own fears of encountering violence and harassment if they leave the safety of their own communities, may make travelling to take part in meetings or forums very difficult (Gell & Hoare, 2009).

Besides, as Ragins and Cotton (1991) have shown corporate informal networks are primarily made up of men (Ahuja, 2002). The nature of the informal decision-making culture is characterized by a strong male network and system of patronage in operation (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). These informal networks are effective tools for male advancement that had been established before women started go up in the career ladder. As a result, women are effectively denied from accessing the high-level networks that have tended historically to be male orientated. The exclusion from the informal networking systems result in not having access to significant amounts of information needed for decision making.

Moreover, women commonly tend to rely on only one manager for appreciation, feedback, and career advancement (Visser, 2011). Thus, when the manager leaves or the relationship gets strained, they may find themselves in a very vulnerable position. This is another reason for women to expand their informal networks and create trust relationships outside their hierarchical lines. (ibid). With regard to the IT field, while the lack of access to informal networks may play a negative role in women choosing IT as a career, this factor becomes increasingly important for

advancement within the organization and within the field (Ahuja, 2002). Informal networks may have a reciprocal relationship with mentoring, which is discussed in the next section.

2.3.1.6 Lack of Mentoring

Mentoring is ‘an intense developmental relationship of relatively long duration in which prote’ge’ receives a range of career and psychological help from a mentor (Ahuja, 2002). A mentor is ‘an experienced, productive manager who relates well to a less-experienced employee and facilitates his or her personal development for the benefit of the individual as well as that of the organization’ (ibid). This relationship may be formal or informal (Ehrich, 1994).

Mentoring has been found to be critical in the advancement of professional careers (ibid). Several researchers suggested that women need more mentoring than men to advance in the organizational hierarchy because they face more organizational, interpersonal, and individual obstacles than their male counterparts (Ragins, 1989).

An empirical study reported that the lack of role models and mentorship programs was a major organizational roadblock that limited the female gender from access to more senior posts (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Especially, IT field is not developing and advancing enough women to the higher ranks and the probable reason could be lack of mentoring opportunities for women. (Ahuja, 2002). A lack of women at higher ranks therefore may have a negative influence on advancement of women at lower and middle levels (ibid). A research has suggested that gender similarity is a key factor in the success of mentoring relationships, and a lack of women available to mentor other women is generally detrimental to women’s’ professional development (ibid, p.29).

Research has further shown that men and women prefer interacting with members of the same sex in the work environment. As a result, ‘women may find themselves without a mentor because male managers may prefer developing mentorships with male subordinates (ibid). Moreover, women have less access to informal settings necessary for initiating and building mentor relationships. In general, women face more gender-related interpersonal and organizational barriers in their obtaining a mentor than men.

2.3.1.7 Lack of Female Role Models

At the career progression stage, where women make critical decisions about their careers, the presence of role models can be very instrumental in steering them in one direction or the other (Ahuja, 2002). This is particularly important as aspiring women leaders have less social support for learning how to credibly claim a leader identity relative to their male counterparts. (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). By their very presence, role models provide evidence that a successful career in the field is a possible and normal occurrence. When only a few percentages of the upper management are held by women, such guidance and support for female employees is severely limited (Ahuja, 2002). The scarcity of senior women also made them seem unfit as role models. Both factors make role modeling difficult for young women aspiring to leadership (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011).

2.3.1.8 Lack of Academic Qualification and Experience

One prominent set of explanations for the gender gap is that women have less human capital investment in education, training, and work experience than men (Northouse, 2016). In fact, in most industries career advancement first depends on acquiring the necessary technical knowledge and diplomas (Visser, 2011). Specifically, Knowledge, skills, and abilities, acquired by individuals through either education, training, and work experience is key to career advancement and progression at all levels in organizations (Latchanah & Singh, 2016).

This supposed lack of human capital is said to result in a lack of qualified women, sometimes called a “pipeline problem.” However, with regard to education, the data from western countries shows that women are obtaining undergraduate degrees at a far higher rate than men, and women are earning professional and doctoral degrees at a rate greater than or nearly equal to that of men, but women are still vastly underrepresented in top leadership positions (Northouse, 2016). Similarly, research conducted in the Arab and Lebanese world revealed that despite the increased number of women pursuing higher educational qualifications which increased the presence of women in management; this does not help their careers in management progress further as almost half still cluster at the lower management levels (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Unlike western and Arab countries, lack of education and access to education is presented as one of the major

challenges for African women career advancement. African women still face many hurdles. Family demands such as having and looking after children tend to limit women's opportunities for higher education (Amayah & Haque, 2017).

However, globally, there is general support for the notion that women have less work experience and more career interruptions than men, mainly because women assume significantly more domestic responsibility (Northouse, 2016). Additionally, women receive less formal training and have fewer developmental opportunities at work than men (ibid, p.420). Research reveals a lack of experience and job occupation, are cited by male chief executive officers as the major reasons why women are underrepresented in senior management (Latchanah & Singh, 2016).

2.3.1.9 Held to a Higher Standard

One of the career advancement challenges presented by a research carried out in many African countries is the fact that women leaders seem to be held to higher expectations than men generally are (Amayah & Hague, 2017). For instance, Joyce Banda, the former President of Malawi, was expected to be a better, more honest leader than her male predecessors, simply because she is a woman. Also, she mentioned that her failure in her job was seen as indicative of all women's ability to lead (ibid).

2.3.1.10 Lack of Confidence and Ambition

Kaiye and Singh (2013) have found that women do not possess the basic traits and skills to prosper in leadership positions due to the lack of ambition and confidence. Especially, corporate women represent a minority group in the IT sector, facing challenges and barriers which limit their career progression in this technical field (Asham, and Argheyd, 2011). Considering women being a minority group in IT sector, Liu and Wilson (2001) cited that the lack of self-confidence is a key challenge encountered within these male dominated environments which results in a self-imposed psychological barrier (ibid).

Furthermore, other research shows that on average, women respond as being less likely than men to aspire to senior management (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). However, some highlighted the

question of confidence and competence, and the need not to confuse the two. They argued that sometimes those who reach the top are those who appear confident, but confidence does not necessarily mean competence and more introverted behavior shouldn't be mistaken for a lack of competence (Thomson & Laurent, 2015).

2.3.1.11 Feminine Modesty

Feminine Modesty is a tendency of women to downplay their achievements and successes to others emphasizing the achievements of others whilst men on the contrary self-promote their achievements (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Empirical research does indicate that women are less likely than men are to promote themselves for leadership positions (Northouse, 2016). As Rudman & Glick (2001) indicated this research must be interpreted considering the social costs' women experience when they promote themselves or are competent in positions of authority. Unlike men, for example, self-promoting women are less socially attractive and less hireable, and women face greater social costs for initiating negotiations than men do (Northouse, 2016). Young women who display a level of confidence and skills are quickly called too smart, willful, bossy, or not so nice (Visser, 2011). The resulting social pressure may prevent girls with above-average intelligence from showing it since it may lead to repercussions from their inner circle (ibid).

Women also use feminine modesty technique as they believe that they will receive more favorable outcomes regarding their achievements in the workplace by being seen as less of a threat or of no competition to their fellow male counterparts. (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Moreover, the negotiations needed to ascend the leadership hierarchy often are unstructured, ambiguous, and prevalent with gender triggers exactly the type of situation that particularly disadvantages women (Northouse, 2016).

2.3.2 Opportunities of Women in Leadership

Women have many opportunities for tackling the wide-ranging challenges including their own personal trait, organizational incentives, and support they get from individuals closest to them. Recent studies also show that there are many advantages gained from women participation in decision making and leadership. Recent scholarship also suggests that female leaders are

associated with greater innovation and profitability, broader consumer outreach and stronger records on corporate social responsibility (Glass & Cook, 2016). Women can seize these benefits for strengthening their presence in leadership positions.

2.3.2.1 Adding Value to Leadership

Some authors argue that there is a feminine advantage to leadership. Advocates of the existence of a female leadership advantage posit that women can be better leaders for contemporary organizations because they tend to be less hierarchical and more cooperative than men (Amayah & Hague, 2017). Investigations into leadership style have also revealed that women are somewhat more likely to use democratic and transformational styles than men are. Research looking at leadership effectiveness also indicates a greater use by women of effective transformational and contingent reward behaviors (Northouse, 2016). More specifically, the transformational leadership style encompasses traditionally feminine behaviors such as being considerate and supportive that is strongly associated with leadership effectiveness (Girdauskine & Eyvazzade, 2015).

In addition, evidence suggests that the leadership role is starting to be seen as less masculine and more genderless. Moreover, recent research indicates that women have significantly becoming more assertive and valuing leadership and power more as job attributes, without losing their femininity (Northouse, 2016). This is an opportunity for women seeking leadership advancement. These findings suggest that the competencies in which superior managers excel i.e. learning, energy, decisiveness, and verbal skill fall well within the competencies that female leaders demonstrate equally or more than male leaders (Thomas-Hunt & Nagpal, 2014).

2.3.2.2 The Business Case

The most popular way of proving the added value of women in senior positions in companies is to present the so-called business case (Visser, 2011). This provides all arguments and underlying numbers linked to the strategic goals of the organization (ibid). The business case is built on a macro-economic analysis of the developments in the labor market. This includes talent pool management, workforce diversity, and the marketing and sales perspective.

Globally, women comprise the fastest growing section of the labor force. Therefore, using this vast amount of labor force is considered crucial for companies (Terjesen & Singh, 2008). Starting from the company's mission statement and strategy, the business case contains an analysis of the ways a diverse workforce can contribute to the realization of the set goals. (Visser, 2011). It is argued that bringing women into the labor force and leadership has a huge financial advantage for the economy. (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014).

Today's business problems require leaders with diverse skill sets, perspectives, and experiences. (Ykul, 2013). Increased focus on women's underrepresentation in leadership has been stimulated by findings that suggest that increasing the female composition of corporate boards relates to positive firm performance (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). This argument for a gender-balanced top management builds also on the notion that top talents are prevalent among women and men in the same way (Visser, 2011). There is equality in terms of competencies and ability to serve in leading roles (ibid). However, it needs to be clear that gender diversity is not only about CEO position and board membership but also having pipeline of managers. Organizations that embrace the benefits of diversity to improve the quality of their decision-making processes will therefore appoint women to positions of crucial value to the organization (Visser, 2011).

Many of the talents women bring to management comprising comfort with sharing power and information, ability to motivate in modern ways, and ease in responding to change are crucial to organizations that are becoming increasingly less hierarchical and reliant on networks of relationships across levels and organizational boundaries (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). However, if not managed properly, diversity can also result in more distrust and conflict, lower satisfaction, and higher turnover (Ykul, 2013).

Gender diversity is linked to innovation as well (Amayah & Haque, 2017). Naturally, people with different backgrounds bring a variety of ideas and perspectives which strengthen the creativity of the team and its ability to innovate. Companies with a large female customer base consider it a business issue to have female employees involved in all decision-making structures (Visser, 2011). Especially when their target markets consist of more than 50% women, it is considered important that not only male customers are represented at top levels but also female customers (ibid). This

will better equip them to design new products and deliver new services since they mirror the market. (ibid, p.32).

2.3.2.3 Changes in Workplace Norms

Changes are taking place at more macro-organizational and societal levels that will contribute to greater gender equality in leadership (Northouse, 2016). Globally, the culture of many organizations is changing; gendered work assumptions such as the male model of work, the notion of uninterrupted full-time careers, and the separation of work and family are being challenged (ibid, p.406). The changes in organizational culture such as women's career development, mentoring opportunities for women, and increased numbers of women in strategic positions will increase the presence of women in prominent leadership roles (ibid, p.413). We will also see positive changes for women in the workplace with changes in the way organizations think about work arrangements and childcare accommodations.

In such a way, organizations will ensure that that workplace policies and the environment in general do not indirectly or directly discriminate against women by perpetuating gender stereotyping (Busken & Webb, 2009). But the effects of these changes will be insignificant without cultural changes within organizations and in wider society (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). The participation of women in the workforce and in leadership position is for the benefit of the entire community, not just the women themselves. And this need to be communicated wisely to the public considering women do not want to remove people who are currently in position. But they just want to expand by joining them" (ibid).

2.3.2.4 Government Initiatives

In the world as a whole and in sub-Saharan African countries, in particular, many governments have been giving encouragement to women and girls to get involved in the work force and in leadership positions (Amayah & Haque, 2017). These initiatives include leadership development program, the implementation of affirmative action and quota to support and enhance their participation.

2.3.2.5 Sharing Responsibility at Home

Structural changes regarding a more equitable distribution of child rearing and domestic duties are also contributing to the entry of women into top positions (Northouse, 2016). Many women are receiving support from their spouses, a finding that suggests that successful dual-career marriages rely on a strong marital partnership in which responsibilities are shared (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Increasing parity in the involvement of women and men in childcare and housework will go a long way in reducing the leadership gap. (Eagly & Carli, 2007)

In balancing work and home life, an appealing method for women is structural role redefinition. This approach involves negotiating with both family and colleagues to renegotiate role expectations both at work and at home (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014). Women's use of effective negotiation techniques can aid them in procuring the resources they need at work and at home to supplement their leadership advancement (Northouse, 2016). Organizations can enhance this through adopting policies and creating programs that ease all employees' balance between work and home (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014).

Organizational initiatives intended to help employees balance their work and family lives are becoming increasingly popular. These initiatives include implementing flexible work hours (flextime), allowing telecommuting, compressed workweeks and offering on - site childcare. Research has shown that these initiatives can reduce employees' work– family conflict and increase their family satisfaction (Locke, 2009).

The individual can also play a part in reducing their work– family conflict through developing self - control skills to avoid stress from handling multiple roles. Furthermore, both dual - career men and women use certain coping strategies more during stages of their lifecycles which included more stressful situations (i.e. young children at home) such as by reducing and restructuring a couple 's commitment to paid work (ibid).

2.3.2.6 Leadership Development Programs

Many organizations are enhancing women's career development by involving them in career development programs (Northouse, 2016). Training in leadership and management equips women with rare and important skills (Amayah & Hague, 2017). The employment environment can be hostile to women leaders, adds Ms. Gugsu, and sometimes they even refuse to accept top positions for fear of criticism and discrimination. This is one of the reasons a training that empowers women to deal with all kinds of harassment as they progress in their careers is crucial (ibid). Moreover, some leadership development programs are helping women to build their networks by increasing networking opportunities, expanding the depth and range of developmental relationships, and highlighting the benefits of networking. (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011).

2.3.2.7 Affirmative Actions

Affirmative action in employment helps to bring the underutilized labor of excluded categories of the society to the market. Despite the required knowledge and skills, many women do not engage in full employment due to the stereotypical views against women (Visser, 2011). Affirmative actions tend to increase the numbers of women in leadership, making diversity among them more likely (Fitsum, 2017). More and more countries are adopting quotas to increase women participation in leadership position (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Yet, affirmative action in general, and quotas, in particular, remain a highly debatable subject matter. Especially, using legislative quota is highly debatable.

One of the most popular arguments against legislation quota is that it will lead to incompetent women being appointed to top leadership positions (Visser, 2011). The other argument frequently made against quotas is that they unintentionally lead to beneficiaries being perceived as less competent, both by others as well as by themselves, an outcome termed the "stigma of incompetence" (Heilman, Block, & Lucas, 1992). It is also important to note that quotas might affect the effectiveness of role models as these women seen as having achieved their success not through effort and skill, rather through luck or the actions of others (McIntyre, Paulson, Taylor, Morin, & Lord, 2010). Thus, women are unlikely to be motivated or inspired by female leaders if they believe they only got to where they are because of preferential treatment. (Visser, 2011)

On the other hand, voluntary quota and other affirmative actions are less contentious (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). As an affirmative action, companies may set specific hiring goals to increase the percentage of women in the workplace. This type of measure is generally more acceptable as the targets are goals and not quotas (Visser, 2011). That means, hiring a female for the role is something you aspire to achieve, not an absolute requirement (ibid).

