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Women's Representation in Leadership Positions in Ethiopia: Analysis of Gender Equality in Higher Leadership Positions from 1991 – 2022

Zeynie Chekol Degu



Photo taken from Ethiopia insight media page

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Geography and
Environmental Studies, College of Social Sciences, Art and Humanities
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Urban, Regional and Local Development Studies (Urban
Development and Governance Stream)**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
June, 2025**

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DECLARATION

I, Zeynie Chekol Degu, hereby declare that this PhD dissertation titled **“Women’s Representation in Leadership Positions in Ethiopia: Analysis of Gender Equality in Higher Leadership Positions from 1991 – 2022”** is my original work has never been submitted partially or fully for the award of any other degrees to this University or any other institutions and all sources of information and materials used for this dissertation have been fully acknowledged scientifically.

Name: Zeynie Chekol Degu

Signature: _____

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to approve that the dissertation produced by Zeynie Chekol Degu entitled “**Women’s Representation in Leadership Positions in Ethiopia: Analysis of Gender Equality in Higher Leadership Positions from 1991 – 2022**” and submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Urban, Regional and Local Development Studies (Urban Development and Governance Stream) complies with Addis Ababa University requirements and adheres to the established standards for originality and quality.

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Chairperson	Signature	Date
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External examiner	Signature	Date
Dr. Mesfin Dessiye	_____	_____
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Dr. Kiya Gezahegne	_____	_____
Advisor (Main)	Signature	Date
Dr. Filmon Hadaro	_____	_____
Advisor (Co)	Signature	Date
Dr. Hanna Tegegn	_____	_____

Chairperson of the Department or Graduate Program Coordinator

Name	Signature	Date
Dr. Demis Mengist	_____	_____

ABSTRACT

Women's inclusion in higher leadership positions guarantees diverse perspectives and promotes gender equality, resulting in better decision-making, organizational performance and accelerating social change toward a more inclusive society. The primary goal of this PhD dissertation is to examine women's representation journey in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia over the last three decades. Within the broad scope of this research, the study addressed four specific objectives. The study has been led by a pragmatic philosophical paradigm to frame the research strategies and come up with workable remedies. Additionally, feminist and transformative theories were utilized as a foundational framework to inform the research objectives or overall investigation. Although this dissertation is more inclined towards qualitative research features, it has employed a mixed-methods approach considering the research subject required both qualitative and quantitative research data types and designs. The study utilized descriptive, explanatory, and phenomenological research designs based on the nature of the research questions. Meanwhile, data-gathering methods such as in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and document analysis have been used to address the research objectives. The study's key informants and participants were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. This study produced a wide range of findings by employing all appropriate scientific procedures. Hence, according to the study's findings, women in Ethiopia have been underrepresented in higher-level leadership and decision-making positions over the past 30 years. Additionally, according to the findings of this study, Ethiopia's women-based policy frameworks are admirable, but an evaluation based on three key metrics reveals their insufficiency in terms of content-wise comprehensiveness, which has an impact on the promotion of women to leadership roles. The result of this study further identified socio-cultural, workplace, institutional, and women's personal challenges as the significant barriers to women in their efforts to advance to higher leadership positions. Finally, this study provided the lived experiences of five renowned Ethiopian women leaders and their lived experiences demonstrated that, although women face multifaceted impediments in their professional and family-related lives, they can overcome these obstacles through determination, consistency to their goals, continuous personal development, resilience, and hard work to achieve aspirations to ascend into higher leadership positions. To summarize, while women's existing representation in Ethiopia's higher leadership roles is admirable and encouraging, gender equality has yet to be attained. To achieve gender parity in this regard, the efforts of different stakeholders, including the government, women themselves, civil society organizations (CSOs), social institutions, and society in general, are fundamental. Furthermore, existing policies, strategies, and plans for women need to be revisited in order to improve women's representation in higher-level decision-making roles. In this regard, to bring practical solutions, subsequent future studies should be conducted by refining the theoretical, methodological, and conceptual scopes of this study, using this study as a springboard.

Key words: *Women, Leadership, Women empowerment, Higher leadership positions, women's representation, Gender equality, Ethiopia*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

AACA	Addis Ababa City Administration
AU	African Union
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EWDCS	Ethiopian Women's Development and Change Strategy
EWLA	Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FFICs	Federal First Instance Courts
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHCs	Federal High Courts
FSC	Federal Supreme Court
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDI	Gender-Related Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HoF	House of Federation
HoP	House of People's Representative
ICDS	International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliament Union
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MDG's	Millennium Development Goals

MoWSA	Ministry of Women and Social Affairs
MP	Members of Parliament
NAP-GE	National Action Plan for Gender Equality
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NPEW	National Policy on Ethiopian Women
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UK	United Kingdom
UN Women	United Nation entity for Gender Equality
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNICEF	United Nation Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
VAWP	Violence Against Women in Politics
V-Dem	Variety of Democracy
WAO	Women's Affairs Office
WEF	World Economic Forum
WPP	Women's Political Participation

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS/WORDS

Gender equality: it implies that the interests, needs, values, views and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration in socio-cultural, economic and political aspects of a country.

Leadership: it is an art of directing, leading and influencing others/followers to make them use their maximum efforts for the achievements of clearly stated goals.

Women's representation: the involvement of women in decision-making posts by having general people and women's interest, perspectives and values in the national agendas.

Higher leadership positions: are all the top positions in the three organs of government at the federal level including the federal legislative, executive and judiciary organs of government.

Political leadership: is a type of social leadership that refers from positions in government with authority and power and working in it for the long and short term welfares of the state and its citizens.

Gender responsive policy: is a policy that recognizes the interests, status and perspectives of both genders from design to evaluation. And it is usually formulated for the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality.

Women's political empowerment: is a means of increasing women's visibility in political and public decision-making areas in terms of both quality and quantity.

Barriers of women's leadership: are all the challenges and obstacles facing women in their professional journey that are limiting them not to climb to the top of the leadership ladder.

Gender equality strategies: are measures that empower women's capability to enable them equally competitive in the decision-making positions and reducing disparities and exclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Chapter introduction

This chapter lays down the foundation for the study by clarifying the rationale for conducting the research, providing context for the issue under consideration, outlining the objectives that were envisioned to be addressed by this investigation, and outlining the study's scope. The study's background is illustrated in this chapter to help readers understand concepts, the historical trend of the issue from global to national contexts, and justify the aim of conducting research on the selected subject.

This chapter also discusses the problem statement, which focuses on identifying the major gaps that inspired the researcher to carry out research on the chosen issue. The empirical, geographical, and time gaps that this study was designed to fill were stated. In this section, all the gaps are articulated in the way to determine the research objectives. Subsequently, the research's general objective has been defined. Similarly, the study's specific objectives were determined and developed from the overall objectives.

Additionally, this chapter discusses the study's delimitations, which include conceptual, geographical, and methodological coverage of this dissertation. Besides it also discusses the significance and benefit of conducting research on the specified research problem. Contributions to academics, knowledge advancement, and policy refinement are among the values aimed for in this research. Last but not least, the researcher provided an operational definition for key words utilized throughout the dissertation. Operational definitions are critical for readers to grasp the concept of words within the framework and context of this study.

This chapter thus gives a clear picture of the dissertation and introduces the reader to the structural organization of the contents included in the study.

1.2. Background of study

The struggle for gender equality is a historical movement for equality, democracy, and women's rights (Hearn & Husu, 2016). The interventions implemented for gender equality are important tools to enhance women's enjoyment and participation in social, economic, and political decision-making areas (Hearn & Husu, 2016). All levels of leadership positions in public institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private organizations are expected to be gender inclusive and take gender diversity into consideration (Offermann & Foley, 2020). Having a diverse workforce is worthwhile to having pluralistic viewpoints, ideas, values, creativity, abilities, and innovation within the various work forces from the perspectives of work productivity and result-based performance (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). As argued by Ojulu and Melesse (2014), it is impossible to realize a participatory, genuine, accountable, and transparent governance system without the full and equal involvement of women. Also, equal representation of women in higher leadership and decision-making positions is more than just a gender equality or parity issue; rather, it is both a women's rights, redistributive justice, and human rights issue too (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014).

However, according to Ojulu & Melesse (2014), historically, women are highly underrepresented in higher leadership and decision-making positions across the globe. The gender gap in leadership and decision-making positions manifest in all types of institutions, specifically, in the public sector, the private sector, academic institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and the legal profession (Ojulu & Melesse, 2014). As Schedlitzki and Edwards (2014) asserted, the proportion of female managers, employees, and graduates has increased recently on a global scale; however, the biggest challenge is empowering and elevating these women to positions of highest leadership with a decision-making authority. As these writers portrayed, around the world, women are primarily found in support roles and in junior and middle managerial roles.