Another controversial measure is using membership of a discriminated group as a favorable factor in hiring. For instance, if two candidates came along and both had the same qualifications and experience, the company would choose the female candidate as part of its affirmative action policy. Some argue that this is also essentially is discrimination in reverse.

Less controversial is the policy of reviewing the company's hiring and promotion practices and eliminating anything that could put a barrier in front of certain groups such as women. For instance, organizations like CARE Ethiopia have achieved good results through reforming its entire recruitment process through re-grading all their job descriptions, re-advertised positions 1 to 3 times if no women applied, head hunted, instituted coded competency-based assessment system with written examination, and assessed and reconfigured the interview questions using a gender lens (Inter Press Service [IPS], n.d). Or, if the company only promotes people who are prepared to travel out of state at short notice that could discriminate against women since they are more likely to be caregiver for their family. The company could remove these barriers to opportunity by adopting a more flexible policy (Visser, 2011).

One of the least controversial affirmative action measures is the process of changing the way the organization looks for new hires. It does this by deliberately targeting its search efforts towards under-represented groups. For instance, a company with poor gender representation might place job advertisements in publications with a female readership. When the time comes to select a candidate, the interview process will be gender and color blind.

To sum up, both quota and affirmative action in workplace have their own advantages and disadvantages regarding enhancing women leadership. Just as with every other approach, they need careful analysis of their implementation to achieve the greatest effect.

2.3.2.8 Mentoring

Research in career development has indicated the importance of positive support from important others in an individual's life. Women who dared to embark on careers outside gender-circumscribed roles indicated that they received support and mentoring from outside of their families, including from educational professionals such as teachers, professors, and guidance counselors (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). In addition, co-workers and bosses played key roles in motivating them to achieve success in their current career paths (ibid). The mentors will also benefit from the mentoring processes (Buskens & Webb, 2009).

2.3.2.9 Rise in Availability of Women's Networks

Informal network becomes more critical the higher one goes in an organization. In recent years, internal women's networks have also become features in large organizations. These networks were seen as crucial innovations that could mark a decisive turning point in the quest for a better gender balance in the higher echelons of management (Thomson & Laurent, 2015).

A study found that such networks can promote diversity by challenging invisible structural obstacles to the promotion of women (Visser, 2011). In addition to giving women a more powerful collective voice, supporting their development and being an autonomous power base from which to seek information, exert influence and challenge policies and decisions, women's networks were said to be good places in which to develop networking skills (ibid). However, there should be a mechanism to keep them from becoming increasingly isolated and ineffectual.

Similarly, the existence of external women's networks serves many vital purposes, including lobbying, information sharing, education, and mentoring (ibid). As women are also good on the internet, they can use that to form informal network and they can have the convenience of doing that from home.

In general, the opportunities indicated above are all existing, separately or in combination with each other, as a support for women to improve their representation in decision-making positions.

2.4 Women and Leadership in Ethiopia

Women leaders' realities in Ethiopia follows that of the developing countries that is discussed in the general part of this chapter. However, as contexts differ from country to country and as an introduction to the case study, relevant literatures are reviewed here in under.

The discussion on Ethiopian women and leadership need to start with the legal safeguard which is the starting point for any supportive measure to be taken by any institution in the country. Under the first section, institutional safeguards and other national frameworks will be dealt. The next part reflects on additional opportunities that are available for women and being undertaken by government as well as by other stakeholders. The final part explores the challenges that women face in leadership.

2.4.1 FDRE Constitution

With the objective of addressing gender inequality and violation of women's rights, the government of Ethiopia designed different national policies and institutions and signed international conventions that are intended to narrow the gender gap. The salient ones are the FDRE constitution and the national gender policy, which are discussed below briefly.

The FDRE constitution, the supreme law of the land, in its Article 25 guarantees all person's equality before the law and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of gender. Moreover, in relation to women participation in the workforce and in decision making positions, Article 35 reaffirms principles of equality of access to economic opportunities, including the right to equality in employment, pay, and promotion. By considering the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia, article 35(3) of the constitution also envisaged that women are entitled to affirmative measures. Such measures are targeted at providing special attention to women to enable them to compete and participate based on equality with men in economic life as well as in public and private institutions. Women workers have also the right to equal pay for equal as per Article 42 (1) (d) of the constitution.

Moreover, the constitution also mandated the state to eliminate laws, customs and practices that oppress or caused mental harm on women. Concerning maternity leave the constitution upholds

that maternity leave will be provided with full pay and the duration is determined taking into account the nature of the work, the health of the mother and the well-being of the child and family. In addition, women have the right to full consultation in the formulation of national development policies, the designing and execution of projects, and particularly in the case of projects affecting their interests. (FDRE Constitution, 1995)

Also, the Ethiopian government is signatory to most of the international instruments related to gender. It has adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women /CEDAW (1979), Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW,1993), the Beijing Platform for Action /BPA (1995) , the African Charter on Human and People Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child . CEDAW calls for equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and it emphasizes the importance of equal participation of women with men in public life. The Beijing Plat form of Action is focused on full recognition of women’s rights and fundamental freedoms and demands for progress towards gender equality in education and health care, in work and the family, and in the public sphere. The African Charter on Human and People Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the rights of women as equal to those of men in all spheres including equality in marriage, the right to equal employment, and rights to maternity leave with pay, the right to access family planning and education.

Ethiopia is therefore making several efforts to strengthen national structures for achieving gender equality (Kassa, 2015). It is believed that the full realization of these women rights will have great contribution for increasing women participation in leadership. Besides, Ethiopia is also one of the countries that incorporated the principles of the MDGs that envisaged goals related woman in leadership i.e. promoting gender equality and women empowerment.

2.4.2 National Policy of Ethiopian Women

The Ethiopian government has formulated the National Policy of Ethiopian Women with the objective of creating appropriate structures within government offices and institutions to establish equitable and gender sensitive public policies by taking into political, economic, and social rights

of women (National Policy on Ethiopian Women, 1993). Moreover, its goals include raising the economic and social status of women, empowering vulnerable segments of the society such as young children and women, removing all legal and customary practices constraining women's economic and social development and the enjoyment of their rights (United Nations [UN], n.d.). Many of the strategies revolve around empowering women through education, employment in both government and private sectors and eliminating cultural and legal barriers (United Nations [UN], n.d.). This national policy has also provided a framework within which Government's commitment to empower women can be channeled. The Women's Affairs Office of the Prime Minister's Office is mandated with responsibilities to oversee and coordinate activities leading to the effective implementation of the Policy (National Policy on Ethiopian Women, 1993).

Likewise the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), the five year national development plan for Ethiopia, and the Development Plan for Women and Children (2011-2028) have included special commitment to increasing women's participation in decision making and reducing violence against women (United Nations [UN], n.d.).

To sum up, both the national Gender Policy framework and the constitution are meant to provide a framework which all government structure and other stakeholders can use to incorporate women's rights in their general or specific activities (United Nations [UN], n.d.). It is also an opportunity to have institutional arrangements that enables the mainstreaming of gender concerns in all programs and activities as it was recommended by the Beijing platform for the advancement of women (United Nations [UN], n.d.).

It is with this spirit and in line with the guiding principles of the National Policy on Women that Women's Affairs Departments were established within strategically situated line ministries (ibid). Similarly, in line with Government's decentralization process, and to ensure the incorporation of gender in the planning and implementation of regional governments development programs, Women's Affairs Bureau were established in regional governments and in special administrative regions.

The Gender Departments in the line ministries, the Regional Gender Bureaus and different government bodies also have been very instrumental for developmental activities targets by gender

(United Nations [UN], n.d.). Following this, several public enterprises have established gender departments and dedicated specific budgets for programs that helps to enhance women participation in leadership (United Nations [UN], n.d.). Effective and efficient use of this system and institutional arrangements is believed to enhance women participation in leadership.

2.4.3 Labor laws

The Labor law proclamation NO.1156/2019 has clearly stipulated different provisions to safeguard women's right upon the formation of employment contract. Management personnel are excluded from the labor law application and they are governed by the civil code which is promulgated back in 1960's. However, the labor proclamation can be applicable on managers if the internal regulation of the company specifically states that the labor proclamation applies for managerial personnel as well (*አመልካች አቶ ዳዊት ሸዋቀና እና ተጠሪ ስኳር ኮርፖሬሽን*, 2005). Moreover, the Labor proclamation governs those who are currently at the staff level but are also seeking managerial position. For these reasons and for providing introduction to subsequent comparison with Ethio telecom internal regulations, the labor proclamation is dealt herein under.

The Labor Proclamation has entitled female workers 90 working days of maternal leave. In addition, it introduced paternity leave of three consecutive days for male employees (Labor Proclamation, 2019). The labor proclamation also prohibits unlawful acts such as **discrimination** of employees based on sex; terminating a contract of employment contrary to the law; compelling employees to execute any task which is hazardous to life; committing sexual harassment or sexual assault at workplace; and physically abusing anyone in a workplace (Labor Proclamation, 2019). The new Proclamation holds the employer liable if these acts are committed by any of its management employees (Africa Legal Network [ALN], n.d). The Proclamation also introduced a new regime to regulate workplace sexual harassment and sexual violence (Africa Legal Network [ALN], n.d). Hence, employees that have suffered sexual harassment or sexual violence will be entitled to terminate their contracts without notice and will also be eligible for severance payment and compensation (Africa Legal Network [ALN], n.d).

Comparing the civil code with the labor proclamation with regarding employee rights, the later gives better and comprehensive protection. As Alemu (2009) stated this highlight the under protection of managers under the Ethiopian law.

2.4.4 Ethiopian Women Opportunities in Leadership

2.4.4.1 Visibility of Women in Decision Making

The visibility of women in the public area has been improved by the representation of women in parliament and the appointment of several women to high public places previously dominated by men (United Nations [UN], n.d.). Although the number of women in decision making is still low, the coming of more women to the forefront in the public area such as parliaments, ministerial positions, bureau heads and women department heads positions has its own advantages (ibid).

First, these women leaders play a role in the public arena. It is believed that women in decision making positions in government and legislative bodies contribute to redefining priorities, placing items on the agenda that reflect and address gender specific concerns and experiences and provide new perspective on mainstreaming (ibid). However, this is not an assurance. As demonstrated in the male-dominated ranks of most European parliaments unless female politicians reach a critical mass, change will come slowly (Terjesen & Singh, 2008). Secondly, the women leaders also become role models to other women who are aspiring to be leaders. However, as Morgenroth & Ryan (2018) argued to get the benefit, the role models need to present not only at the most senior positions but also at all career stages. Third, this visibility of women also contributes for creating awareness in the population on gender issues (ibid). It is believed that countries with more recent female political representation may have more momentum in their change agenda and put more effort into increasing women's full participation in the business arena (Terjesen & Singh, 2008).

2.4.4.2 Women's Groups

Voluntary and independent women organization at different levels is believed to be a vital instrument to fight against all discriminatory practices and problems faced by the Ethiopian women and for the achievement of gender equality (United Nations [UN], n.d.). These organization help to ensure the participation of women and to raise awareness for gender parity. In addition, women

if organized can serve as pressure groups and can voice their interests and needs and fight for their rights.

In Ethiopia, several women's organizations are formed to promote women issues in different domain (United Nations [UN], n.d.). Through these organizations, the women get opportunity for networking and various trainings which can enhance their productivity and visibility in the society. (United Nations [UN], n.d.). Organizations such as NEWA and AWiB are targeted to advance women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, and personal and professional development through experience sharing and learning among women, respectively (Association of Women in Business, 2018). However, the number of women organizations are few and mostly they are concentrated in the urban population.

2.4.5 Ethiopian Women Challenges in Leadership

Many legal instruments and policies are put into practice to close the gender gap in Ethiopia. But the problem of gender disparity is still a persistent problem in the country. This can be shown from global gender gap. According to the global index, Ethiopia is found on the lower rank among countries in terms of employment with few improvements from year to year (Mulatu, 2016). This fact is not unique to Ethiopia. For instance , despite South Africa's strong constitutional guarantees of gender equality and introduction of a number of gender equity legislation initiatives to specifically support women, there still appears to be less women leaders and gender discrimination still remains a challenge in the country (Latchanah & Singh, 2016).

The problem of gender gap in Ethiopia might exist because of different interrelated problems especially hindering women to be active participant in education, employment, leadership, and other sectors. (Mulatu, 2016) Therefore, it is imperative to identify the challenges encountered by women in Ethiopia. This section summarized various research findings as follows.

In response to challenges encountered in seeking leadership and decision making in Ethiopia, gender biases: double burden at work and home; lack of adequate skill, education, and qualification ; personal development issues such as lack of confidence and self-doubt ; and structural issues such as over emphasis on years of service , autocratic style of management , the necessity to get

top management sponsorship or will for career advancement as well as lack of mentors and role models are mentioned as the major challenges (Billene et al, 2018).

Moreover, a research on public institutions in Bedele Town described that the major barriers hindering women from public leadership and decision-making positions include: Socio-cultural attitudes and lack of acquisition of the necessary experience for taking part in public decision-making, over burden of domestic responsibilities, continuation of the negative attitudes regarding women's ability to lead and govern and lack of role models of women leaders (Endale, 2014). Other research also include gender-based discriminations, low level of education necessary for entry level to leadership positions and lack of support from male colleagues as factors for low participation of women in leadership (Miressa, 2014). A study summarized the major challenges for women leaders as lack of support from their spouse, lack of trust in women leadership ability and male oriented organizational culture (Rahel, 2013).

On a research carried out on Ethiopian Electric Utility identified that the major women leadership challenges are: educational qualification and the lack of support by the company to fill the gap; poor application of affirmative action during recruitment, selection and promotion, socio-cultural factors as well as time poverty for adjusting themselves with ever changing information technology due to over burden of family responsibility (Meron, 2018). A research carried out for assessing the factors affecting participation of women in management position in Ethio telecom identifies that educational gap, socio -cultural attitude, organizational culture and company recruitment and promotion practice as the major factors hindering women participation at managerial positions (Birikti, 2014).

Moreover, interviews of four Ethiopian Women who made it to top leadership positions in four different companies in the country shows that there are many similarities in the challenges they faced as working women. All the women stated that lack of equal opportunity in higher positions plays a big part in the minimal number of women in top leadership positions (Association of Women in Business, 2018). It is observed that the most common challenge that they faced was the lack of support from organizations to realize that women need a little extra support to be able to balance personal responsibilities and workplace requirements properly. From these interviews, it can be concluded that the problem is not just on an organizational level but more so from the deep-

rooted societal expectations placed on women and their capabilities as leaders (Association of Women in Business, 2018).

Another research emphasizes the challenges encountered in balancing family and work responsibility inhibit women from realizing their full potential in leadership (Bruktawit & Abeba, 2018). In relation to this, an Ethiopian women who occupy a top position in one of the largest company in Ethiopia on her interview states that: ‘as a mother of four children, the challenge of balancing motherhood and work was not easy (Association of Women in Business, 2018). An article which summarizes 13 research findings has revealed that lack of academic qualification, gender stereotyping, over burden of domestic responsibility, lack of confidence, lack of support at home and at work place, religious practice and lack of experience are the main factors that hindered women empowerment in leadership position in Ethiopia (Nigest, 2019).

These local research findings are in line with the findings related to Sub-Saharan African women leaders and managers (Amayah & Haque, 2017). The findings from this later study highlight some antecedents and underlying causes of the underrepresentation of Sub-Saharan African women in leadership positions, namely biases in societal and organizational culture, different (higher) expectations for women as compared to men, and perceived incongruity between female gender roles and the leadership role. This same study also identified some of the challenges Sub-Saharan African women leaders faced are mostly based on gender roles stereotypes that pervade societal and organizational cultures. The lack of access to education was also seen as a factor in the low numbers of African women leaders. To substantially increase the number of sub-Saharan African women leaders and managers, this article further suggested, beside specific policy interventions, a societal change in the way women’s abilities to lead are viewed is required (Amayah & Haque, 2017).