Women constitute a significant proportion of the population in developing countries, but they have a limited role in all aspects of their societies' socioeconomic life (Mekasha, 2017). The reasons for their limited involvements are correlated to patriarchal thinking, discrimination and stereotypes against women, violence against women, and female marginalization (Tesfaye, Hirut, and Rahel,

2019). According to Ramtohul (2021), despite the challenges posed by patriarchal cultures and structures, women in Africa have made significant contributions and possess a rich historical legacy throughout the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Despite the slow progress, particularly since the 1995 Beijing Declaration, women's political empowerment and their involvement in decision-making processes have been increasing (Bauer & Okpotor, 2013). Yet, gender disparity remains significant in the continent, with women being notably underrepresented in political and public leadership positions.

Rosenfeld (1979) underlined that, in the Ethiopian context, women's contribution was notable in the political spheres that started with the Zemene Mesafint or Era of the Princes, even though they were completely excluded from everything, including traditional church education, due to Ethiopian society's patriarchal nature. Tesfaye, Hirut, and Rahel (2019) also noted that women have made significant contributions to Ethiopian history. As these writers further underlined, for instance, several women made significant contributions to the establishment of Emperor Menelik II's state and nation-building process, including his wife, Empress Taytu Betul. Besides that, as argued by Hub (2023), Ethiopian women have played an important role in conflict resolution and peace building in their communities, in accordance with their traditional norms. Therefore, in Ethiopia, women played significant role in economic, social, and cultural life (Pankhurst, 1990). Nevertheless, according to Mhired (2019), Ethiopian women's strength, abilities, and power to do thing and decide do not grant them the appropriate place, including formal authority for leadership. Rather, as articulated by Wright (2020), "As in other traditional societies, in Ethiopia a woman's worth is measured in terms of her role both as a mother and wife" (p. 52).

Since social, economic and political oppression of women are universal, Ethiopian women movement and demand for equality are part of the global struggle (Gennet, 2014). In response to these movements and demands, Ethiopia recognized the equal rights of women with men in every aspects of their life through the 1995 Constitution Article 35 (1), which states, "Women shall have equal rights with men". Also, Ethiopia is also a signatory of most women-focused international conventions that call for the empowerment and equal participation of women (Hirut, 2015). In order to implement these initiatives, in addition to the provisions in the Ethiopia's 1995 Constitution, the government formulated a National Women's Policy in 1993. This policy led to the rise of different

women-based programs and women-led civil society organizations. These efforts were able to bring some changes to the decision-making status of women. However, it was not easy for them to equally hold higher level political leadership positions (Hirut, 2015).

Meron (2021) articulated that, contemporarily, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was concerned about women's emancipation and lowering the obstacles they encountered by fighting against the deeply ingrained patriarchal system in Ethiopia following the March 2018 reform. According to Meron (2021), the government demonstrated its commitment to empowering more women in the national politics, and thus, women are becoming more involved in politics after the reform. However, Meron (2021) further underlined that merely placing women in positions of authority does not ensure that they would perform to the best of their abilities; rather, additional empowerment initiatives and the removal of obstacles must be considered. Aside from that, it is true that policies and institutionalizations need to be used to support these beneficial initiatives in order to guarantee the sustainability of changes and improvements in gender equality. According to IDEA (2024), access to positions of power and decision-making is a necessary condition for women to exert influence in the political sphere; however, it does not guarantee substantive participation. As IDEA (2024) pointed out, simply having access is inadequate; for women to effect meaningful change, they must occupy influential roles within the decision-making processes.

As outlined by Tesfay (2013), a variety of stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organizations, women's groups, and civil society organizations, are making efforts to help women take on leadership roles and be at the forefront of every endeavor in Ethiopia. Despite this effort, Tesfay (2013) added that much more work is required to increase the influence, voice, and decision-making power of women. In this context, scientific study is required to assist policymakers and improve knowledge of women's roles in leadership through theoretical, methodological, and practical evidence. The objective of this research is intended to further advance the body of knowledge regarding women and leadership by thoroughly analyzing the issues surrounding women and leadership and offering recommendations for how to empower more women to assume leadership roles from a variety of dimensions.

1.3. Statement of the problems

According to UN Women (2020), based on sex-based identities; women have experienced different types of challenges and discrimination over every issue, such as deep-seated disparities in income or a lack of political voice. Ojulu & Melesse (2014) argued that, despite some improvements registered in some countries, gender inequality persists in most of the world's countries, specifically in decision-making posts, regardless of their development status. According to the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) (2022) report, gender disparity is persistent across the globe in four majorly identified dimensions, namely economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The report indicated that, though the global gender gap has been closed by 68.1%, no country has yet achieved full gender parity. With these conditions and moves, the world will likely take an average of 132 years to reach full gender parity (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2022, p. 5). According to this same report, p. 5, across 146 countries, the political empowerment gender gap is greater than the above three dimensions, and it achieved the lowest across time and countries; only 22% of the gender gap has been closed in this dimension, while the health and survival gender gap, educational attainment gender gap, and economic participation gender gap closed by 95.8%, 94.4%, and 60.3%, respectively. According to the WEF (2022) report, women's political empowerment and leadership status are low on a global scale, and at present rates of progress, it will take 155 years to bridge the political empowerment and leadership gender gap. This demonstrates that achieving gender parity in political and decision-making domains will take many more years than in other dimensions, and it additionally implies that nations worldwide must make substantial practical efforts supported by implementable legislative frameworks.

According to UN Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2023), it is indicated that there has been progress on women in leadership in public office over time, but women have not been hired at equal rates in the higher political leadership positions. As a result, today women constitute only 16.1% of ministerial positions and solely 22.9% of shares in parliaments at the global level, with the rest of the seats being held by men (WEF, 2022, p. 39). According to the UN Women and IPU (2023), as of January 2023, only 31 countries have women heads of state and heads of government.

Meron (2021) asserted that "women's leadership is largely absent in Ethiopia" (p. 3). The numerical

finding also demonstrated the underrepresentation of women in Ethiopia, especially in the executive, legislative, and judiciary bodies' higher leadership posts. According to Negussie & Adula (2021), in Ethiopia, since 1995 (the first round of the national election), women's representation in the parliament increased from 2.7% to 42.59% in the recent 6th round election. This shows that the involvement of women in the parliament was optimistically increasing but still not equal to that of men (Negussie & Adula, 2021). According to the WEF (2022), in Ethiopia, from the total seats in the upper house (House of Federation), only 30.60% of the seats are held by women (p. 165). Moreover, women are underrepresented in the Ethiopian justice system, both at the federal and regional levels. For instance, according to Addadzi-Koom & Gage (2022, p. 77), in the three levels of federal courts, the total number of female judges constitute 30.1%, and they are often outnumbered by male judges during court decisions, including involving gender concerns. Based on the evidence above, Ethiopia ranked 74th out of 146 countries in terms of gender gap parity (WEF, 2022).

In Ethiopia, as the above numerical data indicated, gender parity is not ensured at higher leadership positions such as in the Council of Ministers, House of Federation, House of People's Representatives, the Judiciary Body, and other critical positions for public decisions. Moreover, according to Miressa (2014), there are small numbers of women in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia with great challenges emanating from different dimensions. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2017), institutionalization of democracy and producing inclusive public policy would not be realized without allowing the full and equal participation of women like that of men in higher leadership positions.

The existing gender disparities and inequality in leadership roles raise significant questions about why the gap persists despite global, regional, and country-level efforts to achieve gender equality through policy interventions and what Ethiopia's gender disparity looks like in this area. Understanding the root causes of the underrepresentation of women in higher leadership positions is also required. To answer the questions raised above, women- and leadership-related research needs to be conducted to thoroughly explore women's issues in leadership areas. Hence, first and foremost, this PhD dissertation subject arose from the reality and problems stated above, as well as the necessity to address the questions raised above.

Indeed, there are also reasons that inspired this investigation to be undertaken on the aforementioned research topic.

Firstly, this dissertation subject has been positively influenced by the central argument that the more women are represented in higher decision-making positions equally with men, the more the decisions are going to be inclusive and the more the governance systems are going to be equitable, which will improve the well-being of both sexes, leading to a just society and inclusive development (O'Neil, 2015; Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019). To realize this, women- and leadership-related scientific studies need to be enhanced to examine the root causes, identify problems, and provide ways forward for inclusive policies and interventions.

Secondly, there have been empirical studies on women and leadership in Ethiopia. However, a critical review of the existing literature reveals that scholars' concerns are limited to specific aspects of women and leadership, such as the challenges faced by women, women's perceptions of leadership, and opportunities provided by institutions to empower women, among other issues. On the other hand, the existing studies emphasized on cases and assessments undertaken at banks, at Woredas and Zones, and at some selected public or private organizations.