From all literatures reviewed, it is observed that the three topmost challenges for women leaders in Ethiopia are over burden of domestic responsibility, little support from their organizations and deep-rooted socio-cultural attitudes.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As stated in the first chapter, the purpose of this research is to identify the major challenges women leaders face in their upward mobility and the opportunities they seize to overcome those challenges. This chapter discusses the research design, data collection instrument, sampling, and data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research is applied research since it focuses on identifying practical challenges and opportunities of women in leadership positions in Ethio telecom. The design selected to achieve the objective is a qualitative exploratory research design.

Qualitative research captures the how and what of the collective experience (Creswell, 2013). In an exploratory qualitative design, the views of participants are sought more closely, so that insight can be gained into what they think and feel about the question of interest (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Moreover, it places immense value on the participant's voice, allowing individuals the opportunity to give their accounts in their own words. Hence, it is believed that a qualitative exploratory study is best suited for identifying and capturing the participants' lived stories and understanding their shared experiences (Creswell, 2013). The chief data collection methods used are in-depth interviews and document analysis, which serve to supplement each other in the study.

3.3 Selection of Participants

Qualitative research is generally concerned with the use of purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013). In purposeful sampling, the researcher selects the participants and the sites because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. According to Creswell (2013), there is no set number of participants to interview when conducting a qualitative study. Nevertheless, Polkinghorne (1989) suggests interviewing a minimum of five participants for a qualitative study. Creswell (2013) believes that interviewing up to ten participants who have relevant knowledge and can articulate it should be enough to reach saturation for qualitative studies.

In Ethio telecom, there are a total of 64 female employees in a leadership position at different levels. The collection is comprised of 52 section managers, 7 directors/department heads/, 4 chief officers/division heads/ and a chief executive officer. Currently, these women leaders are leading 12 technical, 14 commercial, and 37 support work units of the company. The leaders are situated in headquarter, as well as in different zonal and regional offices in Addis Ababa and across the country. Also, they have work experience in the range from 8 months up to 37 years in the company.

In this study, purposive sampling techniques were used to recruit participants. The sample taken in this research was not comprehensive and was mainly to investigate the experience of women managers in an in-depth manner. A criterion was set to select persons who would form the sample of the study from the population. The participants were required to have one or more years of experience and be a current female leader working at the middle management level, top management level, or at the executive leadership level in Ethio telecom.

3.4 Data Collection

Multiple data gathering techniques were used to collect data from the study area. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews as well as document analysis were employed to gather data. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources to get a view on the major challenges and opportunities of women in a leadership position in Ethio telecom. Data in the form of desk review is collected from several sources such as the company's human resource policy, collective agreement, as well as from other published and unpublished documents of the company.

3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Some authors suggest that interviews are most common for data collection in the qualitative approach (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the primary data source is a semi-structured in-depth interview of women leaders who currently serve in middle and top management positions of Ethio telecom. A semi-structured model is selected to be flexible with the respondents and allow them to drive the research (Lee, 1999).

The semi-structured interview guide is with open-ended questions to allow participants the opportunity to share their experiences, and thoughts about the theme under investigation (Davidson, 2014). While some interviews were conducted in person in respondents' offices, most were conducted by telephone at a time selected by the participants. Telephone interviews have been shown to produce as reliable information as face-to-face interviews and, in some cases, may even increase participants' ability to discuss sensitive information such as experiences of discrimination (Cachia & Millward, 2011). Telephone interviews are also particularly suitable in research that requires access to geographically dispersed research subjects. (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).

Part A of the open-ended interview guide covers the demographic of the research participants. Part B of the interview guide has open-ended questions focused on four primary areas: their leadership role; the perceived challenges and barriers to women career progression, the primary obstacles, and challenges the respondents encountered, if any, through-out their career progression; the current challenges and opportunities they encountered post-promotion if any ; the types of support and opportunities they get in their journey to leadership, as well as the strategies that can be used to advance women progression to leadership in the company. As such, the questions were structured to identify both positive and negative leadership experiences that have occurred throughout the respondents' career progression into a leadership position. Moreover, in line with suggested best practices (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010; Lee, 1999), the researcher takes care of writing objective and non-leading questions. Besides, to ensure the objectivity of the interview process, the researcher carefully writes and rewrite all the interview questions, with assistance from an outside third party, both to improve the research validity and to ensure that the researcher is not leading the participants in their answers (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010).

The general themes, but not the specific questions of the interview were emailed to the participants, so they have time to reflect on their experiences before the interview. Data collection was terminated at the point of saturation, where the researcher was not able to get new information by adding more respondents.

3.4.2 Unstructured Interview

To supplement the data obtained through the semi-structured interview, the researcher has conducted an unstructured interview with Women and Children Affairs Office manager using open-ended questions, which were related to the challenges faced by women leaders, the company policy and practice as well as the role of the office in the subject matter. (Interview questions attached in the appendix)

3.4.3 Document analysis

Documents were an essential part of the data collection in this study. The researcher reviews human resource management policies and procedures, collective agreement, and other relevant documents of the company. This review is believed to substantiate the data collected through the interviews.

3.5 Data Analysis

Interviews and document analysis were employed as data collection tools in this research. A criterion sampling design was used to allow the researcher to select a sample of 17 research participants who satisfied the criterion (Creswell, 2013). The sample taken in this research is not comprehensive and is mainly to investigate the experience of women managers in an in-depth manner. For the realization and successful accomplishment of the study, data collected from different primary and secondary sources were recorded, edited, organized, analyzed, interpreted, and presented in relation to research questions. More specifically, interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed to determine the themes /meaning units that emerged and to ultimately describe the essence of the experiences of the women leaders (Moustakas, 1994).

An in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended, interview format was employed to enable a range of questions and related issues to be explored. The interview questions were prepared based on the research questions (see Appendix). The frequency of data collection events was three: first for the initial recruitment, second for the actual interview, and third for the follow-up summary and exit interview. Initial warm-up questions that covered demographics and their leadership role in the company began the process, with the intent of leading the sequence of questions to flow from

general to specific. The average interview time was 45 minutes per participant. The interviews were conducted through both phone interviews and face to face. For confidentiality purposes, the participants were given fictitious names based on their recommendation. Unimportant aspects of description were also removed to prevent identity disclosure. Moreover, all interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of the interview participants.

The researcher's role is paramount in data collection as it provides opportunities for immediate responsiveness and flexibility through verbal and nonverbal communication. According to Merriam (2009), the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis as he/she could clarify, summarize, and check with participants for accuracy of interpretation during the data collection phase. An interview log was utilized during the research study to maintain a record of observation from the interviews, which contributed to the process of identifying categories and themes within the data (Allen & Carlson, 2003). An audiotape was used for critical listening to improve the interview techniques and to code the responses from the interviewees. The researcher was responsible for recording the data with an audiotape.

The interview transcripts were analyzed using Creswell's approach to discover patterns and themes (Creswell, 2013). All transcripts were read carefully to get a sense of the entire message that the participant was attempting to get across. To identify key themes from the transcripts, the researcher reviewed and re-reviewed the transcripts to identify specific themes related to the two-primary area of the study. The coding and recoding of the transcripts were done manually and independently by the researcher. Confirmation was undertaken with a sample of transcripts to ensure that the researcher has recorded rightly.

The researcher employed, throughout the data analysis process, a continuous process for reducing the data into manageable data portions, assigning labels to each segment and interpreting, and bringing meaning to words, quotes and statements about the lived experiences of the participants under study (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Marshall & Rossmann, 2010). This process continued until the researcher reached saturation i.e. additional analysis and or data collection resulted in more of the same findings (Marshall & Rossmann, 2010).

3.6 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Given the sensitive nature of the topics covered in the interviews, the researcher has started the interview with an explanation of the research process and by giving an assurance of confidentiality. Moreover, the researcher has provided an opportunity to allow respondents to ask any questions before the interview began. This process helps in enhancing the level of comfort, trust, and openness of the respondents. It also helps to get a more accurate and complete picture of their experiences. Given her assurances of confidentiality to her respondents, the researcher did not involve a third party in coding the interviews.

The researcher used some practical ways to reduce the amount of bias, which is generally linked with qualitative research. The first was carrying out a pilot interview which allowed the researcher to check the quality and the understanding of the questions. Maximum validity of the results was also pursued by being clear, consistent, and precise in the duration of the interview as well as in the transcription and interpretation of results.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

This study was carried out in line with the approval obtained from Addis Ababa University. Relevant work units of Ethio telecom are also formally communicated prior to the study. The purpose of the study and its confidentiality is guaranteed. For confidentiality purposes, the participants were given fictitious names based on their recommendations. Unimportant aspects of description were also removed to prevent identity disclosure. Moreover, the data collected from the participants are kept private and used only for the study.

Summary

This chapter has discussed how the research was conducted. Data collection methods, the sampling strategy, analysis of data, and ethical issues were discussed. In the next chapter, the researcher has provided the general background of the study area and has presented and discussed in-depth the findings of the study.

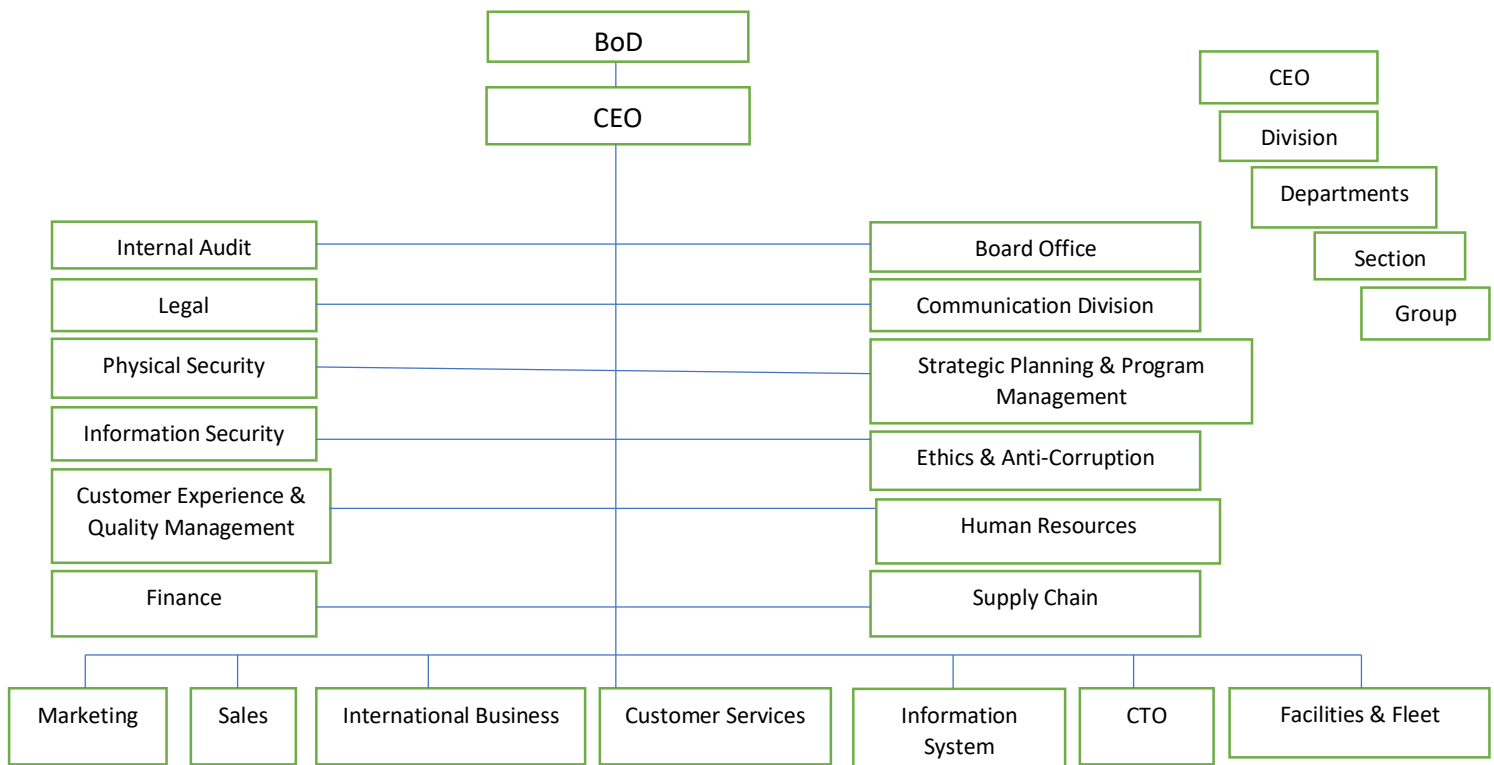
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Background of the Study area

Ethio telecom was established as a public enterprise by regulation number 197/2010 to provide and make accessible world class information technology and telecommunication services through building a competent workforce and work culture. In addition, it has a mandate to provide communication services including rebroadcast of television services. Ethio telecom aims also include engaging in the construction, operation, maintenance and expansion of telecommunication networks and services throughout the country. (Regulation No.197/2010).

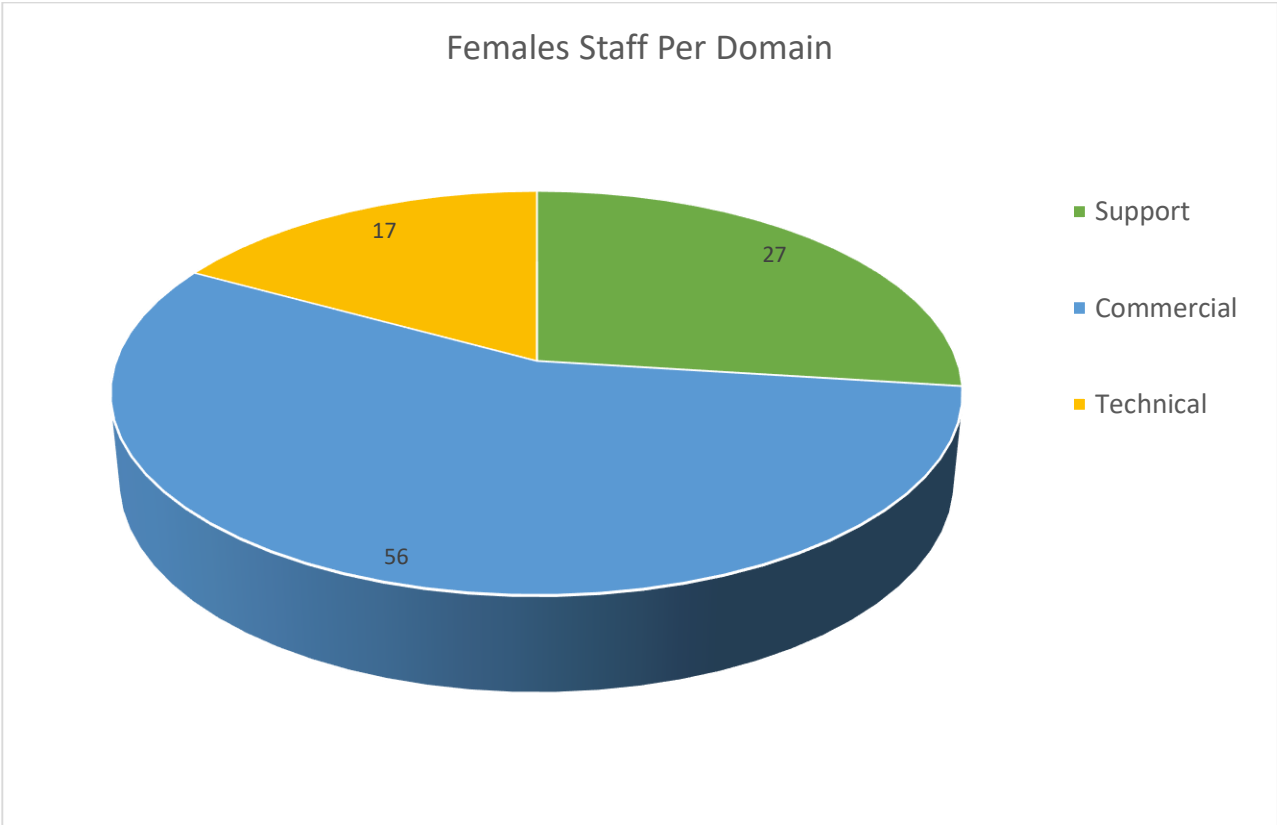
With this purpose in mind, the organization is structured as indicated in the following organizational chart.

Graph 4.1: Organizational Structure of Ethio telecom



As per the headcount in November 2019, total female employees in the company are 4545 in number, accounting for 28% of the total employees. This number shows a 2% increment from the 2013 data, which was only 26% of the total employees. Per domain, commercial, support, and technical constitutes 56%, 27% and 17% of the female employees, respectively.

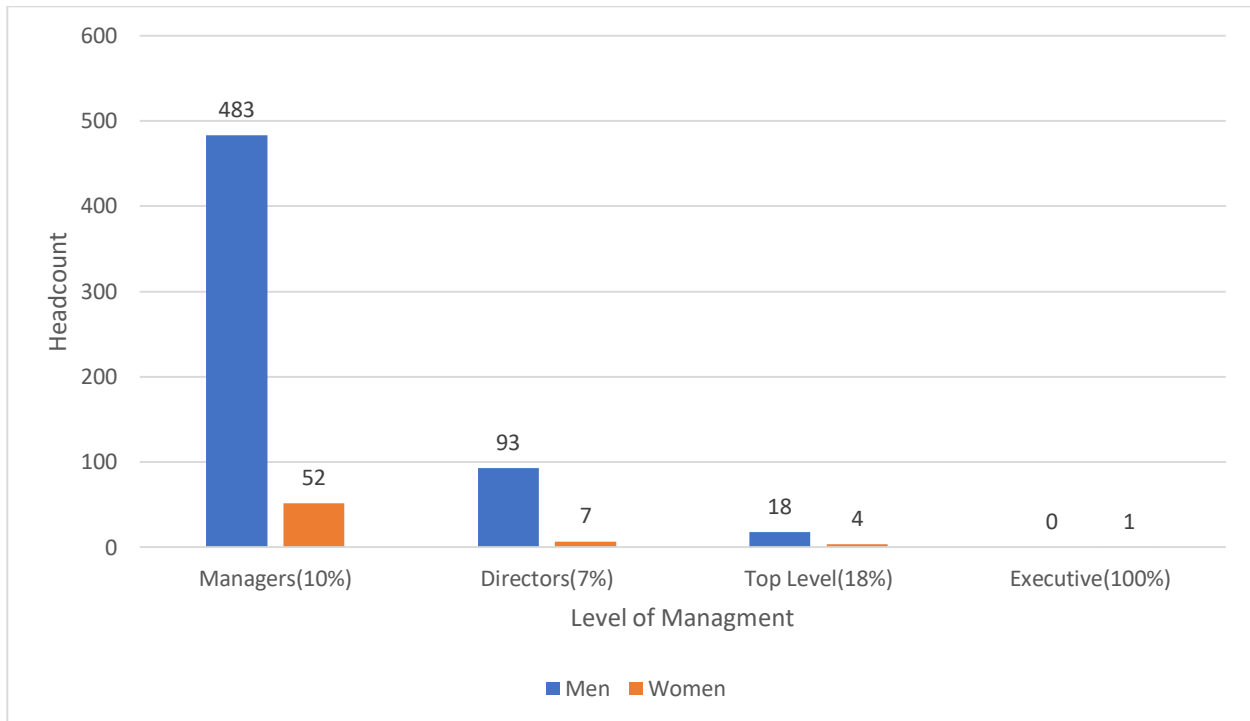
Graph 4.2: Female Staff per Domain



From Graph 4.2, it can be shown that more than half of the female employees are in the commercial field such as sales, customer service, and marketing field. The next is the support domain which constitutes fields such as Human resources, supply chain, finance, legal, etc. As Ethio telecom is an information communication service provider, the core field for the company is the technical field that includes Information Security and Network divisions. As can be shown from the graph, the technical field constitutes the least number of female employees i.e. 17% of the female employees. The next part compares this fact with the level/position of the female employees. (Unpublished headcount report, Ethio telecom)

Generally, the company has four level of management starting from Section Manager i.e. Manager, Director, Chief Officer (Division Heads) and at the top, Chief Executive Officer.

Graph 4.3: Total Headcount at Leadership Level



On the managerial level, the women managers constitute only 10% as they are only 52 in number from a total of 535 headcounts. Whereas on the next level, the director position, they hold only 7% and they are 7 in number out of 100 directors. Director’s position includes the ones who are leading the regional and zonal units of the company. From 23 Zonal and regional units in Addis Ababa and across the country, only one is currently being led by a woman. When we come to the top management positions, chief officer or division head, the percentage of women holding position increases by 11% and they are 4 in number out of 22 constituting 18% of the composition for this level. At the top, for the first time in the company’s history, the company is led by a female chief executive officer.

Table 4.1: Headcount of Females at Leadership Level

December 2019 Headcount	Manager				Director				CXO				CEO
	Total	Tech	Comm	Sup	Total	Tech	Comm	Sup	Total	Tech	Comm	Sup	
Total	535	175	123	237	100	28	14	58	22	8	4	10	1
Female	52	10	14	28	7	1	0	6	4	1	0	3	1
Percentage	10%	6%	11%	12%	7%	4%	0%	10%	18%	13%	0%	30%	100%

In general, at managerial position, per domain, female constitutes 14 % technical, 11% commercial, and 32% support units. From examining this data with the total female number in Graph 1, it can be inferred that women participation per domain in technical, and commercial field decreased by 2.7% and 45% respectively whereas in the support field it increases by 5 %.

The main feeder for the managerial/leadership position is the supervisory position, and as indicated in table below, the female supervisor constitutes 16% of the total supervisors' headcount.

Table 4.2: Headcount of Females at Supervisory level

December 2019 Headcount	Supervisor			
	Total	Tech	Comm	Sup
Total	1819	681	603	535
Female	285	35	153	97
%age	16%	5%	25%	18%

At the supervisory position, per domain, female constitutes 5% technical, 25% commercial, and 18% support units. From examining this data with the total female number in Graph 4.1, it can be

inferred that women participation per domain in technical, and support field decreased by 11% and 9% respectively whereas in the commercial field it increases by 2%. This confirms that generally on the career advancement stage, women's participation decreases exponentially. From the comparison of the supervisory position participation with the total female employees' population, it can be concluded that the higher the ladders, generally the women participation go thinner i.e. from 28% to 16% to 10% and 7%, however; on the two top positions women participation increase by 11% and 100% respectively. However, this does not preclude the fact that the higher the ladder women participation becomes less and less as still, women constitute only 11.6 % of the total management/leadership position up to chief officer/Division Head level.

In sum, from the total leadership positions, female constitute 33%, however, when the chief executive officer position is taken out, they constitute only 11.6% , which is much less as compared to the female employees' number which amounts to 28% of the total employees. In other words, when the position of the chief executive officer is omitted, among the total number of women employees only 11.6% reached at the middle and top managerial positions.

Therefore, the subsequent parts of this chapter deal with the factors for this less participation of women in leadership and the supports and opportunities these women leaders seize to come to their respective leadership position.

4.2 Demographic Representation of Study Participants

Seventeen female leaders or managers working at Ethio telecom did participate in the current study. Of the 17 women, 6 % fell in the age bracket of 20-30, 35% fell in the age bracket of 30-40, 41% fell in the age bracket of 40-50 and 17 % were at least 51 or older. Of the 17 participants, 12% were single, 82% were married, and 6% were divorced during the time of this study. In terms of number of dependents, 59% have in the range of 1-5, 29% in the range of 5-10 and 12 % are with no dependents.

The 17 participants' educational level reflected 53% with an undergraduate degree, and 47% with a graduate degree. For their occupational status, participants reported 46% as managers in support field, 12% managers in technical field, 18% managers in commercial field, and 12% at directorial level, and 12% at the top-level management level. As for the work experience range in the

company, 12% reported less than 10 years, 52% reported between 10-20 years, 24% reported between 20-30 years and 12% reported between 30-40 years.

4.3 Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to gain insight into the challenge's women in leadership roles encounter and the opportunities and support necessary to overcome those challenges. Moreover, the research examines what should be done to increase women's participation in leadership positions at Ethio telecom.

The analysis of the findings presupposes the following assumptions: (a) the belief that gender gap exists and there are challenges encountered by women managers /leaders for career advancement and (b) some opportunities and supports exist to tackle the challenges encountered by the women managers/leaders depict through their lived experiences. More specifically, the research addresses the following questions (a) The leadership roles of the research participants and (b) What opportunities and challenges do women managers encounter in their roles? This second question comprises sub questions including challenges in career advancement and coping mechanisms; support systems to overcome the challenges; and the research participants' perception of what should be done to enhance women's participation in the leadership positions of the company.

The findings confirm that female leaders/managers face various challenges for career advancement despite having some opportunities and support systems.

General Introduction

As an introduction, the researcher asked the interviewees about their leadership role. The aim was to identify the participants' sense of self and to shed some light on the reason for their success. The specific questions included issues of workload to understand the overall degree of responsibility in their current position.

All the women managers/leaders express themselves and their duties and responsibilities well, which shows that they have good communication skills. The communication skills and self-expression get better with the position they held in the company. In relation to their leadership

role, 31% focused on their managerial roles only whereas the rest 69% have explained their leadership roles as well. In explaining their leadership roles, majority of them also indicate what they do to motivate and positively influence their team to accomplish common goals. However, only few of them describe their work unit duties and responsibilities in detail and their interaction with other work units.

Three of the participants emphasize the need to lead with vision so that their followers understand the big vision for inspiration. For example, Saba said: “I lead by example and my team need to understand the vision to follow me. When I give assignments, I always make sure they understand the purpose”. Another participant, Sefanit, explained how she motivates her team. She said: “I want my team to stand out as the majority of team members are women. Therefore, I pinpoint their strength and shortcomings clearly to them and give recognition to best performers.”

All participants believed that they were successful in fulfilling their managerial/leadership position. Two of the participants, however, raised concerns that the overall output of their work may not satisfy the end customers even though they were trying their best to fulfill their responsibilities. They raised challenges and delays in input and supplies from stakeholders (both internal and external) as a reason for the problem in delivering results. They relayed how such happenings negatively impact on their work and induce stress.

Ninety percent of the participants attributed their success to their dedicated efforts and work output while the 10%, beside their work ethics, believe the credit also goes to luck as there were many advancement opportunities in the company at the time of their promotion. However, few participants also indicated they struggled to gain self-worth and think other women may also pass through the same challenge because of the discriminatory socio-cultural attitude which considers women as less or not having the necessary leadership qualities. In sum, the findings show that most of the participants have a strong sense of self, even though the degree varies from one to the other or their leadership journey varied.

Regarding their workload, 20 % indicated extremely high work burden, 40% very high, 30% high, and 10 % thought their workload was medium.

All participants emphasize the importance of their role as a manager/leader as well as their work unit role to realize the vision of the company. As to their leadership style, some include notions such as participatory, situational, human-side, attention for details, anticipating the future, understanding others situations, convincing ability, great commitment, wisdom, strong relation, positive attitude, team work, collaboration, path-finder and motivator etc.

Each interviewee indicated that there is a gender gap in the company referring to the relatively small number of female employees in the company and the limited participation of women in leadership. However, eighty percent of them are not aware of the degree of the gender gap in the company. The majority do not have the exact or approximate figure of the gender gap by field and by management position. Whereas twenty percent of the leaders/managers have a clear figure of the women participation level which the researcher finds out during the interview.

4.4 Opportunities of Women Leaders

The following interview questions were posed to the study participants in examining the opportunities and support systems they had for career advancement: Do you get opportunity/support for succeeding in your career development to leadership position? If yes, what kind of opportunity/support and from where do you get the opportunity/support?

4.4.1 Benefits of Women's Leadership

Half of the participants acknowledged the importance of bringing women to leadership positions for the company. Some specifically stated that the company is benefiting from women's leadership qualities. Genet, for example, had the view that women leaders add more value to the company as they often apply participatory leadership style. She further added that women have acquired a broader view from managing their family, and the same can be reflected in their leadership.

Abaynesh also believes more women at the top will rise women's visibility. She said, "There is a gap in seeing women's potential when there are no women leaders at the top level". She explained: "*the number of female chief officers has increased significantly after the company gets its first female executive officer.*" Genet also mentioned that female leaders can be role models for other female staffs. She said: "*The staff can learn from both strong men and women, but to learn from*

someone with similar experience is better”. Moreover, Hawwi mentioned that females are not often given opportunities, but they are as competent as males. She further added *“to prosper, the company must use the talents of all of its workforce effectively.”*

4.4.2 Empowered Mindset

One third of the respondents stated that they have an empowered mind set. Saba, for example, said: *“I have an empowered mind set from the beginning, without the management title. I am passionate and highly committed to my work. I take initiatives by myself and try my best to finish work on time. I am independent. At the same time, I do like to collaborate and ask for help from others.”* Saba credited her father, her role model, for some of these leadership qualities. Another participant, Kokebe, on the other hand, shared the following:

I believe I have what it takes, always. Most women said they have a bad experience, like, they get ‘you cannot do it attitude’ from others, but not me, I have never experienced that. Maybe, I am lucky. I do all the technical work as the men do. The only difference is I may not socialize as my male colleagues do. I give priority for my demanding work, I even discontinued my further education for my work. For new assignments, if I have to, I ask for help and learn, like everybody else. I have a positive mindset. I believe I can do any technical works. It has never crossed my mind that I cannot do what others can do. (Kokebe)

As the previous one, this participant also mentioned that she looks up to her father, her first role model, and supporter in life. Similarly, Abaynesh said:

A path to upward mobility is full of obstacles. I take all those challenges as good opportunities even when the road gets rocky. I do not want to waste my time thinking about the downside. I believe challenges also bring solutions and I can overcome any challenge to reach my destination. My parents’ trust in us play a big part in this. They believe we can accomplish anything.

Zinash’s mindset is also similar to the above two participants. She stated:

I have never thought less of myself. I know I can do anything if I have the dedication. There is no limit. I take things positively. I am enthusiastic and curious to learn new things, and

I am always willing to take more responsibility. Because of that, my supervisors usually pick me for new assignments. I think I learn that from my mom. She is strong, accomplished and with positive outlook for life.

Genet stated the importance of focusing on excellence. She said: *“I have never said I am a woman and I cannot do this. I always focus on exceeding at my job. Throughout my life, I never sat back and dwell on obstacles. If you are stuck with the challenges, you will be crushed. I believe that. So, I always move on and look for improvement areas. I think my biggest role model, my father, instilled that in me. My father is very supportive and perseverant.”* Etsegenet commented that everybody may encounter challenges, at home or at work. She believes all the challenges are temporary and things get back to normal after a while. This participant’s response shows that she has a positive outlook on life.

4.4.3 Strong Family Background

As it is also illustrated in the preceding section, five participants attributed their strength and success partly to their strong family background. Moreover, it can be inferred from the interview of the majority of the remaining interviewees that they developed an empowered mind set from their family or acquired it down the road. For instance, Sefanit said: *“my dad used to inspire me to get the necessary education and change myself. I wanted to fulfill his promise and that become the biggest drive in my life. After marriage, my husband becomes my motivator and encourager. He wants to make sure that I do not show any weakness at my work.”* Makeda also mentioned that she was shy at first but her first supervisor guided her to be more assertive and confident. She further explained that his support as well as the exposure she got from working in different projects has helped her to learn how to express herself well.