Furthermore, Meaza (2009), Berouk (2004), and Ojulu and Melesse (2014) had conducted empirical studies on women in political leadership roles in the national context. As examined by the study's researcher, all of the above empirical studies described the status of women's representation in higher decision-making positions in institutions such as parliament, ministerial positions, and political parties from 1995 to 2012 GC. Likewise, they all disclosed the wider gender gap and insignificant representation of women in higher political leadership positions. In spite of that, in the course of examining all stated studies, the researcher found three basic gaps that need to be filled by this monograph dissertation. The first is time; the research mentioned above analyzed the representation of women in senior leadership positions from 1995 to 2012 GC, or solely during the four election cycles. The second is a conceptual gap; the studies have overlooked women's leadership representation in the third branch of government, the judiciary. Finally, methodological shortcomings: the primary source of data for those investigations was secondary data from preserved documents, books, and journal articles. Thus, this study used the aforementioned studies as a springboard to frame

the investigation and filled the gaps by broadening the time frame, methodology, and conceptual covering (scope). Likewise, this dissertation used a comprehensive approach, looking at women's participation in higher leadership positions in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches during a three-decade period using long time data.

Finally, Ethiopia declared its first women's policy in 1993, following the coming of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to power; however, an examination of the content of women-based policies and their impacts on women's empowerment was not studied in a comprehensive manner. As a result, this study addressed the identified gap by conducting policy content analysis while taking into account its impacts on women's political empowerment.

1.4. Research objectives

The study is mainly aimed at examining and describing women's representation in higher-level leadership positions in Ethiopia from 1991 to 2022 in the last three decades. In order to achieve this general objective, the study has the following specific objectives.

1. Analyzing the contents of women-based policies and their linkage to women's empowerment of leadership positions from 1991-2022 in Ethiopia.
2. Describing women's representation status in higher leadership positions from 1991 to 2022 in Ethiopia.
3. Exploring the major barriers hindering women's participation in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia.
4. Examining the lived experience of exemplary women leaders working in federal higher leadership positions in Ethiopia.

1.5. Research questions

The study mainly inquires, "What were the women's representation statuses in higher leadership positions from 1991 to 2022 in Ethiopia, and why did the gap exist at this level despite the efforts of the last three decades?" To answer this main research question, the following specific research questions were structured.

- In what ways have the policies in place aligned to the empowerment of women to higher leadership positions from 1991-2022 in Ethiopia?
- How has women's representation in higher leadership positions varied from 1991-2022 in Ethiopia in light of policy efforts?
- What are the barriers to women's participation in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia?
- What does the life journey of exemplary women leaders in Ethiopia look like?

1.6. Scope of the research

This dissertation has a limited conceptual, geographical, and methodological scope. Conceptually, the subject of this study encompassed the current and former representation levels of Ethiopian women in higher leadership positions. Although women's involvement is vital in all areas of leadership (corporate, academic, military or legal), this study specifically has focused on women's political leadership representation. Besides, the study has included additional aspects that are supportive of this concept. Among them, it has examined the existing policies, strategies, or other legal frameworks that exist to ensure gender parity in Ethiopia. Specifically, the study shows how the existing women-based policies are empowering women to take on leadership roles in higher-level decision-making positions. In this regard, this study concentrated solely on women-centered policies, strategies, and plans designed for women's socioeconomic and political empowerment; it does not examine development-related policies that mainstream women's issues alongside other issues. Additionally, this study has analyzed the barriers that hinder women's ability to achieve higher leadership roles. Solutions for those barriers and experience sharing from respected female leaders are the other major concerns of this paper at the conceptual level. However, the analysis of women's presence in higher leadership positions were limited to federal higher-level government entities; the conditions of women's representation at other levels of government (at the lower and middle-level public positions) and other non-governmental entities such as the private companies, CSOs, NGOs, and were not the focus area of this study.

Geographically, because the research focuses on the conditions of women's participation in higher

decision-making positions at the national level, the federal institutions are the subject of this study. It is because, in Ethiopia, these bodies typically make significant national decisions that are envisioned to get implemented at the regional, zonal, woreda, and city administration levels. The subject institutions for this research center of analysis were all of the existing 20 ministerial offices, the president and prime minister's offices (the executive), the judiciary body (federal three-level courts), and the legislative body (the House of Federation and House of People's Representatives).

Methodologically, this study is not purely qualitative or purely quantitative but a mixed type of research that has included important values from the two approaches. An important element from both qualitative and quantitative research approaches has been used in this single study in order to implement their strengths and reduce the weaknesses of both. It is also a type of descriptive and explanatory research. In-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and document analysis were the major data collection tools for this specific study. Following data collection, the data analysis techniques implemented for this study were thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and content analysis. Finally, in terms of time scope, this study focused on the 30 years of women's representation in federal higher leadership positions. To see the variation in participation levels and gender equality/inequality analysis, descriptive and explanatory analyses were conducted using different timelines depending on the availability of the required data.

1.7. Limitation of the study

This study is limited in the concepts covered, the methodology adopted, and in the participants selected. This study could be more worthwhile if it covered the representation level of women both in public and private institutions and at all levels of decision-making positions. However, this study was intentionally designed to focus on the presence of women in public organizations at the federal higher level of decision-making positions. This conceptual and methodological limitation resulted from a variety of constraints including time, resources, and participant accessibility issues. Nevertheless, the study examined the relationship between structural and policy-level gaps in women's representation in leadership positions across federal legislative, executive, and judiciary government institutions.

As previously stated, the research participant's accessibility uneasiness (those in higher positions) was caused by two major factors: hesitancy about the impact of the study (negligence) and being overburdened with governmental and public tasks. They did also prioritize work schedules and give repeated appointments for the interview schedules. Such constraints alienate the researcher from the schedule set by both the supervisors and the researcher. Additionally, it also exposed the investigator to extra expenses. On the other hand, the initially intended government offices to get secondary data for this study have been changed later due to their poor data management systems and the absence of organized and comprehensive archived data. The change and the effort to establish contacts took a long time. Nonetheless, by identifying the limitations early, the researcher has used different strategies to handle the challenges that steam from psychological readiness up to waiting for long to get the convenient time of participants and to collect the necessary research data.

1.8. Significance of the study

The study has theoretical, methodological, and policy (practice) level significance. Theoretically, this dissertation is necessary to uncover the dynamics of women's leadership participation over time and fill the knowledge gaps in the area of women and leadership in Ethiopia. Empirically and methodologically, this study has invaluable contribution in uncovering the 30-year women's representation level in Ethiopia in federal-level higher leadership positions in a comprehensive and organized manner. To make informed policy and take practical decisions, it is critical to understand the dynamics of women's participation rates at different times based on empirical data. It is also meant to determine how the previous three decades' initiatives (policy measures) have contributed to closing the gender gaps in leadership positions in the country. Meanwhile, it has the purpose of identifying and analyzing the different barriers that restrict women's performance in their journey to climb leadership positions. Practically, the study discloses the state of interventions during the last three decades, as well as the impacts of those efforts, especially the role of policy reforms in reducing gender inequalities in leadership positions at the federal legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.

Additionally, as basic research, it has added to the body of knowledge about women and leadership. And, as an evidence-based study, it would serve as a source or reference for policymakers to conduct further relevant actions on women's political empowerment and decision-making roles.

Furthermore, it can also be useful for other scholars and research institutes to utilize it as a benchmark for further investigation into women and leadership by refining the methodologies, tools, approaches, and theories applicable to the country's setting. Finally, it significantly contributes to the researcher's self-development in terms of knowledge and future career growth.

1.9. Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. The first chapter introduces what is being investigated by articulating the problems (issues to be examined), as well as the research objectives and the reasons for accomplishing them. The second chapter provides a review of selected related literatures, including the theoretical/conceptual/empirical literature. These literatures are consistent with the study's specific objectives, which include identifying the barriers that prevent women from rising to the higher rungs of the leadership ladder, analyzing women-based policies that assist women in reaching higher leadership positions, exploring ways for further improving women's leadership roles, and other related concepts. The third chapter of this study deals about the research methodology, or the research approaches, designs, and tools of data collection that are utilized to answer the research questions of the study. In this chapter, the research paradigm that shaped the overall contents of the study has been presented. Chapters four, five, six, and seven of this dissertation present data analysis, findings, and presentations on four subsequent study objectives, as well as discussions of findings obtained from interviews and document analysis. Finally, chapter eight of the monograph gives the conclusions, recommendations, and future areas of study in the studied subject. The study's final section includes appendices and references.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Unlike the first chapter, which highlights the dissertation's essential aspects, this chapter extensively reviews the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature pertaining to the subject under study. The conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literatures on the topic of women and leadership have been reviewed and presented subsequently. Additionally, the study's conceptual framework was established based on the literatures reviewed, which outlines explanatory variables pertaining to barriers, values, legislation, and practical concerns regarding women and leadership.

The conceptual literature review of this study focused on presenting the meanings, principles, ideas, and assumptions to clarify concepts related to the issue and to contextualize the terms, phrases, or subjects relevant to the study. In this regard, concepts of gender equality, its essentiality in leadership positions, the relationship between women and leadership, trends of women's status in leadership at different geographical contexts, the challenges with them, and other related concepts have been raised and discussed in the conceptual literature section of this study.

Subsequently, major theories claiming to explain gender inequality and explain issues related to women in leadership and decision-making positions have been reviewed here. Specifically, various versions of feminist theory with their core principles, ideas, assumptions, and propositions are reviewed and presented in the context of this study. Likewise, the fundamental thought of conflict and structural functional theories regarding gender inequality is also presented in this section. The empirical literature of this chapter included the review of scientific and scholarly works related to the topic under study. This review section is examined and presented, taking into account the global, regional, and national settings for women and leadership. Several notable books, monographs, and peer-reviewed materials from reputable sources were reviewed.