The participants’ experience confirms that having empowered mind set and strong family support greatly helps to aspire more and to overcome challenges that can be encountered in women’s carrier life.

4.4.4 Delegation and Special Assignments

Leading a team or participating in an important project increases an employee’s visibility and competitiveness for promotion. Some of the respondents believed that the absence of this opportunity greatly affects women’s career advancement. Majority of the respondents (nine

respondents) stated that throughout their career path, they get an opportunity for development through delegation, task or teamwork assignments or project works. They all believe that these opportunities helped them for upward mobility. Majority of them get such an opportunity starting from their entry-level position in the company. Saba, for example, remarked:

The opportunities I got are way greater than the challenges. I believe I was lucky. For example, all my bosses gave me the opportunity to advance in my career through task assignments, and delegation. My previous boss, even when I was a junior staff, used to give me assignments just like the senior staff. I do mistakes as I was a beginner, but they used to tolerate that. Besides the delegation, my bosses facilitated development training for me. That has had a huge impact on me.

Hermela, one of the youngest participants in this study, said “*I believe we have a good opportunity at the company for career advancement. For example, I have the least experience in my current position. But most of the time, my immediate supervisor delegate me to act on his behalf when he is out of office. I learn a lot through that. His trust in me gives me strength too. Now I come to believe that, I could lead all these work units by myself. This kind of opportunity helps me to know my potential.*”

Mehret on the other hand had a slightly different view. She believed she reached to her current leadership position primarily because of her full dedication for her work. But she also believed, the opportunity she got from working in different positions and involving in various projects has helped her to advance her career. Kokebe similarly reflected on her experience:

The opportunities I got are greater than the challenges. From the beginning, I had the opportunity to work with different people across different sections. Especially my second level supervisor used to give me new assignments and assign me to team works. That has helped me to gain experience and build my confidence. Throughout my career, I have also the opportunity to work in various work units.

Another participant, Etsegenet had also a similar experience. She had the opportunity to move to a project work after working only for a short period at her entry-level. She believed that working in projects helped her to be ready for the next career ladder earlier than many others in the company. Fassika, on the other hand, stated that her first immediate supervisor in the company

had supported her progression through delegating and giving challenging assignments. She further added that she got the chance to attend short term training abroad through scholarship, by her supervisor guidance and support. Zinash also mentioned that getting opportunities early for thought-provoking assignments and the various team works in the company helped her to gain so much knowledge and experience.

Likewise, Makeda stated that she feels she is so lucky to work closely with different consultant groups in her junior years at the company. Menna, on the other hand, mentioned that *“I have had the opportunity to work in three divisions. This has helped me to gain a few professions and develop my capacity.”* She also added: *“touching every point of the career ladder has helped me to develop through time, at a deeper level. Skipping career ladders sometimes create a problem as important lessons got missed”*

4.4.5 Mentoring and Coaching Opportunities

Half of the participants reported that mentoring and coaching was one of the biggest supports they get for their career progression. They stated that those mentors and coaches have developed them and sometimes promote them to stretch opportunities. Saba recalled her previous supervisors support as follows:

My past managers were my mentors. I get the leadership quality I have now mostly from them. They gave me a purpose for my work. Before giving assignments, they make sure that I understand the objective. Moreover, even when I was a junior, they used to give me challenging tasks. They trust me, I trust them also. There may be a quality issue or error in the work I do but they tolerate that and coach me; that has been a great inspiration for me to do better. They also understand my family responsibility and we have reached a mutual understanding to have a flexible arrangement. Also, when a problem occurs, they do not rush to criticize, rather they listen to my side of the story. Besides, they facilitate various development training and have taught me how to collaborate with others for a common goal. They have been my role models.

Alternatively, Hermela revealed that she received mentoring and coaching opportunities, not from one, but a group of management staffs. She explained: *“The management staffs at my earlier supervisory position often involve me in their discussion. They share their leadership experience*

and gave me advice on how to develop myself. Especially one time, when I encounter difficulty at work, few of them support me very well. Those experiences have equipped me for the current managerial position.”

Another participant, Kokebe, emphasized the importance of getting someone to have trust in her. She remarked, *“At first, you need to get someone who believes in you, I have got that opportunity from my second-level supervisor. He used to give me exciting assignments. When I hesitate to take such assignments, he encouraged me to say that I can do it. He also guided me through every step of the process.”* Similarly, Fassika said *“My previous bosses have supported me a lot, by delegation and by appreciating me for the work I do. They also gave me advice on how to improve myself. Plus, they facilitate training for me. Especially, one of them has recommended me for a new position at our work unit.”* Another participant, Makeda, revealed that she was shy and reserved when she joined the company. Fortunately, her boss has encouraged her to express herself more and gain confidence.

Unlike the others, for Zinash, the mentor was a peer. She said she learned many leadership qualities from her mentor, whom she had a chance to work with in a project. According to her, working closely with her mentor and following up on his footsteps helped her for career advancement.

4.4.6 Family Support

One of the most common themes emerging from the interviews was the importance of support from individuals closest to the women managers. When reflecting on their multiple roles, fourteen participants stated that they got support from their family or helpers. Mehret stressed the importance of family support as:

For a woman who is a mother and a family leader, it is difficult to work in high-level commitment position without strong support at home. The support could be from anyone, a life partner, family, or helpers, it does not matter. We need this as a woman because there is more burden on us including pregnancy period, giving birth, and taking care of children. I have a good opportunity in this regard. I have someone to cover my family’s responsibility. So, I can work when I have work to do, at night or over the weekends. If a woman wants to succeed in her career, she needs to arrange that support. Especially at the

start of career advancement, when our job demands our full commitment, we depend on such kind of support.

For some, that support comes from life partner and children. Abaynesh was thankful for their never-ending support:

My responsibility at the office is enormous which needs my full commitment. Some days I do not even have time to think about home because of my huge responsibility at the office. The biggest support I have is from my husband and my children. From the start, my husband was there for me. He covers every gap related to my children and home responsibility. Also, my children have been studying and leading their life in a proper way which is also a big support.

On the other hand, few mentioned that they got support from their parents. Biftu remarked that she has a big family and she also used to take care of her five siblings. Currently, she could concentrate on her work as her mom is helping with taking care of the family. Likewise, Selamawit's parents have been supporting her in looking after her two kids for her to focus on office work. For the other participant, Sefanit, the support also involved her siblings. She reflected:

My mom and siblings have supported me in taking care of my children. Mom helps me when I give birth to my three kids, and my siblings have been living with me and lending their support. So, I do not have to worry when my housekeeper is gone, as some of my female colleagues. Moreover, my husband, even though he did not do the house chores, accommodate my demanding work. He also makes sure that no problem arises related to my work.

Makeda emphasized the importance of shared responsibility in the home. She explained that: *“my parents help me a lot in taking care of my kids. My husband is also supportive. He believes home management is a shared responsibility.”* Menna stated that *“At present, all my children have grown up, so I do not have such issues. In the past, maternal leave is only 45 days, and it has been a challenge. At that demanding time, my husband has supported me fully in family responsibility by driving me every day for breastfeeding and helping my kids in their study.”*

For other respondents, family support has a different package. Kokebe believed that accepting her demanding work, by itself, is the big support she gets from her family. Hermela said: *“I do not*

encounter any big challenge related to work-family balance as I am single and have no kids. However, my mom is my big supporter, and she gives me advise in every big decision I make related to my job such as moving to a new city for a new role.”

In sum, the women managers credited the support of their family and helpers as critical for the success of their career advancement.

4.4.7 Recognition and Value

Four participants have stated that the recognition and value they get for their work at the office is also a huge support. Saba, for example, stated that: *“my work has been recognized and valued by my previous bosses that has a huge influence on me.”* Likewise, Mehret said: *“I believe I reached this position because of my devotion to my work. Many women can do the same but to get recognition for that by itself is, I believe, support. I have got that opportunity and as a result, I got a recommendation for my current position.”* Abaynesh described her career advancement as slow because of a lack of recognition.

I have dedicated my whole life to my work, in the past as well as in the present. The difference is the visibility, being recognized and valued for that. In the past few years, some management acknowledged my service and now, more than ever, I got utmost recognition for my longtime dedication, sacrifice, and work output and I credited that to our top-level management. I believe that is a huge support and opportunity. (Abaynesh)

Fassika said *“Recognition for my work is one of the supports I got from the beginning. My entry-level manager has believed in me and recommended to me to get a new position. That motivates me to do better. I have also got similar support from other previous bosses”* Similarly, Genet said: *“I feel I am so lucky to be recognized for my work because many women may miss that opportunity. Women’s contribution gets unnoticed, often.”*

4.4.8 Training Opportunities

One-fourth of the participants emphasized the importance of training for raising into a higher position. Saba said her previous bosses have arranged various training that helped her in career development. Similarly, Fassika believed that her career progression is backed by abroad training that was facilitated by her previous manager. Zinash also cited that throughout her career, she got the opportunity to participate in various professional and self-development training, which helped

her to gain new knowledge and access to networks. Likewise, Sefanit has also mentioned that her career advancement is aided by the international training she took while working in her previous organizations.

4.4.9 Networking Opportunities

All participants that had the chance to work in different teams and assignment have expressed that they get a greater chance to build a network. Zinash, for instance, has acknowledged her organization as one offering development opportunities through sponsored membership in AWiB. She revealed that AWiB has helped her in developing external networks. She further added that working in multi -sectoral teams organized by Ethio telecom helps her to build an external network, which has a positive impact on her personal and professional development. Similarly, Makeda believed that the Women Leadership forum which was established a few years ago by women leaders in the company could be a great help on this regard. On the other hand, Sefanit, stressed the importance of involving in the already existed informal networks around the office which are usually dominated by men.

4.4.10 Supportive Work Environment

Majority of the participants pointed out that they advance in their careers as they have been working in a supportive work environment. Etsegenet remarked:

You need empathy in your working environment. I have that one. For example, as a family leader, I may need to stay at home for a few days when an emergency come up. If everyone around my office understands that I need those few days to get back to the routine, then things get easy. That understanding also keeps me motivated. Then, I will be back and serve with full energy. The same works for others. So, I believe the main thing is understanding each other. Especially for a company like us that hire a great number of young women, this kind of consideration and support need to be there.

Similarly, Saba shared: *“Sometimes I may need to stay longer after office hours. But as I am responsible to pick my kid from school, I told my boss that I cannot stay at the office after 6:00 P.M. If there are urgent works, I would prefer to work afterward from home. My boss understood my situation, my other responsibility too. This may not seem a big deal for many but for me it was. In turn, I do the same for my company. I am flexible and come to the office over the weekends for*

work. When you know the company cares for you, you want to contribute more.” From her explanation, it can be inferred that she negotiates with her boss to have flexible working hours. This shows the importance of negotiation both at home and at work, as discussed in chapter two of this study.

Other participants describe a supportive environment in terms of its unique offer. In this regard, Makeda said: *“I have always been lucky. Especially my current working environment is conducive for career development, we build each other through mentorship and knowledge sharing platforms.*

Few participants have also mentioned that the freedom they have in their work is a big incentive for their development. Kokebe said: *“my big incentive is to do my work without external influence and getting the chance to defend myself at the end. I have the freedom to do that at the office which helped me to grow freely.”* Likewise, Zinash mentioned that all her previous bosses have allowed her to do her job independently, to think freely, and bring new ideas to the table. She believes that greatly helped her career development.

4.4.11 Exceptional Advancement Opportunities

Four of the participants have stated that they have got unique opportunity for promotion. Etsegenet said *“When I joined the company, luckily there were many opportunities for promotion, and I used them effectively. I have moved to a new position in a project after working only for short period of time at my entry level position.”* Likewise, Hermela considered getting the current managerial position with less work experience than her colleagues as an opportunity. She added *“they believed I fit for the position because I delivered good result in my supervisory position.”* Fassika has also mentioned that her promotion is facilitated by her previous manager as the scope and responsibility of her work unit has widened. For Makeda, working in a project and subsequently the special opportunity provided for project coordinators to compete for managerial position was as a unique opportunity she gets in her career. However, Menna argued that such promotion should not be taken as opportunity. She believes important lessons might be missed by skipping a career ladder, that subsequently may have a negative effect on one’s leadership success.

4.4.12 Support for Further Education

Few participants have revealed that the support they get for their education has facilitated their career development. Biftu said she has benefited a lot as she gets both her diploma and first degree through the company's sponsorship. Zinash also remarked that she studied her master's degree by the company funding, and consequently she got minor salary adjustments after that. She said later that it also helped in her application for a management position.

4.4.13 Additional Organizational Incentives

Half of the participants acknowledged the importance of incentives provided by the company such as long maternal leave and loans for further education for their career advancement. The Women and Children Affairs Section manager W/o Zuriashwork also believes leave without payment arrangement is particularly important for women who are interested in taking courses abroad for their career development. The details of these organizational incentives including affirmative action are discussed below.

4.4.13.1 Personnel Policy and Procedure

The Personnel Policy and Procedure upholds Ethio telecom's commitment to supporting capable employees in advancing to positions of increased responsibility through demonstrated performance. In its policy statement, it has recognized both the need for an internal career development program for its employees and the need to provide equal opportunity for all persons to obtain employment. The manual also specified that selections for promotions and transfers be made based on an individual's overall qualifications and ability to perform the essential duties of the job. Therefore, the company's core principle of in its human resource activities is to provide equal opportunity for all based on merit.

Regarding women it specifically states:

This policy also supports Affirmative Action requirements to provide upward mobility for women, minority persons, and handicapped persons (Personnel Policy and Procedure, 2011).

Even though there is no provision in this policy which provides the details of affirmative action, it can be inferred from the above statement that the company has a goal to provide affirmative actions for women.

4.4.13.2 Placement Procedure

The Placement Procedure is applicable to all kinds of recruitments. Yet, direct hire may skip some of the formal recruitment processes. Accordingly, the procedure stipulates the CEO's mandate to direct hire an employee if it is critical for the business or if it is not possible to get from the market through the formal recruitment process (Placement Procedure, 2016). About this mandate, the Delegation Matrix of the company specifies the Chief Executive Officer's power to approve the promotion or change of title of assignment for Chief Officers, without a vacancy in consultation with the company's Board (Delegation Matrix, 2019).

Except for the direct-hire, external and internal recruitments have to go through the formal recruitment process. The procedure stated that the only criterion that is used for external recruitment is qualification/merit-based/; and the selection is based on the best result. It states objectivity is uphold on all the recruitment stages. The jury at the interview stage holds 4 persons, two from HR and the other from the user unit.

The placement procedure has provided some affirmative action provisions that apply at the recruitment stage of external recruitment starting from the exam stage. The procedure states when the exam is only the interview, and at the interview stage, if two or more people scored the same result, priority will be given to female candidates, and second for the candidate with the highest CPGA. However, before the interview stage, there is no affirmative action. As it is discussed in chapter two of this study, this kind of affirmative action is the least contestable among all the affirmative actions.

Moreover, when both written exams and interviews are used together, and if two or more candidates scored equal final points, first the one who scored highest in practical exam shall be considered, second, a female candidate is considered. Hence, when a practical exam is part of the recruitment process, affirmative action takes second place. Whereas when written, practical and interview exam are required and two or more candidates scored an equal point , priority will be given first to the one who scored higher on the practical exam, second to the candidate who scores

highest on the written exam ,and it is only at the third place female are prioritized. Thus, it can be understood from these arrangements that affirmative action is given for women only when the final score is equal. Even in this case, the prioritization could be on the second or third place.

For transfer and promotion, the company does not have special treatment for women at the shortlisting stage. That means the criteria for selecting the shortlist of candidates is merit-based and women are not given affirmative action at this stage. The procedure specifically states that if two or more from the shortlist have equal results based on the selection criteria, the one with the best current performance appraisal result shall be shortlisted. Thus, at the shortlisting stage just like the external recruitment process, women are not prioritized unless two or more candidates score equal points.

For transfer and promotion, at the interview stage, on the total result women shall be given two more points. So, for example, if a female candidate scores 80% on the interview, her score will add two and recorded as 82%.

In sum, the procedure does not consider women's challenge at the shortlisting stage for both external recruitment and internal promotion, except giving priority when equal points are scored by female and male candidates. Even in the case of equal score, the priority for females holds second or third place depending on the exam type i.e. written or practical exam. It only applies a limited amount of affirmative action i.e. 2% at the interview stage.

The company's management personnel's procedure is still at the draft stage and it is expected that it is going to consider the gaps in affirmative action and other safeguards, or protection given for female managers.

4.4.13.3 Collective Agreement

The Collective Agreement applies to employees up to the supervisory level. That means it does not apply for managers. However, as it is still relevant for female employees who aspire to enter the managerial positions, it is important to cover its gender-related provisions.

The Collective Agreement has affirmative action for females. It states females are given 3% and 4% at shortlisting and interview stages, respectively (Collective Agreement, 2018). Accordingly, this Collective Agreement has a better affirmative action incentive than the placement procedure

as it considers the shortlisting stage and gives 5% extra point when compared to the latter, which provides only 2%.

The female staff has also been given special attention to pregnancy and breastfeeding. The agreement stipulated four months of maternal leave, and if the women give birth while she is on annual leave, her maternal leave will resume being counted only after she completed her maternal leave. Pregnant women are also not obliged to work overtime after 2 p.m., or night shift for one year after giving birth. Two hours of breastfeeding time will also be given for six months. Moreover, the agreement specified 10 days of paternal leave. The agreement has also stipulated that the company shall make sure female staff will not miss benefit packages such annual bonuses and salary increments due to maternal leave, and their past evaluation will be considered for that effect.

Besides, in case of sickness of a spouse or a child and for infant vaccination, up to ten days and four days leave, respectively, are provided in a year. The agreement upholds zero tolerance for sexual harassment and violence, and if proved, could result in a salary deduction up to summary dismissal. Like the Personnel Policy, it prohibits discrimination against a subordinate based on the solicitation of sexual favors in exchange or expectation of favorable evaluation, promotion, hiring, which could be a cause for automatic dismissal. In addition to this, it states that sexual harassment, sexual violence as well as any human rights violations against women are penalized with 15 days salary deduction up to summary dismissal, if proven. Thus, the Collective Agreement has better protection than the Personnel procedure on this regard.

The Collective Agreement has also provided leave without payment arrangement based on valid reasons. Consequently, female employees can consider using this arrangement for taking training or short-term courses abroad. The company has also sponsorship programs up to degree level for all its employees.

4.16.4 The Role of Women and Children Affairs Office

Women and children Affairs Section Manager W/o Zuriashwork has described the efforts being exerted by the office. Accordingly, the office has been working to identify the challenges of women staffs in the company through supervision and find solutions for the challenges in collaboration with the relevant work units. Moreover, the office has also been organizing

knowledge-sharing platform once or twice a year in which female role models share their lived experience with the women staff. The manager has also mentioned the plan to discuss with Telecom Excellence Academy of the company for designing a special leadership development program for women based on actual need assessment. Currently, the academy's training participation is reserved for women proportional to their number in the company i.e. 28% of the trainees for each program.

The manager has also stated that the office current works are mainly related to the employees at the staff level. Accordingly, the researcher observed the need for the Gender Office to closely work with the Human Resource Division and Telecom Excellence Academy of the company to incorporate women leaders in all its plan.

4.16.5 Work Commitment

Commitment to work is one of the emerging themes from the in-depth interviews. For the majority of the participants, devotion to work is the biggest catalyst for their career advancement. Even the remaining few, though they attribute their success to good fortune partly, they acknowledge that commitment to work is necessary for upward mobility. According to the respondents, the more one goes up the career ladder, the more dedication is expected.

Most of the participants express their dedication to their job by phrases such as “ *I won't stop if I do not get the result*”, “ *I make sure they [the team] understand the purpose of the assignment*”, “ *I have stayed overnight few times to solve emergency problems*”, “ *I stayed late in the office if I need to finish my work*”, “ *I have never taken a day off for the past few years*”, “ *I always say yes for new assignments*”, “ *I always make sure I solved the problem at hand*” “ *I take unfinished works to home and do them after I get some rest*”, “ *I am alert 24/7*” and “ *if there is anything I don't know I always ask for help.*” Some participants clarify their work commitment by giving specific examples.

Mehret said:

I believe I got this position because of my contribution. I have full devotion and commitment to my work. During project work, there are many times we stayed longer at night. It is not the time but the plan we have for the day that direct us. We sometimes use a contract taxi to go home, after we got home, I may stay longer to send the report. No one pressured me to do that. This is not uncommon in my career path.

This same participant also recalls another situation *“On another project, after it is completed, we identified that there were few gaps. We sat with the consultants and stayed the whole night in the office to solve the problem, On the next morning, when all went home to take some rest, I directly went to different offices to check the system live. I wanted to confirm it actually worked.”* Likewise, Abaynesh said: *“As the Telecom sector by itself is complex, leading my unit towards the company vision need great commitment. I have fully dedicated myself to fulfill that and it is not a challenge for me as I have always been a leader in the field. There are many other things I need to take care of besides my work, but I manage all the other things well not to affect my responsibility at the office.”*

Therefore, the majority of the participants attributed their success to their dedicated efforts and work outputs while few, beside their work ethics, believe the credit also goes to luck as there were many advancement opportunities in the company at the time of their promotion. In sum, this finding shows that most of the participants have a strong sense of self, even though the degree varies from one to the other or their leadership journey varied.

4.5 Challenges of Women Leaders

Next, the researcher asked the following: Is there any challenge you encountered in your leading/managing role at the company? This question included sub questions such as: Do you encounter any challenges in your career advancement to leadership position? If yes, what was the challenge? What did you do to alleviate the challenges?

All the research participants point out that challenges are natural part of the corporate experience. All but one mentioned one or more challenges at work. The exception stated that she did not encounter any challenge so far. And another participant mentioned she encountered work related problems only as opposed to additional challenges in her personal/family life. The rest of the participants' response to this specific question is stated below.

4.5.1 Managing Multiple Roles

Balancing work and family can be a challenge that limits women from seeking leadership roles. For the majority of the participants, managing demanding roles both at the office and at home is one of the major challenges in their career advancement. Two of the participants, however, stated

that as they are single with no dependents, they do not face such a challenge. One of the participants admitted that trying to meet the demands of both the office work and her family needs has exhausted her in the past. She reflected:

The work-family imbalance was my biggest challenge. In the first few years, I was more inclined to office work and involve myself in a lot of activities. Because of that, my family and even my well-being were affected. Then noticing the impact, I started to delegate more to focus on my management role. Currently, I have a balanced life both at work and at home. (Saba)

This respondent believes that both family and work are important parts of life and it is expected from the woman to blend them or strike a balance between the two. Likewise, Fassika commented: *“being a woman by itself brings a challenge as women also manage the home. There is huge responsibility at both ends. Home responsibility may also affect the office work sometimes. My husband is in a better condition compared to me. I believe it is important for women leaders to negotiate on shared responsibility at home.”*

Biftu shared the same view. She said *“I have a demanding work and a big family. Other than the office management, I have also an equivalent burden at home, so I always have a challenge to balance between the two. Currently, my mom is helping me with take caring of my dependents.”* Biftu further emphasized that when women establish family right after graduation, their career advancement might be hampered. She explained:

When women graduate in their mid-twenties they want to get married mainly because of their family and societal pressure. After marriage, they will soon have kids and it becomes harder for them to apply for a new position as they have a lot of responsibility at home. So, often, the women miss on career advancement opportunities to have a family. (Biftu)

In line with this argument, Semira, who is also a new mother, suggested that because of her new baby, at this point of her life she does not want to progress her career further. She feared that a new role and increased responsibility would damage her work-family balance and affect her work

performance. From this it can be understood that, it becomes more difficult to have a work-family balance for women with young children.

Majority of the participants stated that they able to manage this challenge through their strategies and/or with the help of others. A few indicated that because of their family strong support, they are not affected by this challenge. For example, Mehret specifically stated that because of her prior arrangement, she does not feel this challenge as much. She said:

Because of the workload, I often stay longer at office or work late hours. It is the nature of the work. Family need so much time especially when you have kids. I have someone to cover this family responsibility for me, so I can work when I need to work. (Mehret)

Likewise, Kokebe stated that *“There is a lot of travel, working on the weekends and working from home. If it were not for my family support, it would have not been possible.”* Fassika, however, indicated that the solution does not come from her family support but from her own strategy. She said *“As a manager, what I do to balance between the two is to manage the urgent works after office hours or in my leisure time. Even when I am at home, I do it after I take some rest.”* This participant has managed double responsibility by using her personal time for office work.

Another participant, Etsegenet, summarizes the situation as: *“anyone can experience the tension between the two responsibilities but the tension or imbalance is temporary and it always gets back to normal. We all have our own mechanisms. My solution may not work for others.”* Similarly, Abayensh stated:

Family is part of life and we need to embrace it. There are always challenges when you have multiple roles. The challenges are not easy, that is obvious. Especially, when you go up on the career ladder, the work becomes more time consuming and demanding. Sometimes, I may need to stay late or even spend the night at the office. There are also many responsibilities at home when you have children. Yet, I take those challenges as opportunities. Challenges also bring solutions. (Abayensh)

Most participants in the study had assistance from their family and an array of personal assistants to fulfill most part of their duties at home. However, their situations may not reflect the circumstances of other women who either choose not to, or cannot afford to, get family support, or hire domestic helpers to help them bridge the domestic and office work. Thus, it can be concluded that without the necessary support, multiple responsibilities might be one of the biggest challenges' women face in their career advancement.

4.5.2 Gender-related Stereotypes and Norms

4.5.2.1 Gender Bias

Some of the interviewees said they were aware of prevalent gender bias in the company. This theme came up directly or indirectly during the interviews. Thirty five percent of the participants pointed out gender bias as a challenge and shared their experience. One of the participant, Saba, claimed that she was a victim of such gender bias. She said: *“At my first managerial position, they thought I was not able to do my job because I’m a woman. So, I have to go extra miles to convince that I am good at it. There were statements made by some colleagues that affects me emotionally, but I have managed to control my emotions.”*

Biftu also indicated that this attitude is more prevalent in the technical fields. She explained:

The company has come a long way but still if you are a woman you may often get a ‘you cannot do it’ attitude. Moreover, as fewer women join the technical fields, they are the exceptions and they attract more attention than their colleagues and that makes the women uncomfortable. In addition, the working condition especially the field work is not conducive as such for women. As a result, women employees do not get assigned often to field works despite being hired just to do that. Women are given more the office works and the men get the field work. As a result, women do not get adequate experience.

Kokebe, who is also a technical manager, has somehow a slightly different experience. She puts it this way: *“At first, you need to get someone who believes in you, I got that opportunity from my second level supervisor. At my entry-level position, my second-level supervisor assigned me to a new team work even though I did not have prior experience. I hesitated to accept but he encouraged me. My first level supervisor at the time second-guessed me and said: are you sure*

you can do it? I did not take it personal though.” Concerning the nature of technical works, she reflected, field works in remote areas may not be suitable for women as they include traveling through difficult routes.

Majority of these participants claimed that the nature of the field work and the working conditions are discouraging factors for women employees. Nonetheless, they reported gender bias as the most challenging issue and consequently, more women are not joining the technical fields, both at the staff and managerial levels. This impact women’s participation in the company as the technical fields are the company’s core activities.

4.5.2.2 Women are held to Higher Standards than Men

Six participants strongly expressed that they have to prove themselves beyond what is expected for others to believe in them. They explained that this double standard is in some way related to the socio-cultural attitude. In relation to this, Abaynesh stated that if it were for her performance, she would have gotten the position she has right now a long time ago. She reflected: *“I had what it takes then. I would have reached where I am at right now at that time if not for the double standard prevalent in the company. I had to prove myself again and again to get the value I deserved.”* Genet also explained that women’s work gets unnoticed sometimes and for that reason, women have to work harder than men to attain the same position and title. These participants experience confirmed that there is a double standard for women’s efforts than men in the company.

4.5.2.3 Male Dominated Corporate Culture

Three participants have expressly stated the socio-cultural attitude as a challenge. On this regard, Abaynesh state that: *“There has been a dominant norm that upholds women do not have what it takes for leadership positions. This is deeply rooted in the culture and it may not be intentional. Because of that, the women career path is full of obstacles. Some men may pass you just because they are men.”* Another participant also shared her experience as follows:

Our work demands collaborating with different internal stakeholders. Sometimes colleagues from other departments may ignore me and directly contact my male staff or discuss matters with my immediate male supervisors on the work I should involve in. I

think, sometimes, it may be because I am a woman. I solve such situations through discussion.” (Zinash)

Another stereotype is the assumption that women will leave work to have children and therefore contribute less work over-time. In relation to this, Etsegenet, mentioned that she sometimes notices hiring more women being considered as a hassle at her department. Another participant, Genet, however, believed the claim has some truth in it. She argued that some women’s performance decreases after they give birth. She further stressed the need to work on changing men’s attitude about shared responsibility at home as that is the prevalent attitude which have negative effect on women participation. She said: “... *we also need to work to change the attitude of men about shared family responsibility as they need to be supportive to ease the women burden. However, women should be strong with or without the support of men.*”

4.5.2.4 Discrimination

The majority of the participants stated that they never experienced direct discrimination; although, indirect discrimination was still widespread. One of the participants revealed that she experienced direct discrimination once by one of her male managers. She said:

Few years back, an opportunity came for new project work in my department. The manager picked my male co-worker even though I had better performance evaluation results and more work experience than him. When I mentioned it to the manager, he could not give me a valid reason. But what I perceived from the manager’s explanation is that he wanted to provide the opportunity for my co-worker thinking that the latter needed it more than me. (Hermela)

Hermela believed that women are interested in moving up the corporate ladder but experience indirect discrimination regarding promotional opportunities. She further argued that discrimination is one of the factors for the low assignment of women on challenging tasks.

4.5.3 Fewer Opportunities for Delegation

Some participants argued that women do not have equal opportunity to delegation and other professional development mechanisms. Hawwi concerning this stated that “*women are delegated*

significantly less than men in the company. There are different reasons for this, I believe. Some women hesitate when they are offered. Managers also prefer to give more delegation to men.”

A technical manager, Kokebe, confirmed that this fact is more prevalent in the technical fields. She said women are not delegated as much as the men. She explained: *“Women prefer to work at the background, so they are not visible, and the managers prefer to delegate the men who are active at the front.”* Hawwi commented: *“For bosses to assign you for work or assignment, you need to be proactive. You should show that you can do it. But some women wait until they get picked.”* She further added that the women hesitate to take more responsibility at office especially when they have young children.

4.5.4 Fewer Role Models and Mentors

Two respondents consider the existence of fewer women in leadership positions in the workplace as a barrier to career advancement. To this, Biftu, said: *“in the past, I was one of the first female managers in the department. Because of that, I could not get the opportunity to share and learn from women leaders’ experiences.”* Abaynesh similarly believed lack of visible female role models is one of the major obstacles to women’s career advancement. She added as women leaders were few, there is less opportunity for sharing experience with each other. Hawwi further explained: *“The network is loose even within the few because of time scarcity. Men have a better opportunity on that, as they may go out with men and learn, and they are more active in networking than women. For a woman, as a manager, people do not approach you. They take you seriously. So, you are on your own, often.”* Hence, the existence of fewer women leaders in the company can also be considered a challenge by itself.