The review literature in this chapter enhanced the problem statements, highlighted research gaps, and contextualized the inquiries. It was also presented to assist the reader in understanding significant concepts, theories, factual data (evidence), and empirical gaps from the literature.

2.2. CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2.1. Understanding gender equality

The definition and notions of gender equality are contested among the different forms of feminist theory, and the content of the topic is full with continual issues and dilemmas spanning from what gender inequality really means to who is responsible for this gender inequality? On the other hand, there is a little consensus on the definition of gender equality among policymakers, academicians, and civil society organizations (Verloo, 2007). According to Verloo, (2007), Gender equality is both a core concern and an essential part of human development and, is a topic of academic and policy research.

As defined by Kabeer (2005), gender equality is a process of empowerment in which individuals, particularly women, gain the opportunity to make choices and access resources previously unavailable to them. Additionally, it is defined as empowering women and girls by providing equal capabilities, resources, and decision-making abilities (UNICEF, 2017). Gender equality is also defined by Babugura (2017) as the equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities to be equally enjoyed and rendered by boys, girls, women, and men; it also refers to the equal conditions and circumstances for both genders to realize their full human and democratic rights and to contribute to and benefit from the economic, social, environmental, cultural, and political developments. According to Babugura (2017), gender equality does not mean that both genders are the same and will become the same; rather, it means that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender equality is all about the similar treatment of women and men in all conditions of a state including in higher leadership positions, and this is mainly derived from the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), that is, all mankind is born equal with dignity and rights (Negussie & Adula, 2021).

2.2.2. Essentiality of gender equality

A country cannot achieve higher progress and redistributive justice in all dimensions of development without providing equal opportunities for men and women (Shanthi and Kakarla,

2020). In this respect, gender equality is not just a fundamental human right; it is the basis for a prosperous, peaceful, and sustainable development at global, regional, national and local levels. Equal involvement of men and women in the workforce in general, as well as in leadership and decision-making positions, certainly contributes to a country's economic success; it also improves the well-being of women and the nation as a whole from a variety of perspectives (Shanthi and Kakarla, 2020).

According to Babugura (2017), meaningful sustainable development is unthinkable without recognizing the diverse view, experience, potential, perspective, and knowledge of both genders, and failing to recognize the women's potential means losing half of the above attributes that belong to a woman, which makes the developmental efforts and results inadequate.

When women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living: positive developments can be seen in education, infrastructure and health, while concrete steps are taken to deliver democracy. Thus, by lifting the living standards of women, allowing more women's participation in decision-making, policy formulation, and taking up political leadership, the whole nation will be developed (Salween Institute for Public Policy, 2018, p.5)

The utilization of both genders' attributes in the developmental activities determines the success of countries. The more the nation utilizes their men and women citizens' potential equally, the closer the nation is to success (Babugura, 2017). According to Jeni, et al. (2014), greater women's participation in all levels of government administration is valuable for the consideration of policy from different perspectives. As per Jeni, et al. (2014), women's equal participation in the legislature with males suggests that the parliament will be more concerned with social issues. This is because women are more sociable and more aware of social issues than males, and they prioritize social issues such as child care, pensions, women's rights, social capital, and social cohesion. Women's names, on the other hand, are less likely to be associated with corruption in the public as well as the private sectors. "Women's voices can be transformative, working to highlight and combat discrimination, focusing attention on policies that can reduce gender inequality, and directing resources to programs that can enhance opportunities for women, girls, and their families" (Jeni, et al., 2014, p. 173).

2.2.3. Women and leadership

For many centuries, patriarchal norms prohibited 'women,' (one of the two sex groups) from being associated with leadership and from participating equally in formal leadership and decision-making positions in the society and, as a result higher leadership positions were conventionally held by men and have created gender inequality in public spheres (Keohane, 2020; Harris, 2019). However, in the past five or more decades, women's participation and representation in formal leadership positions have increased in government, business, higher education, CSOs, legal and non-profit organizations, and other aspects of countries (Keohane, 2020; Harris, 2019). Nevertheless, there is a substantial gender gap in high-level leadership positions, and women are underrepresented in higher leadership positions such as executive posts, parliamentarians, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), directors, and other positions in every corner of the world, irrespective of the economic and democratization status of countries (Appelbaum, D'Antico, & Daoussis, 2019; Carli & Eagly, 2001; and Chin, 2011).

As articulated by Appelbaum, D'Antico, and Daoussis (2019), governments, giant companies, and other private or public-based organizations have shown their interest in workforce diversity or inclusion of both genders at every level of leadership positions. According to the above writers, this aspiration basically emanated from the effective nature of women's leadership in goal-setting and achievement, concern for others, collaborative working, and societal interest-based performances. According to Harris (2019), women are better known for their honesty, work ethics, compassion, communication, generosity, goal-achieving, cooperative, and democratic leadership styles in their leadership courses. However, despite this fact, women are marginalized from higher leadership posts because of many recognized and unnoticed factors and barriers. Women face different challenges compared men's to ascending into and working in higher leadership and decision-making positions (Harris, 2019). Most of the challenges are universal, and they exist in every corner of the world, as patriarchal family structure is the history of all family settings (Rhode, 2016). The patriarchal-based inhibiting factors including unconscious bias, childcare responsibilities, a lack of mentors, outright prejudice, gender role expectations, a lack of family/friendly policies, and gender stereotypes are identified by Keohane (2020), Appelbaum; D'Antico & Daoussis (2019); Rhode (2016), and Chin (2011) as problems limiting the ambition of women in seeking higher leadership positions in every aspect of life.

2.2.4. Trends of women in higher leadership positions

A. The global trend of women in higher leadership positions

All significant decision-making positions have historically been held by males worldwide, although this trend has started to change since the middle of the 20th century, when a few women started to hold high leadership roles alongside men in various nations (Adler & Osland, 2016). According to Adler & Osland, (2016), none of the 147 women who have held the positions of president or prime minister in their respective nations throughout history did so prior to 1950. Based on statistical data, only three females ascended to heads of state and heads of government positions worldwide in the 1960s. In the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, there were 6, 11, 37, and 39 women leaders as president and prime minister, respectively. Ultimately, in 2010, there were 54 female presidents and Prime ministers (Adler & Osland, 2016). Of the 54 higher leaders of governments in the 2010s, 37 (69%) were female prime ministers and 17 (31%) were female presidents (Jalalzai, 2017). When the trend first began, Margaret Thatcher of UK, Indira Gandhi of India, Golda Meier of Israel, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka , and Elisabeth Domitien of Central African Republic were the most prominent and early female national leaders to ascend to power prior to the 1980s and shattered the glass ceiling in their respective executive branches (Montecinos, 2017; Jalalzai, 2017). Following the aforementioned female leaders, several important female leaders have been able to advance to higher governmental leadership positions as a result of reforms from the 1990s to the present.

Jalalzai (2004) asserted that in contrast to other regions, European nations elect a relatively greater number of women to positions of leadership due to their more welcoming and improved political systems for women. According to UN Women (2021), the top five departments and portfolios led or held by women executive members in different countries are the concern of family and child affairs, social inclusion, social security, and indigenous affairs of minority groups. Currently women holding higher leadership positions are evident in nations Finland, Argentina, Bangladesh, and New Zealand (Jalalzai, 2017). The Middle East and North Africa, as well as several established nations like the US, Russia, and China, are among the many places where women have yet to shatter the glass ceiling in leadership (Jalalzai, 2017). The only regions lacking women in leadership roles were the Arab and Pacific ones (Montecinos, 2017).

Women still make up only 23.3 % of cabinet positions of governments and 27.2% of legislators, despite the fact that things are changing quickly (UN Women, 2024). Data show that women are underrepresented at all levels of higher leadership and decision-making positions across the world, and gender balance in politics remains a long-term objective (UN Women, 2024).

B. Trends of women's representation in higher leadership positions in Africa

Although African women have historically been marginalized from political power, they have played a crucial role in transforming the continent across various domains, including social, economic, and political spheres (Amina & Ibrahim, 2019). Amina and Ibrahim (2019) assert that women's roles are predominantly associated with caregiving on a global scale; however, this phenomenon is particularly pronounced in Africa, where women are anticipated to demonstrate heightened levels of effort, commitment, and sacrifice. According to Ramtohul (2021), despite the challenges posed by patriarchal cultures and structures, women in Africa have made and possess a rich historical legacy and significant socio-economic contributions throughout the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras.

In recent years, African women have assumed a crucial role in international conferences focused on women's issues, actively advocating for the safeguarding of women's rights through the promotion of the ratification of various international and regional treaties and agreements. Notably, Africa has emerged as a leader on a global scale regarding women's representation in parliamentary roles (Ramtohul, 2021). Africa exhibits both the highest and lowest Women's Political Participation (WPP) in lower houses, with Rwanda having women making up 61% of its members of parliament (MPs), while Nigeria has only 4% representation of women among its parliamentarians (International IDEA, 2024). Despite the slow progress, particularly since the 1995 Beijing Declaration for Action, women's political empowerment and their involvement in decision-making processes have been increasing (Bauer & Okpotor, 2013).

The election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia as the first female head of government in Africa, alongside the appointment of Joyce Banda as president of Malawi in 2012, represents a significant milestone in motivating African women to pursue leadership roles within their respective nations (Sadie, 2015). Pursuant to Sadie, (2015), African women have increasingly been elected to leadership positions within regional organizations, such as the African Union. In 2012, the African

Union appointed Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma from South Africa as its first female chairperson, marking a significant milestone in the organization's 49-year history. Although the progress has been gradual, the election and appointment of women to higher leadership roles have been on the rise. This trend is also evident in Ethiopia, where Saleh-Work Zewde was elected as the first female head of state, serving from 2018 to 2024. Countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, Namibia, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Mozambique are notable for their high representation of female parliamentarians (Sadie, 2015). Remarkably, Rwanda leads globally, with women occupying 61.25% of the seats in the national parliament (IPU, 2022). Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania are among African countries that gave constitutional guarantee for quota system to have certain number of women in their high level leadership positions (Lituchy, et al., 2017). Yet in Africa, women's aspirations for leadership positions in both private and public sectors are hindered by various challenges, including discrimination, stereotypical attitudes, patriarchal mind sets, workplace issues, and personal problems (Amina & Ibrahim, 2019). Overall, despite the existence of various global, regional, and sub-regional initiatives promoting gender parity in higher leadership positions, such as the establishment, ratification and domestication of the 1995 Beijing Declaration for Action, the African continent has experienced sluggish advancement in the representation of women in decision-making roles. The gender disparity remains significant in this regard, with women being notably underrepresented in political and public leadership positions (Sadie, 2015).

C. Trends of women's representation in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia

Although Ethiopia's patriarchal social structure has limited women from holding higher leadership posts, they have always played significant roles in the country's politics, socio-culture, and economy, both during times of peace and conflict (Meaza, 2009). Women leaders back then typically gained access to authority through marriage or blood ties to male leaders rather than through official channels (Meaza, 2009).

Formerly, Ethiopian political history holds the names of the prominent and influential women leaders such as Queen Shaba, Queen Eleni, Queen Yodit Gudit, and Empress Taytu Betul and their historical roles are documented in different literatures in different ways. During the reign of Menilik II (1889–1913), women's, including Menilik's wife Empress Taytu Betul, started to shine in the history of modern Ethiopia (Agenagn, 2020). According to Meaza (2009) and Agenagn (2020),

Empress Taytu was the most influential and iconic female politician and political advisor in the course of keeping Ethiopian sovereignty and unifying the country by serving as a war general against the Italian invasion, a foreign relations architect, and the chief advisor of the emperor. As depicted by the above scholars, next to Empress Taytu, the daughter of Menilik II, Zewditu (1917–1929) was the first official female leader to be crowned in the history of Ethiopia, with the latter Emperor Haile Selassie I, or the then-Teferi, as her regent, with the support of the nobility.

As depicted by Meaza (2009), even though they did not ascend to formal leadership positions, there were also other women who played a decisive role in protecting the country from foreign enemies, such as the Italian ambition for colonization. In this regard, the roles of patriots Zenebech Woldeyes and Shewargeged Gedle were unforgettable in 1935 (at the time of the second Italian invasion). In the 1960's up until the 1980's, women's have been engaged in different movements, including the student's movement, by being in and outside Ethiopia to bring changes to the political and economic aspects of the country from imperial to socialist rules. Again, after the 1974 revolutions and changes of the Emperor Haile Selassie regime, women have played their part through women's associations and other related organizations (Meaza, 2009).

As described by the above scholar, after the downfall of the military government and the inauguration of the 1995 constitution, women's participation and representation in public and political leadership has increased from time to time. These progresses are observed in the national and regional legislatures, cabinets and executives, and in the judiciary body. For instance, as Ojulu and Melesse (2014) argued, despite its tortoise-like journey, in all areas of public representation, women's involvement is showing advancements. As a whole, women have contributed a lot to Ethiopian sovereignty and modernization by joining in the resistance movements against the foreign invasion and in the struggle against the dictatorial governments in the country through military and non-military-based associations along with men's (Meaza, 2009). However, as articulated this scholar, after the completion of the predetermined goals, women's faces turned to the routinely gendered roles in the house, and this is mainly because the values rendered by the women have not been credited to the extent possible and women's weren't offered leadership positions as their sacrifices leveled at the armed struggles. As a result of this, according to Haregewoin and Emebet (2022), it has been found difficult for women's access to higher leadership and decision-making positions in a variety of state and non-state sectors. Due to the facts presented above, currently, there is a wider gender gap in the representation of women in

parliamentary and ministerial positions as well as in the judiciary body (Ojulu & Melesse, 2014; Negussie & Adula, 2021).

2.2.5. Review of international and regional legal frameworks for gender equality

Ethiopia is a signatory to international inclusive conventions and charters such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These frameworks affirm men and women's equal rights to all economic, social, cultural, civic, and political rights. The international and continental legal frameworks and policy provisions have recognized the importance of ensuring women's equal participation in political and public decision-making positions of countries. Thus, the women-based legal frameworks in Ethiopia mostly base themselves on the following international instruments.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): It was adopted in 1979 and this international instrument stresses the need to make every possible effort to end discrimination against women in all spheres of society. It also underlines the importance of taking proactive measures, such as legislation and regulations that encourage women's participation in the political process and decision-making. The CEDAW asserts in Part II, Articles 7(b), "State Parties shall ensure that women participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, as well as to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government." This calls for the equal participation of women in positions of public decision-making. Ethiopia domesticated this convention in 1981.

The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Platform for Action (VDPA): This was generated in 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna, Austria. It stated on the needs to guarantee that women everywhere are able to exercise their human rights. It therefore encourages all governments to use the opportunity to empower women as agents and beneficiaries of the development process. Moreover, the declaration concerns the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women (DAW) and the elimination of violence against women (VAW). In this regard, the declaration on VAW was drafted by the UN General Assembly and encouraged member states to implement the provisions. The Vienna Declaration calls on member states and all regional and international organizations to work on the advancement of women's access to decision-making positions at all levels. The World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in 1995 was a follow up to Vienna declaration in 1993.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA): This was the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The inadequate representation of women in authority and decision-making is one of the 12 major concerns of the Beijing Conference. The conference pointed out the persistent exclusion of women from decision-making platforms and various aspects of life as key barriers to women's advancement to political leadership positions. The party states of the declaration were convinced by the statement that “Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace (BDPA, 1995)”.

The Beijing platform emphasized that the most effective way to consider women's perspectives and aspirations in the development of public policy is to ensure that women are fairly and equally represented in leadership positions in public/government/institutions. In order to guarantee the tangible involvement and representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles, the BDPA identified the following strategic objectives: (a) Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making; (b) Enhance women's capacity to participate in leadership and decision-making; (c) Create or strengthen national machinery and other governmental bodies; (d) Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs, and projects; and (e) generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: This fifteen-year (2015–2030) international public policy has a motto of ‘no one left behind’ and has built up on the unfinished and off-track Millennium Development Goals by expanding its frameworks to reach the most vulnerable groups, including girls and women. Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls are among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In developing their goals, UN member states acknowledged continued gender inequality as a fundamental impediment to achieving sustainable development in the economic, social, and environmental arenas. It identified goal of ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, public, and economic life (SDG, in Goal 5 (5.5)). Moreover, It also has the goal of adopting and strengthening solid

policies and enforceable legislation to promote gender equality and empower all women and girls at all levels (SDG, Goal 5 (5.c)). The Addis Abeba Action Agenda (AAAA) of July 2015 is an action plan for implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which originated from Ethiopia's third international conference on development financing.

Africa has also continental conventions and protocols that are aimed at achieving gender balance in society, including participation in decision-making positions. The Maputo Protocol is one of the continental legal frameworks.

The Maputo Protocol: This protocol was ratified in 2003. It includes the African Women's Rights Protocol, and others, that are commonly referred to as the Maputo Protocol. The key principles of African women's protocol include gender equality and the abolition of all forms of discrimination that harm women's lives. An affirmative action or any positive measures, was recognized by the protocol for promoting women's active engagement and participation in public decision-making roles in all branches of government. The Article 9 [2] of the protocol presents that the states are obliged to “guarantee increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making.” Member states were also required to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to facilitate the implementation of the protocol's provisions”. The Maputo Protocol is formulated under the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights. Although Ethiopia signed both the charter and protocol, it has not ratified the Maputo Protocol yet.