4.5.5 Lack of access to Informal Resources and Levelers of Influence

Networking can be defined as an individual’s attempt to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career (Forrest & Doherty, 2004). Two of the participants raise challenges in this regard. For example, Biftu said: *“Men support each other. But, women to women or men to women support is loose so this also affect career advancement. She further stated that if women get some extra support, they can do better.”* (Biftu)

Zinash, who works as a manager in support field, also raised her concern: “*sometimes it is difficult to access information which may be important for my job, and which I may not get it formally. My male colleagues get such information. Even though I have good communication with those colleagues, somehow the information does not reach me.*” This is also an illustration that the informal networks are dominated by men and women do miss out.

Sefanit had the following to say on the importance of involving in informal networks for careers advancement:

At my current work unit, at first, I was the only female manager. The men have their networks. I tried to get into one. I noticed that when they discuss recommending someone for a managerial position, they usually omit women. The informal network, if you are not involved in it, it makes you invisible. No one will remember you. Still, it is a good platform to share experience and information. I also use it to remind people of my value. It has been a struggle as I do not have time for socializing as the men do. Also, I do not have much in common to talk about other than work stuff. But I always try to get involved in their discussion, sometimes I even comment on football match results. In sum, I use the platform to make myself visible and unforgettable. I found it useful. (Sefanit)

This shows that informal networks may also help to get people who can advocate on behalf of the women when they are not around. This works for both internal and external networks. Sefanit further stated: “*if you want to advance, you have to involve both in the formal and informal networks. You should not wait until you are invited. If you wait you may not be invited at all. You need to be proactive.*” As clearly stated by the participant, as connections seldom come to women, they need to be active in developing bonds.

As stated by the participants in this study, using the already existing networks is useful. However, Hawwi believes that as women tend their family, they may not be able to attend socialization activities after work. Accordingly, it can be challenging to build supportive networks with others. Many participants also raised the absence of parallel networks for women in the company as a concern.

4.5.6 Limited Education

Some interviewees argue that women are not advancing in their careers because of having lower educational qualifications as compared to men. Three participants mentioned that women may not get time or the financial resources to advance in their education and that may be one of the reasons that hinders their upward mobility. Sefanit explained that: *“there are many staff who could not afford to study their second degree. The company’s credit association has a loan arrangement up to 20,000 birr for further education, that is a good start but it is not enough. We need to have a comprehensive arrangement as it is difficult for women to allocate a big amount of funds by themselves.”*. Likewise, another participant stated that *“the company data shows there are many women who are still at diploma level, there are many reasons for that but one of the reasons is a financial issue. They need a little support on that.”* (Makeda)

In support of the above argument, Menna, a senior and very experienced participant in this study, stated: *“I think the major setback for women education is time management and their initiative. If a woman could not manage her time well, she could not get the time to develop herself. Many women do not take initiative.”* In relation to this, Makeda responded: *“I wanted to study for my doctoral degree, but my family is big. I had the responsibility of taking care of my 5 siblings. With my family responsibility, I could not do that, and I always regret it.”*

Other participants argued that problem of resources to pursue further education is not supported by the company data. They claimed that as of November 2019, there are 225 women with a master’s degree and 3631 with first degree, and women with a diploma or below are only 15% of the total female population. In relation to this the Women, Children, and Youth Affairs Section Manager W/o Zuriashwork explained: *“the company data shows many women have the necessary education for the managerial position and above. Hence, we should not take a lack of education as a major barrier for women’s career advancement to managerial positions.”*

Nonetheless, less education can be considered as one of the challenges women encounter in their upward mobility success. However, the reason for less education differed from one woman to the other.

4.5.7 Women Resisting their Own Advancement

In addition to the external barriers listed above, the study participants confirmed that women also suffer from their own prejudices and setbacks.

4.5.7.1 Hesitation to Take on Additional Responsibilities

Sixty-eight percent of the participants directly or indirectly indicated that women themselves have a big role in their low participation in a leadership position. Half of those associate women's low motivation for career advancement to factors such as socio-cultural attitude and time scarcity. But the rest of the respondents did not link it with such factors. Menna said:

Some women doubt their abilities. When they are delegated for more responsibility, they hesitate or decline and miss the opportunity for development. They also shy away from training or leading teams and meetings. Many women do not use opportunities in front of them like access to education. Compared to other companies, our company provides better conditions for career advancement. Women need to get out of the victim mindset and use the opportunity.

Another participant, Sefanit, described: *“some women when they got the opportunity for promotion, they said “are you sure I am able to do it?” with reluctance. They did not have to wait until the offer comes.”* Some of the interviewees associate this hesitation with other factors such as family responsibility. On this regard, Genet explained:

Some women have less motivation for work and career development especially after they get married and gave birth. They do not take the initiative to develop themselves through education as most men do. Their performance decrease after having kids, they come late for work. Because of this, I heard sometimes supervisors are afraid to hire or promote more women... The women lose hope after a while, they got stuck somewhere down the road. But they should not be like this. Some of us may be lucky but, more or less, we all pass through those challenges. They need to be strong and overcome any impediment. They need to aspire more. It all starts with their act.

4.5.7.2 Less Self-Advocacy

Limited self-advocacy by women managers is an emerging theme from the in-depth interview. Majority of the women are not aggressively seeking promotion or career advancement. Rather, they seek for their job to speak for itself. One of the participants said: “*I got this position because I just went for the interview when requested*”. (Kokebe)

This fact may be related to the women’s internal drive. Majority of the women interviewed expressed their passion or drive for their work in terms of intrinsic values such as: “*my biggest drive is to see my effort reflected in the output*”, “*I applied for the management position just out of my curiosity to try new things*”, or “*I do my job to the best of my ability for my personal satisfaction, not for promotion.*” One participant especially compared men’s drive with women’s in the workplace. She explained:

Men are often driven by their need for position, power ... we women are weak on that. Financial gain is not our drive as it is for men, which could be the biggest drive. So, we got stuck with our current position for long. My drive is the passion I have for the work, that is good, but it is a weak drive for career development... I do not promote myself well. If no one gives value for my work, I may not get the chance for a promotion at all.

Zinash also stated that “*Women usually do not promote themselves; they focus on their duties and often give little attention to career development. They do their work well, but they do not apply for a new vacant position as the men do.*” This shows that majority of the participants did not actively seek for career development. Yet, they made use of the opportunity when it materialized. The participants’ commitment to work and the output, as described by themselves, was the reason to get the position they have.

4.5.7.3 Lack of Ambition

Few participants determined that an important reason some women did not secure leadership positions was lack of ambition. As one participant puts it “*Some women think what they got is enough. The men upgrade themselves every time, many women do not do that. They decline*

delegation and promotion. If they do not take more responsibility, how could we bring more women to a leadership position?” (Genet)

Other participants do not believe women have less ambition but more doubt in their leadership abilities. Hawwi, described it as: *“Many women are reluctant to take more responsibility because of lack of leadership experience. But, even without the leadership experience, they need to take the risk. They can learn in the process.”* Several interviewees also strongly believe that women do not lack the ambition, but they are not assertive enough to take more responsibility. On this regard, Makeda shared her view: *“I noticed some female staff have difficulty in expressing themselves and that makes them doubt themselves for career advancement. I used to be like them, if not for my previous supervisor and my exposure afterwards.”*

From the findings, it is understood that all the women leaders in the company, at any given point in their career, are likely to experience one or more of these challenges. Sometimes the challenge is explicit, and other times the challenge is subtle and not easily visible.

4.6 Discussions

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the challenge’s women in leadership roles encounter and the opportunities and support necessary to overcome those challenges. Through this, the researcher expects to shed some light on what should be done to increase women's participation in leadership positions in Ethio telecom. The design selected to achieve the objective is a qualitative exploratory research design to capture the how and what of the collective experience (Creswell, 2013). It is believed that a qualitative exploratory study is best suited for identifying and capturing the participants' lived stories and understanding their shared experiences.

The methodology used for the research was mainly an in-depth interview with the women leaders and document analysis of the company's internal regulations. The in-depth interview was targeted to identify the major challenges and opportunities of women leaders from their lived experience. The women leaders lived experience helps to understand the opportunities and strategies they applied for overcoming the challenges they face in their career advancement to a leadership position.

In this part, the most important results of the research are further discussed and linked to the research questions of the present study. Furthermore, the results are discussed in relation to the relevant literature and documents, and some significant convergences or divergences are pointed out.

4.6.1 Major Opportunities

The study findings have confirmed that there are many opportunities and supports for succeeding in leadership and for overcoming the wide-ranging challenges. These include the women's traits, organizational incentives, and support they get from individuals closest to the women managers. The organizational incentives and supports indicated by the participants are increasing recognition for benefits of women leadership, delegation, and special assignments, mentoring and coaching opportunities, supportive work environment, exceptional advancement opportunities, recognition and value, training and networking opportunities, support for further education and other organizational incentives. External opportunities include strong family background and family support whereas from the women themselves empowered mindset and commitment to work are considered as the major catalysts for career advancement.

Company's Opportunities

Half of the respondents acknowledge the benefits of women's leadership to the company. Some specifically stated that the company is benefiting from women's leadership qualities. Few have also indicated that more women at the top rises women's visibility, and the number of role models for aspiring females' staff. Others have also indicated that the company is more successful financially and boosted its image through women's leadership as it is shown from the recent management change at the top. This later finding corresponds with Thomas Hunt and Nagpal (2014) that claim that bringing women into leadership has a huge financial advantage for the economy. A participant has also mentioned the workforce diversity argument that is linked to the success of organizations. This finding endorses the findings of Visser (2011) stating organizations that embrace the benefits of diversity to improve the quality of their decision-making processes appoint women to positions of crucial value to the organization.

However, the argument related to target market representation is not cited by the participants. According to Visser (2011), organizations need to make sure female customers are represented at top levels to better equip them to design new products and deliver new services since they reflect the market. Moreover, change in the workplace norms is not experienced by the study participants as some literature suggests. This study finding shows that the participants have not yet observed positive changes such as the way organizations think about work arrangements and childcare accommodations, as it was found in contemporary organizations. According to Visser (2011), the culture of many organizations is changing as gendered work assumptions such as the male model of work, the notion of uninterrupted full-time careers, and the separation of work and family are being challenged.

According to Ykul (2013) leading a team or participating in an important project increases an employee's visibility and competitiveness for promotion. This stance is supported by most of the participants who state that throughout their career path, they get an opportunity for development through delegation, teamwork assignments, or project works. They all believe that these opportunities helped them for upward mobility. Many of them indicated that they get such opportunities starting from their entry-level position in the company. In this regard, the participants stressed the importance of willingness and initiative on the part of the women themselves to accept delegation and to be good at time management.

Half of the participants demonstrate strong evidence and clear awareness that mentoring, and coaching was one of the biggest opportunities they get for their career progression. They stated that those mentors and coaches have developed them and sometimes promote them for career advancement opportunities. For the majority, the mentors are immediate supervisors or managers; for few, peers, or colleagues. This finding is in line with Buskens and Webb (2009) who assert that co-workers and bosses played key roles in motivating women to achieve success in their current career paths. Yet, contrary to the research findings in other countries, the mentoring and coaching opportunities of this study participants are limited to the internal community of the company and did not include positive support from the wider community. On the other hand, in their study, Latchanah and Singh (2016) confirm women who embark on careers outside gender-circumscribed roles receive support and mentoring from outside of their families such as educational professionals. It was also observed during the interview that mentoring and coaching have aided

the study participants to develop their confidence and communication skills. This validates the widely recognized benefit of coaching and mentoring as described in Buskens and Webb (2009).

Regarding training and leadership development programs, the present findings partially contradict and partially confirm the results carried out in other countries (Visser, 2011). Several participants in this study have emphasized the importance of the training they got throughout their career for raising into a higher position. This partially confirms the research conducted by Amayah & Hague (2017) which stresses the importance of training in leadership and management to equip women with rare and important skills. However, a unique leadership development program has not yet deployed for the women in the company. In other words, Ethio telecom does not implement a comprehensive leadership development program based on women's need assessment with the aim of supporting and enhancing women's participation in leadership. On the other hand, Northouse (2016) stated that many organizations are enhancing women's career development by involving them in career and leadership development programs.

Earlier studies show that effective organizational networking has a positive impact on career progression, as it allows for easier access to information, social and professional expert advice, and increased job opportunities and promotions (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). Concerning networking, all the study participants that had the chance to work in different teams and assignment have expressed that they get a greater chance to build a network. Another research conducted by Visser (2011) had the aim of highlighting the importance of external women's networks for lobbying, information sharing, and education, and mentoring. In line with this, few participants in this study have mentioned the networking opportunity they got through different organizations and associations such as AWiB and Ethiopian Economic Association. This supports the previous finding that states the increasing availability of women groups in the country is helping women in their career advancement (United Nations [UN], n.d.).

Besides, one participant also believed that the Women Leadership forum which was established a few years ago by women leaders in the company had motivated many to develop their careers through further education. According to O'Neil, Hopkins, and Sullivan (2011) and (Armstrong et al., 2012), women's network is a key technique to the advancement of women's careers into senior leadership roles within organizations. The finding also confirms that the company is following the

trend of other large organizations in creating women networks. As stated by Thomson & Laurent (2015) in recent years, internal women's networks have also become features in large organizations. However, there should be a mechanism to activate the women's leadership forum of the company to get the full benefits, as stressed by some participants. Interestingly, one respondent has also mentioned the benefit she has got from involving in the already existed informal networks around the office by her initiative.

Moreover, majority of the participants stated that they advance in their careers as they have been working in a supportive work environment. They mentioned it mostly with managing multiple roles partially echoing the finding supported by Locke (2009). Having a supportive supervisor has been shown to reduce the extent to which work can interfere with family life as supervisors can provide instrumental aid to their employees, which can reduce workload and work stress, and emotional support and advice (Locke, 2009). However, for a few participants, the support also includes knowledge-sharing platforms, as well as work freedom or working without external influence.

One-fourth of the participants have stated that they got a unique opportunity for promotion such as moving to a project work quickly and getting recommendations with less experience compared to others to compete for managerial positions. This is an emergent theme during the interview. Besides, few participants have revealed that the support they get for their education through company sponsorship has facilitated their career development. They also emphasized the importance of their time management skill to further their education. The importance of education is intensively supported by Latchanah & Singh (2016) as a base for career advancement at all levels in organizations.

Half of the participants also acknowledged, directly or indirectly, the significance of the incentives given by the company such as long maternal leave and loans for further education for their career advancement. However, as the interview with few revealed, they are not sure of the affirmative action given to female leaders. As it is indicated in Placement Procedure (2016), according to the internal regulations of the company, females staffs up to supervisor level have a cumulative affirmative action of 7% at shortlisting and interview stage, whereas women at a managerial level have 2% affirmative action only at interview stage. Yet, with the decision of the CEO, the whole

formal recruitment process including affirmative action could be skipped during the direct hire (Placement Procedure, 2016). This finding is partially in line with some previous findings confirming that affirmative actions are being adopted to increase women's participation in leadership positions. Still, the finding also shows that the company does not implement quotas as that of some other countries to increase women's participation in leadership positions (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018).

Some participants have stated that the recognition and value they get for their work at the office is also a big opportunity. The researcher did not anticipate coming across this theme during the in-depth interview. A participant indicated that being recognized for the work is big support by itself as many women could miss it. Another participant also affirms this by saying she was lucky to be valued as women's contribution often gets unnoticed. The participants indicated that because of the recognition, they got a chance for promotion.

External Opportunities

One of the most common themes emerging from the interviews was the importance of support from individuals closest to the women managers. The participants credited the support of their family and helpers as critical for the success of their career advancement. When reflecting on their multiple roles, fourteen respondents stated that they got support from their family, so that they can focus on their office responsibilities. For some, family support includes the support they receive from parents and siblings. Few shared from their experience that they have spouses that consider home management as a shared responsibility. This finding corresponds to previous researches of Latchanah & Singh (2016) and Eagly & Carli (2007) suggesting many women are receiving support from their spouses, findings that promote that successful dual-career marriages rely on a strong marital partnership in which responsibilities are shared.