Under the framework of the Maputo Protocol, there are sub-regional women’s rights-based conventions, including the 2015 ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development; the SADC (South Africa Development Community) Protocol on Gender and Development, adopted in 2008; and the Council of Ministers of the East African Community Gender Policy. In all cases, the member nations were obligated by all stated protocols and regulations to assist in enforcing the protocol and to take all necessary steps to promote women into leadership roles at all levels. Regarding equal representation of women in positions of decision-making, each legislation, policy, and protocol in the region is executed out with its own standards and goals in account.

Agenda 2063: It is a 50-year strategic framework for Africa. It was also aimed at establishing a prosperous, inclusive, peaceful, and developed Africa in 2063. Gender equality is among the

various aspects of the development agenda of this instrument. Agenda 2063's aspiration six goal seventeen advocates gender equality in all phases of life. It aims to guarantee gender equality in decision-making positions at all levels and mandates member states to achieve 30% female representation by election at all levels of government, including the judiciary. It encourages the establishment of supportive institutions for gender equality (Hingston, 2016).

2.2.6. Challenges of women's participation in leadership positions

A. Gender stereotypes as hindering factor

Gender stereotypes are all about what women and men look like (descriptive) and how they should behave (prescriptive); i.e the descriptive and prescriptive characters are the expectations placed on men and women by society (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009).

The Eagly's (1987) social role theory explains gender stereotypes, and for this theory, the gender difference between men and women is expressed in terms of the behaviors, roles, and expectations assigned by the society to be displayed and exercised by the two genders. According to this scholar, based on society's judgment, women are considered communal and men are evaluated as agentic. As a gender stereotype, the communal are believed to be helpful, emotional, kind, affectionate, sympathetic, and concerned with the welfare of others. On the other hand, the agentic are believed to be controlling, forceful, assertive, aggressive, direct, ambitious, and independent from other people. Because of such stereotypes, all the communal and agentic attributes are ascribed to women and men, respectively. According to the above scholar, this stereotypical characterization determines the role, influence, and social status of men and women both at home and in the workplace.

According to Eagly (1987), because of this characterization of genders, both men and women are forced to engage in work, occupations, or professions convenient to the above gender-stereotypical views. As a result of this, men occupy all the jobs that require assertiveness, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and physical strength, such as engineering, information technology, construction, electrician, vehicle technician, driver, operator, sport player, and piloting, while women are mostly involved in the jobs like teaching, nursing, clerical support, street and related sales, cleaning roles, and food preparation that require helpfulness, collaboration, and nurturing to/with others. As Eagly & Sczesny, (2009) further underlined, always the top managerial

and leadership positions and jobs are considered to be male domains and such managerial positions appear to be characterized in masculine terms. According to this writer, this gendered role alignment is also displayed at the workplace, where men control high-level decision-making and leadership positions while women are only restricted to clerical work, resulting in unequal power and resource distribution between men and women.

Gender bias and gender stereotypes sometimes result in different treatments and evaluations of men and women in a certain organization. Good performance and competence would not render a guarantee for the women to climb higher organizational ranks in a stereotypical society. This biased evaluation towards women lets them hold the lower positions in organizations (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). The society judge women's ability negatively or ascribe lower values and in higher leadership positions, women leaders are seen more hesitantly than their male counterparts (Johns, 2013). In general, gender stereotypes preserve men's supremacy in all aspects while assigning inferior status to women in a nation like Ethiopia. In cases where iconic female leaders who work in higher leadership and decision-making positions exert their potential and perform better than their male counterparts, the support and encouragement provided by the society are not as great as for male leaders, evaluating her performance from the cultural values of the society (Alqahtani, 2019).

B. the Glass ceiling and the Glass cliff effects as hindering factors

Glass ceiling and glass cliff explain the different manifestations and conceptualizations of the challenges and barriers hindering women from ascending to higher leadership and decision-making positions. Archival and experimental research has confirmed the practice of the glass ceiling and glass cliff as challenges for women to capture the higher leadership areas (Kulich & Iacoviello, 2017).

Glass ceiling

"The glass ceiling", a phrase first introduced in the 1980s, is a metaphor for the invisible and artificial barriers that block women from advancing up the corporate ladder to higher management and executive positions" (Johns, 2013, p.1). The glass ceiling is a way of putting invisible challenges in front of women in their work journey and limiting their options to the limited and specified ranks assumed for them. This hard-to-see informal barrier makes women restricted by what they have rather

than thinking and acting to hold higher positions, higher pay, and further opportunities (Lockwood, 2004). According to Lewis, (2019), the barriers are termed "glass' because of their invisibility, and they are not noticed by the women until they result in the unequal status of women in all aspects of life.

According to Lockwood (2004), there are different manifestations to determine the existence of a glass ceiling in a certain organization, be it private, public, or non-governmental. The first sign is the implementation of different payments (in favor of men) for both genders, no matter the similarity of positions. Related to this, women who have the same professional competence as men are not allowed to take some advancement training like that of men, so that the men can easily move to better positions by guaranteeing such advancements. The second sign according to the above scholar is when women's promotion is hampered by the well-established masculine-based organizational culture and when this culture maintains the traditional conditions, like the need to maintain men at the top as they were. The other significant indicator of a glass ceiling in an organization is perceptions about women's capacity to reconcile work and home duties. As Lockwood (2004) remarked, many cultures contend that women's primary obligation is caregiving to their families. Because of this notion, many organizations do not enable women to advance to higher levels of leadership and decision-making. Organizations assume that women's commitment to their home tasks will affect that of the institution's performance. As a result of this, organizational positions that demand outside commitment (fieldwork), overtime work, and other special commitments are not encouraged for women. Finally, men's informal off-office networking helps them create friendships, which leads to the gain of necessary information and social networks for advancement to higher leadership and decision-making positions.

Glass Cliff

When women started to break the glass ceiling and capture senior leadership positions, a new barrier often stood in front of them: the glass cliff. The glass cliff denotes that women are more likely to be placed in higher leadership and decision-making positions at times of difficulty, crisis, or in precarious contexts (Kulich & Iacoviello, 2017). Such discriminatory and biased appointment conditions are invisible and unnoticed by the victim (women) assuming the position, and this situation is called a "glass." On the other hand, a person who holds a position at the time of poor performance of an institution has a greater chance of being blamed and criticized for future failures, which leads to stress and opting out of the organization, although the failure of the organization had

already started before the appointee woman came, and this condition is called the "cliff" (fall down) (Kulich & Iacoviello, 2017). According to Oelbaum (2016), different archival and empirical studies based on different cases demonstrated that women are often appointed for higher leadership positions that are inherently risky, while men are appointed to lead in relatively stable, normal, and better circumstances.

A position held by women through the glass cliff is dangerous in the career life of a woman, and it can also exacerbate gender inequality. Compared to men, women who assume leadership positions are more exposed to blame and humiliation for the negative outcomes of organizations that have already been in a bad journey (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). As underlined by Oelbaum (2016), a woman who has reached higher decision-making positions in a critically poor-performing organization is exposed to anxiety and depression up until leaving the position. This glass cliff is not only limited to these effects on women's careers, but it also leads to the conclusion that lower performance means the presence of women, which negatively contributes to the coming women assuming leadership.

The glass cliffs are not restricted to business organizations; they are also applied in political organizations and institutions as a response to faulty outcomes, poor outcomes, fear of failure instability, and other related result indications (Kulich & Ryan, 2017). The appointment and selection of both men and women have to be in comparable conditions to see the performances of both in the same environment (Kulich & Iacoviello, 2017).

C. Work/family load conflict as hindering factor

Though human beings have lived in this world for thousands of years, the perception towards the primary responsibilities of women is not far from childbearing, child rearing, and caregiving to a family, and this has reduced the leadership and decision-making status of women both at home and in workplaces (Wei & Taejun, 2013). According to Wei & Taejun (2013), family responsibility is one factor among many others that influences the use of time, commitment, and energy women devote to work. The homework (family care) often competes with women's efforts to engage in the workplace and creates family-work conflict in their lives. Such a condition creates an adverse effect on the career development of women into leadership and decision-making positions.

Gendered roles have contributed to the family/work conflict, i.e., the overburdening of women with household responsibilities has its own negative effects on their external work performances (Friedman, 1991). According to Friedman (1991), "Women report more conflict than men and parents report more conflict than non-parents (p. 16)". Sometimes a woman who runs both her professional and home affairs is obliged to take some of her career time for her family; in the meantime, she might be penalized for leaving her work and will be penalized during time promotion and career development interventions. This condition keeps women held back in the promotion process and ascendance to higher leadership positions (Johns, 2013).

Men and women experience work-family conflict differently (Friedman, 1991). Employed women are less likely to spend more time, effort, and energy than unemployed women on family issues, but compared with men, they are more likely to devote considerable time to home and family in fulfilling their family responsibilities (Wei & Taejun, 2013). As a result, most women professionals are obliged to face a "triple burden" at home, at work and in the community affairs. A triple burden refers to the competing women's reproductive, community and productive roles at family and broader levels (Moser, 2012). Therefore, marriage and family life, especially the gendered one, have a complex outcome on the work performance and career development of women by consuming the energy, time, devotion, and attentions of women towards their jobs (Wei & Taejun, 2013). Family-work conflict also reduces the efficiency and effectiveness of women (Friedman, 1991).