A participant also mentioned the importance of negotiation both at home and at the office to reduce the dual responsibility. This finding is in line with Northouse (2016) which states women's use of effective negotiation techniques can aid in procuring the resources the women need at work and at home to supplement their leadership advancement. However, the company is yet to adopt policies and programs that ease all employees' balance between work and home (Thomas Hunt & Nagpal, 2014).

Few participants have also emphasized the role of the female themselves in balancing their dual responsibility through time and stress management skills. This is in line with Locke (2009) who asserts that the individual can play a part in reducing their work-family conflict through developing self - control skills to avoid stress from handling multiple roles. Remarkably, for a few participants, family support has a different package. For example, for one participant, accepting or tolerating her demanding work, by itself, is the big support she gets from her family. The finding related to family support has shown that if not with the necessary support, multiple responsibilities might be one of the biggest challenges' women face in their career advancement.

Opportunities from the Women Themselves

Before undertaking the qualitative investigation, the researcher did not expect to come across themes that the interviewees presented in their answers such as an empowered mindset and commitment to work as opportunities. Even though all the participants recognize the opportunity and the support they receive from both inside and outside of the company, most of them believe empowered mindset and devotion for work are the biggest catalysts for their career advancement. Even for the remaining few, though they attribute their success to good fortune partly, they acknowledge that commitment to work is necessary for upward mobility.

Interestingly, one-third of the respondents stated that they have an empowered mindset, and they mainly attributed it to their strong family background. These participants have expressly stated that having an empowered mindset was an opportunity they get to succeed. It can be inferred from the interview of the rest of the participants that they develop an empowered mindset from their family or acquired it down the road through different development mechanisms such as coaching, mentoring, and training. Hence, these respondents experience confirms that having an empowered mindset and strong family background greatly helps to aspire more and to overcome challenges that can be encountered in one's carrier life.

4.6.2 Major Challenges

From the in-depth interview, it is identified that all the participants except two have encountered gender-related challenges in their journey to leadership. Hence, it is more likely that any woman manager or aspiring woman at any given point in her career is likely to experience one or more of such challenges. This confirms the previous research findings that are presented in the literature review part of this study. The major challenges encountered by the participants, based on study are categorized into two i.e. external and internal.

External Challenges

The external challenges include managing multiple roles, gender-related stereotypes, and norms (including gender bias, discrimination, held to higher standards, and male-dominated corporate culture), fewer opportunities for delegation, fewer role models and mentors, lack of access to informal resources and levelers of influence, and limited education. Generally, this finding supports the previous research results which identify overburden of domestic responsibility, little support from their organizations, and deep-rooted socio-cultural attitudes as major challenges for women leaders in Ethiopia (Nigest, 2019).

For most of the participants, managing demanding roles both at the office and at home is one of the major challenges in their career advancement. Concerning this, some indicated that the magnitude of the challenge goes with the workload of the leadership position. As reported by Ahuja (2002) and Bruktawit & Abeba (2018), professional women are faced with trying to manage a career, a home, and child-care which inhibit them from realizing their full potential in leadership.

Moreover, one-third of the participants have strongly expressed that they need to prove themselves beyond what is expected for others to believe in them. This is also in line with the previous research findings carried out in African countries which describes that one of the career advancement challenges is the fact that women leaders seem to be held to higher expectations than men (Amayah & Hague, 2017). Gender bias and stereotyping are also pointed out by six of the study participants. Few participants have also expressly stated the socio-cultural attitude as a challenge. These findings support the previous research findings of Gell & Hoare (2009) that state skepticism and

mistrust of women's ability to lead, and the stereotypes and prejudices about their role in society and their lack of suitability for leadership roles are major challenges for all women.

The research finding also indicated that most of the challenges related to stereotypes and norms are especially stronger for women who work in the technical fields. This also endorses the findings of Latchanah & Singh (2016) stating in male-dominated fields, challenges such as gender bias and socio-cultural attitudes are more predominant. The reason for the prevalence of such attitudes in the technical field, as indicated by the participants, arises from both the females themselves and from their immediate managers or their working environment. This finding partially supports that such a challenge can arise from the socio-culture attitude as well. As stated by Latchanah & Singh (2016), when women enter a career path that is more male-oriented by society, they are challenged to prove their capability.

On the other hand, only one of the participants has revealed that she experienced direct discrimination once from one of her male managers. The rest of the participants stated that they never experienced direct discrimination. However, it is not clear if this is related to the fact that discrimination is often subtle and difficult to understand. As Feyerherm & Vick (2005) described discrimination has been so integrated with company cultural norms and organizational status quo, most people do not notice it.

Furthermore, some respondents argued that women do not have equal opportunity for delegation and other professional development mechanisms. Like the socio-cultural attitude, getting fewer delegation than men are more dominant in the technical field. Some of the participants believed that the absence of this opportunity greatly affects women's career advancement. The existence of fewer women in leadership positions in the workplace, which resulted in fewer role models, is also considered by a small number of respondents as a barrier for upward mobility. This finding corresponds with Ahuja (2002) that claims when only a few percentages of the upper management are held by women, guidance and support for female employees are severely limited. It also confirms the empirical study reported by Latchanah & Singh (2016) and Billene et al (2018) that lack of role models and mentorship programs was a major organizational roadblock that limited the female gender from access to more senior posts.

Women are less likely than men to have the networks, contacts, and social and professional experience expected of public leaders (Gell & Hoare, 2009). Concerning this, few of the participants raise a lack of access to internal and external networking as a challenge for their career advancement. These challenges can be mitigated by more women involving in the existing informal network as depicted by the experience of a participant. A participant also indicated that many women are not interested or do not have time to build networks. This endorses the previous research findings stating women are less adept at networking than men and have no time for it as it takes much time (Thomson & Laurent, 2015). Some participants also mentioned the importance of strengthening the already existing women leadership forum in the company for this purpose.

Many interviewees also argue that women are not advancing in their careers because of having lower educational qualifications as compared to men. This finding corresponds with Miressa (2014) that claims that the low level of education necessary for entry-level to leadership positions is a factor for the low participation of women in leadership. Quite the opposite of this, few participants have argued that there are enough women with the required qualification for a managerial position and lack of education should not be considered as a major challenge. This is partially in line with the finding that less work experience and more career interruption, not lack of education, of women which hinders them from career advancement (Northouse, 2016). However, few research findings from African countries stated that, unlike developed countries, lack and access to education are presented as one of the major challenges for African women career advancement. (Amayah & Haque, 2017). Three participants in the present study mentioned that women may not get time or finance to advance in their education and that may be one of the reasons that hamper their career advancement. These findings correspond with Amayah & Haque (2017) that claim family demands such as having and looking after children tend to limit African women's opportunities for higher education.

The study findings also show that there is no comprehensive leadership development program for women in the company. This is contrary with the trend of many organizations in enhancing women's career development by involving them in career development programs (Northouse, 2016). As also claimed by Amayah & Hague (2017) sometimes women refuse to accept top positions for fear of criticism and discrimination and training that empowers women to deal with all kinds of harassment as they progress in their careers is crucial.

Women Resisting their Advancement

This study extends its findings to include internal factors or challenges. Concerning internal factors, majority of the participants directly or indirectly indicated that women themselves have a big role in their low participation in a leadership position. This is reflected through hesitation to take more responsibility, lack of ambition, and less self- advocacy. Most of the participants indicated that many women hesitate or decline when they are presented with delegation or more responsibility. This may be, as indicated by some respondents, related to a lack of self-confidence or time scarcity. This finding endorses the previous research of Billene et al (2018) and Liu & Wilson (2001) stating personal development issues of women such as lack of confidence is the major challenge in seeking leadership and decision-making positions. Also, some participants associate women's low motivation for career advancement to factors such as socio-cultural attitude.

Kaiye and Singh (2013) and Thomas Hunt & Nagpal (2014) claim women do not possess the basic traits and skills to prosper in leadership positions due to the lack of ambition. In support of this claim, few respondents of the present study determined that an important reason some women did not secure leadership positions was due to lack of ambition.

Less self-advocacy was an emergent theme from the in-depth interview, as observed by the researcher. Majority of the participants were not aggressively seeking for promotion or career advancement. This confirms the empirical research conducted by Northouse (2016) indicating that women are less likely than men to promote themselves for leadership positions. Other writers relate this less self-promotion with feminine modesty. According to Latchanah & Singh (2016), feminine modesty is a tendency of women to downplay their achievements and successes to others emphasizing the achievements of others whilst men on the contrary self-promote their achievements.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study explored female leaders' challenges and opportunities through their career advancement, with the ambition of successfully meeting the aim of the study while answering all the research objectives. The findings confirm that female leaders/managers face various challenges for career advancement despite having some opportunities and support systems. The major challenges identified in this study include both internal and external factors. External challenges are derived from managing multiple roles at home and office, gender-related stereotypes and norms (including gender bias, discrimination, held to higher standards, and male-dominated corporate culture), fewer opportunities for delegation, lack of access to networking, limited education, and fewer role models/mentors. The internal challenges are through which the women themselves resist their advancement including hesitation to take on additional responsibilities, lack of ambition, and less self-advocacy.

The study findings have confirmed that there are many opportunities and supports for succeeding in leadership and for overcoming the wide-ranging challenges women encountered in their journey to leadership. The opportunities can be classified into three main categories i.e. from inside and outside of the company, and from the women themselves. The company's opportunities include efforts being made on recognizing and valuing the benefits of women leadership, supportive work environment depicts mainly through understanding multiple roles of women, delegation and special assignments, mentoring and coaching, training and networking opportunities, unique advancement opportunities, recognition and value, support for further education, and other organizational incentives such as maternal leave, loan for further education and limited affirmative actions during promotion. External opportunities incorporate family support and having a strong family background, and to some extent external networking opportunities. From the women leaders themselves, the major catalysts for their career advancement is an empowered mindset and commitment to work.

The results of the study have some similarity with the work of previously published authors reviewed in the second chapter of this study. Most importantly, the finding of this research lends support to increasing calls for a holistic approach to improve women's participation in leadership in Ethio telecom.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the overall findings of the study and the conclusion derived so far, the following recommendations were forwarded to enhance women's participation in leadership in Ethio telecom. The researcher recommends the executive management, Human Resource Division, and Telecom Excellence Academy to strengthen the opportunities provided by the company through designing and implementing comprehensive women's leadership development program. This program can be implemented through short-term and long-term plan.

Short Term Plan includes:

- ❖ Providing special training for women based on need assessment, such as training on communication and negotiation skills, women empowerment, work-life integration etc.
- ❖ Providing training for the management related to gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming
- ❖ Strengthening the already established women leadership forum of the company

Moreover, Women and Children Affairs office need to closely work with the Human Resource Division and Telecom Excellence Academy of the company to incorporate women leaders in all its plan.

Long Term plan incorporates:

- ❖ Designing and implementing effective career mapping for women focusing on providing the necessary tools for their development comprising a succession plan and a comprehensive affirmative action

- ❖ Organizational support to ease the multiple responsibilities of women through childcare accommodations such as offering on-site childcare

Aspiring women leaders are also recommended to effectively exploit the existing opportunities through

- ❖ Learning from female role models available in the company or elsewhere
- ❖ Actively looking for additional responsibilities and career advancement opportunities
- ❖ Make use of the company's support for education
- ❖ Active involvement in the existing informal networks in the company and

Also, future women leaders are advised to develop their leadership capability by

- ❖ Taking available leadership and self-development training inside or outside of the company
- ❖ Enhancing their work commitment and productivity

Further Research Direction

Taking the results and the methodological limitations of the current study into consideration, some ideas for further research are proposed. As the current study was focused on female leaders, future research could look at identifying major challenges and opportunities of female staff at entry-level to the company. Furthermore, a research that focus on male perception about the same topic can enlighten the research area and can come to a contradiction or an agreement with females' statements about women's challenges and opportunities in leadership. Factors for the low participation of women in the technical field also calls for deeper analysis. Moreover, comparative analysis can be carried out with other similar organizations in the country. Besides, as the current thesis was a qualitative case study the researcher embraces the compliment of a quantitative study with a bigger sample that potentially may contradict or confirm the findings.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW CHECKLIST FOR WOMEN MANAGERS/LEADERS

The interview questions included general demographic and major challenges and opportunities encountered by women leaders during their career advancement.

Part A

Age range: _____ Family status: _____ Number of Family members/dependents: _____

Educational Qualification: _____ Job position: _____ Work experience in the company: _____

Part B

1. As a leader/manager, what is your role?
 - What are your duties and responsibilities in your leadership position?
 - How much is your workload?
2. Is there any challenge you encountered in your career advancement to leadership position?
 - If yes, what was the challenge? What did you do to alleviate the challenge?
 - Is there any challenge you encountered in your leading/managing role at the company? If yes, what have you done to alleviate the challenges?
3. Do you get opportunity for succeeding in your career development to leadership position?
 - If yes, what kind of support and from where do you get the support?
 - If you encountered challenges in your career advancement, what kind of coping mechanisms and support systems you utilized to overcome the challenges?
4. What should be done to enhance women's participation in leadership in the company? If any?

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW CHECKLIST FOR GENDER SECTION OFFICER

1. Do you think there is gender balance between women and men leaders/ managers in the company? And How?
2. What are the major challenges that hinder women from moving up to the leadership/managerial position in the company?
3. What kind of opportunities do the women have to enhance their participation in leadership?
4. Does the company have incentive/motivational scheme in promoting women leadership in the company?
5. What is the role of the gender office in promoting women leaders in the company?
6. What needs to be done to enhance women's leadership participation in the company? If any?

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

Dear participant, you are being requested to participate in a research entitled *Women and Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities: The Case of Ethio telecom* by Yalemfiker Girma Moges a graduate student at Addis Ababa University School of Commerce.

Brief description of the study is described below please listen carefully.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to identify the major challenges women encountered in their career advancement to leadership position and the opportunities they have to overcome the challenges. You are being requested to participate in this study because you are working in a managerial/leadership position in Ethio telecom. This research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Leadership and you are asked to take part in this study because you meet criteria for participation in this study.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an in-depth interview which will take not more than forty minutes. You cannot be identified by your name throughout the interview. For the interview, your voice will be tape recorded.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The study will not impose any significant risk for participants except minimal discomfort that might be encountered while answering interview questions related to your lived experience as a leader/manager. However, I can assure you that no personal information is linked to your responses, and any results published would be done anonymously. No names will be linked to the information at any point. Voice records will be kept in a protected and locked file in the personal password-protected laptop of the researcher to ensure safety. All your responses for interview questions will be destroyed after the completion of this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There will be no direct benefit that would be gained by you from attending in this study. However, the results of this study help to enhance women participation in the leadership positions in Ethio telecom.

Refusal to participate or withdrawal from the study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study or from the interview at any time.

Who may you contact?

If you have questions, concerns, or need clarity, please feel free to forward before the interview commence or contact myself **Yalemfiker Girma Moges** at **09111508611**.

Compensation

Your participation is voluntary. No compensation will be given for your participation

Confidentiality

All the information you provided in this research will be kept confidential. Results will be published and presented in such a manner that you as a participant will remain anonymous.

CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT:

By giving my written or verbal consent, I am expressing my willingness to be interviewed by the researcher. I understand that I will be part of the research study that is looking into Major Challenges and Opportunities of Women and leadership. I understand that I have been selected to participate in the study because I am a working on a managerial /leadership position in Ethio telecom where the researcher is conducting the research.

I learned that the participation would be entirely voluntary, am free to withdraw at any time and my voice will be recorded. I know that there is no direct benefit or risk by taking part in this study.

I have been informed that the answers I will give will not show my name, information will be kept in a protected and locked file to ensure safety. I will also not be identified in the final research report.

Do you have any question?

Do you agree to voluntarily participate in this interview process?

Yes	
No	

If yes, continue

If no, thank you and goodbye

Thank you very Much