Table 2.1: Sources of Work-Family Conflict

Jobs contribute to work-family conflict when the employee:	Families contribute to work-family conflict when the family:
i. Works long hours: ii. Has a burdensome work schedule involving overtime, weekend work, travel demands, or shift work; iii. Has a job with little autonomy; iv. Has no job security: v. Has a very physically or mentally	i. Has a disapproving spouse; ii. Has inequities in the marriage; iii. Has an unequal division of home labor; iv. Has children, especially pre-schoolers; v. Has had unstable child care arrangements; vi. Has an elder care responsibility,

demanding job; vi. Has a negative social climate at work; vii. Has unsupportive co-workers; viii. Has an insensitive supervisor; ix. A company with inflexible work policies.	especially for relatives living at a distance.
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Source: Friedman, 1991, Sources of Work-Family Conflict, p. 17

D. Lower aspiration as hindering factor

Lower aspiration, confidence, and career ambition of women is another factor that prevents them from assuming senior and executive positions. Women's lower self-confidence and self-belief lead them to take fewer leadership positions and focus more on cautious career choices (Johns, 2013). According to the finding by Johns (2013), women lag behind men by an average of three years in assuming and thinking about leadership and managerial positions. The findings by Johns further indicate that stastically,"40% of women reported that they wanted to assume Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions as compared to 70% of men" (Johns, 2013, p. 6). There is a clear disparity in the ambition and aspiration towards senior-level positions by women and men.

Women have a tendency to gravitate towards jobs that are consistent with their feminine characteristics as assumed by society. Gender stereotypes in this regard have a significant negative impact on women's career choices. So that, women restrict themselves from assuming higher decision-making positions and have a tendency to apply for and stay at lower and medium-level positions. Gender stereotypes sometimes create women's self-stereotypes (personally, the women might feel that they do not fit for or are not capable of assuming higher leadership roles and responsibilities) (Netchaeva, Sheppard, & Balushkina, 2022).

According to the result of a meta-analysis of 174 studies over the last 60 years undertaken by Netchaeva, Sheppard, & Balushkina (2022) on the female/male aspiration to leadership positions, there is a significant gender difference in career development aspiration. The results revealed that men aspire more for higher leadership and decision-making roles than women. Women's self-stigma is identified as the major cause of the difference in aspirations for leadership between

men and women. Self-stigma has been understood as individuals internalizing their respective gender stereotypes and voluntarily conforming to gender norms. Gender scholars such as Kabeer (2005) and Hancock (2007) refer this concept as the colonization of women's mindset and inculcate the belief that men are better than women and deserve more power. As argued by Netchaeva, Sheppard, & Balushkina (2022), this means that the women's conform to communal stereotypes and the men's conform to agentic stereotypes or characters. Again, this communal character of women forced them to think of leadership positions as stressful ones that might take the attention of women from their families and would overburden her. Generally, women have lower aspirations and levels of self-confidence, which prevent them from pursuing higher positions in their professional lives.

2.2.7. Approaches of ensuring gender equality

1. Women's empowerment

The term 'empowerment' first came to be used in the 17th century, and it denotes self-strength, self-control, self-power, self-reliance, personal choice, own decision-making power, freedom, etc (Mandal, 2013). Pursuant to this writer, empowerment has different dimensions which enable people, especially the deprived, oppressed, and powerless, to manage their own lives as they wish to live and to play a crucial role for themselves, the community, and the nation as well. Though the process might be different because of the different values and beliefs of societies, the empowerment of the subjugated individuals and groups has to be the focus of all people to make them believe in themselves and gain self-confidence (Mandal, 2013).

According to Revelo (2009), women's empowerment is a process of making women improve their own agency, come up with their own agenda to be protected, and solve their own problems and development of self-confidence. According to the above author, women's empowerment should take into account women's distinct needs in order to make them as equal as men's, with the ultimate goal of guaranteeing gender parity and assisting women in gaining control in one state's social, economic, and political life. Women's empowerment constitutes economic, social, cultural, political, and physical dimensions. The empowerment works in each dimension should go together, and they cannot be practiced independently or working on a single dimension doesn't realize full empowerment process. According to Revelo (2009), there are four interrelated components of women's empowerment, and a woman's empowerment level is measured using these components.

- i. **Physical empowerment:** is an empowerment process that enables women to control their personal (private) wellbeing, which determines their economic, social, and political lives. This empowerment dimension included helping women decide on their state of sexuality, family planning methods, family size, divorce issue and other related aspects of their lives. The right to self-safety, security, and freedom from all types of violence and practicing all types of rights are parts of women's physical empowerment. There are also other sub-actions that contribute to the success of this empowerment practice, such as the right to proper healthcare, clean water, sanitation facilities, and dignity.
- ii. **Economic empowerment:** Usually, women might have an income, but unfortunately, they might not have the authority to control their income. Often, the income generated by the women is taken by the husband, son, or any other body. Women's economic empowerment creates an enabling environment and situation for women to have control over their finances, productive resources, own assets, and gain access to the same pay as men for equal work. It includes the use of their own income (like when to spend, for what to spend, saving mechanisms, etc.). Ensuring the right to choose a preferred education type, profession, and the right to be an entrepreneur are also aspects of women's economic empowerment. When women's economic empowerment is realized, they become economically independent and have decision-making power in every aspect of life.
- iii. **Political empowerment:** This dimension refers to making women part of the political process of one country, and this empowerment process could be expressed in terms of guaranteeing and ensuring the political rights of women like that of men's. This encompasses the right to be heard, to be elected as a political candidate or to elect as a legal citizen, the right to organize in the form of political parties or civil society organizations, the right to have peaceful demonstrations, and the right to participate in the decision-making process of a country by being an active citizen.
- iv. **Socio-cultural empowerment:** This type of women's empowerment helps the women to have positive self-image, self-perception, self-esteem, and self-confidence in themselves and in their social status, the community and the broader public spheres. This

empowerment dimension includes increasing the women's ability to speak out about the issues that matter to them most, struggling to make their voice heard, making their agenda considered, and showing the value of their opinion and voice. It is about creating an independent self-identity based on the positive values and norms of society and being active in them.

According to Mandal (2013), in addition to the above empowerment approaches, educational and psychological empowerments are also crucial to reverse gender inequality and make women play their roles for themselves and for others besides them. Accordingly:

1. **Educational empowerment:** Women's empowerment is unthinkable without proper access to quality education for all, including girls. Education for girls and educating a mother means bringing change in the life of a family. Educated mothers may use generate additional income for the family and participate in the labor force (being competitive and included). Women and girls' education enables them to challenge the traditional attitudes towards women, provide them with necessary equipment and skills for achieving their life goals.
2. **Psychological empowerment:** Women who are psychologically empowered become above the constraints of societal norms and conventional patriarchal burdens, they also build the identities necessary to flourish in the family, community and society. Such women acquire self-respect, pride, maturity, and resilience by choosing their own growth paths and explore opportunities as they exercise their independence. They become firm, tough, and hardworking as a result of this, which also offers them mental power.

2. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is an internationally recognized approach or strategy to ensure gender equality, and it was introduced at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995 (UN-Women, 2020). According to Elson (2003), it is about inculcating gender perspectives from the beginning to the end of policy-making processes and practical interventions. "Gender mainstreaming refers to moving gender equality concerns from the backwards and side streams into the mainstream"(Elson, 2003, p. 1). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2013), it is a gender equality strategy that argues for the inclusion of

women's experience, perspectives, interests, and concerns like men's in the design, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres; so that, the policies consider the interests of both genders and benefit both equally.

As UN Women (2020), gender mainstreaming is the most practical way of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment because it takes the issues and concerns of women from the periphery to the mainstream of decision-making, policy-making, and policy-practice processes, and it tends to make gender equality the focus of every program, function, and structure of an institution. Like that of women's empowerment, the ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is gender equality

3. Gender-responsive budgeting

According the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2019), gender budgeting is another globally accepted strategy to ensure gender equality between men and women by focusing on public revenue and expenditures. Gender budgeting is the arrangement and structuring of fiscal policies and administrative procedures to address gender inequality. Totally, it is the incorporation of gender dimensions at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring both revenue and expenditure to include women's needs and interests and promote gender equality (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2019).

Gender budgeting contributes to the full implementation of gender mainstreaming because it focuses on the gender equality perspective of the government budget (Elson, 2003). The main aim of gender budgeting is not to create a separate and different budgetary environment for women; rather, it is to mainstream gender issues in the normal budgetary process (Elson, 2003). According to this writer, in some cases, male and female have different needs that require exclusive allocation of expenditure. For instance, a special budget might be required for maternity care for women but not for men. The issue of gender budgeting is not about 50% of spending for male or 50% of spending for female in a country's budgeting process, but the spending in a country should serve the different interests and priorities of both sexes equally without difference (Elson, 2003).

2.3. THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1. Theories of gender inequality

2.3.2. Introduction

Wienclaw (2011) defines gender inequality as the treatment of individuals based on their gender, rather than their objective differences such as potential, skills, abilities, and educational attainments. According to Wienclaw (2011), In any case, the pursuit of gender equality is about social justice, human rights, and women's rights. As to the above writer, gender inequality exists globally, that various empirical and theoretical evidence supporting its existence. However, the cause is not fully understood, leading to scientific arguments among theorists and writers. Each theory focuses on explaining men's dominance over women in various aspects of life, including family, economy, decision-making, and social affairs.

1. Feminist theories

According to Raina and MA (2017), feminism encompassed a wide spectrum of activities, including political, ideological, social, and economic movements, as well as activism, all with the objective of establishing equality between the two biologically determined sexes. In accordance to Raina & MA (2017), the premises and goals of feminist theory are to ensure women's equality in all aspects of life by giving them the same opportunity to possess and use resources that men do elsewhere. Ferguson (2017) asserted that, the main goals of feminism and feminist theory are not to create a unique and distinctive world for women and to distinguish them from men, but to disrupt oppressions and struggle to correct unjust systems to create a better world for women. According to Arinder (2020), criticizing systems of oppression and inequality is the overall goal of critical theory, which includes feminist theory. Arinder (2020) asserted that some writers regard feminist theory to be a subset of critical theory, while others claim that it is a stand-alone theory with its own prepositions, concepts, and viewpoints that do not fit into other theories. Feminism theory's fundamental concepts include sex, gender, racism, discrimination, equality, difference, and choice. On the other hand, feminism has the proposition that, when the existing status quo, such as unequal systems, oppression, and subordination of women, is acknowledged publicly and starts to be fixed, mutual understanding and change certainly occur.

Although feminism started as a movement in developed nations, it slowly grew to a global level, and women from developing countries became part of the struggle for equality within their cultural settings (Gennet, 2014). There are different types of feminism; different feminist theories have different views, perspectives, and approaches to defining the level of gender inequalities and oppressions in society, and they all articulate diverse approaches to reducing gender gaps and bringing about reforms and critical changes (Samkange, 2015). Despite their differing approaches to the issue of women, they all believe that gender roles are socially constructed (Gennet, 2014). According to Samkange (2015), various stakeholders and organizations, including the political and educational sectors, the economic system, religious teachings, family, societal values, men, and women themselves, contributed to the existing so-called gender inequalities, and the sum of all these factors leads to women and girls having the lowest social status in almost every part of the world.

Some of the feminist theories are grouped under gender reform feminisms (e.g., liberal and socialist feminism), gender resistant feminisms (e.g., radical feminism), and gender revolution feminisms (Lorber, 1997). This grouping is based on the approach they are following to address gender inequality. Among the various feminism theories, the following are the most influential that explain the issue well.

I. Liberal feminism

The premise of liberal feminism is that the socially identified difference regarding men and women is not biological, and therefore, men and women are not different (their common humanity exceeds their little biological difference). If this is the case, both of them should not be treated differently in front of the law, and they should have the same rights regarding education, work, and others (Lorber, 1997). For these theorists, gender inequality is the result of the culture of the society, the way men and women are socialized, and the attitude of the individuals (their mindset). Thus, liberal feminism advocates equal opportunities for men and women in education and work.

According to Effiong, & Inyang, (2020), Liberal feminism also called "mainstream feminism because it believes that gender inequality would be reduced and eliminated by integrating or mainstreaming women in all aspects of life. The above authors highlight that medieval philosopher John Stuart Mill, known for his liberal feminism, argued that women's behavior and decisions are not natural but rather societally constructed, rejecting misunderstandings about women in his book

"The Subjection of Women". The above writers pointed out that, women's work and behavior are influenced by societal values and norms, not divine will. Hence, women should mobilize and work together to break this subjugation and effect change.

Samkange (2015) underlined that the proponent of this theory advocates for gradual societal reforms to ensure women's rights and benefits, opposing radical changes or revolutionary means. They support women's rights in political, economic, and social systems, rather than implementing radical changes of existing conditions regarding gender issues. The suffragist movement is an example in this regard because it brought the right to vote to women. According to Samkange (2015), since gendered societal structure is the result of culture and an individual's attitude, it can be changed by empowering both genders through education.

II. Radical feminism

As Lorber (1997), "Radical feminism's theoretical watchword is patriarchy, or men's pervasive oppression and exploitation of women, which can be found wherever women and men are in contact with each other, in private as well as in public" (p. 16).

Samkange (2015) noted that the two predominant factors in women's oppression according to the radical feminists are patriarchy (a form of male dominance over women in everything) and sexism (discrimination against women because of their gender identity based on the belief that, intrinsically, men are superior to women). According to this scholar, radical feminists believe that men have the physical ability to commit any sort of violence (rape, wife beating, murder of ex-wives, and so on) against women, and that this violence demonstrates how their patriarchy governs all women. Men use this socially acceptable supremacy to perpetrate physical, sexual, and financial violence on women, affecting their work, decision-making, personal freedom, and social status. Samkange (2015) further illustrated that, what makes the problem worse is that this supremacy is fully supported by the society as normal, though it affects the lives of women. Therefore, this societal condition characterized by patriarchy and sexism needs to be challenged and changed worldwide according to this theory.

For the above writer, this feminist seeks to know and understand the very system, ideology, and organizations behind women's long-time oppression and wants to address those causes from their

base. According to Pearson, cited in Effiong and Inyang (2020), radical feminists believe patriarchy is the primary cause of escalating sexism in society. To abolish sexism, efforts should focus on destroying patriarchal family and social order, including the abolishment of conventional marriages and family life, for the sake of women's liberty from a prison-like life. Samkange (2015) noted that the change towards sexism and patriarchy would be realized by reordering society and reorganizing families and other institutions, which have an impact on the lives of women. For them, alternative institutions such as religious, economic, political, health, educational, and social institutions should be available only to women to address their needs. Because the feminists in this group believe that former institutions were shaped by the needs and interests of men while ignoring the voices of women, therefore, women-only spaces are required.

According to Lorber (1997), patriarchy can best be resisted by establishing an anti-hierarchical societal mind setup that is able to support women's ability to think and act freely by being independent from any forms of forceful dominance and enabling women to create their own spaces to take breath and think about themselves and the environment surrounding them. As a political solution, a women-only consciousness-raising team plus alternative institutions that serve the interests of women are very crucial according to this writer.

For Effiong & Inyang (2020), there are misconceptions about the term "radical feminism. Some people think that this feminist movement advocates for women to hold their positions against men. On the other hand, there are also some extreme radical feminists who preach that men are evil, selfish, and arrogant, and they advise women to stay away from them and live in their women-only world by eliminating men. Effiong & Inyang (2020) underlined that those radical feminists who believe in such way do not deserve to be called real radical feminists. But a genuine radical feminist believes in the evilness of women's subjugation, marginalization, and oppression, strives to aggressively fight the causes of this, and struggles for the equal treatment of men and women to the greatest possible extent.

III. Marxist and Socialist feminism

According to Lorber (1997), Marxist/socialist feminism advocates that the principal cause of women's subjugation is capitalism or the capitalist economic system. Marxism claims capitalism is the number one enemy of women in all forms of oppression. In the eyes of Marxists, in a capitalist

economic system and in capital accumulation (private property), men are the haves and women are the have-nots, so women are going to be economically dependent on men (husbands). Therefore, for Lorber (1997), the source of women's oppression is their dependency on the economy of men.

According to Armstrong (2020), in every capitalist system, there are different social classes; among them, the class in the household is the one that represents the two bodies, the husband and wife. In the capitalist economic system, social reproduction undertaken by women was not considered as labor, and because of the hierarchical structure, women did every reproductive work at home under the control of men. The women did this to renew the generation (including providing workers with a lower wage) for the unthankful capitalists. But these actions of women contribute nothing to them other than bulky work. Armstrong (2020) further asserted that women's current and former subjection is not God-given but rather the outcome of a capitalist economic system that has aggravated women's oppressions. Since patriarchy is inextricably linked to capitalism, it can possibly be eliminated by abolishing capitalism and abolishing gendered social and family task distribution.

Castiello and Budig (2008) noted that, while socialist feminism shares many principles with Marxist philosophy, there are notable differences. Marxist feminism emphasized the capital and property accumulation of many classes, including gender, whereas socialist feminism linked sexuality, gender, or work allocations to both sexes. According to Castiello & Budig (2008), for both socialist and Marxist feminists, capitalism is the cause of women's exploitation. Marxists believe that capitalism leads to the patriarchal system, which can be abolished through the elimination of capitalism. However, socialists argue that both capitalism and patriarchy contribute to gender inequality and need to be transformed at the family level, including redistributing responsibilities and providing equal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political power for women, as men did.

As further emphasized by the above scholars, Marxist feminism has been criticized for merely relying on Marx's analysis of capitalism as a source of exploitation and ignoring the contributions of multiple factors. And some other feminists argued that subordination of women had existed before the capitalist mode of production came to be practiced; thus, the Marxist feminist's ideas emanated solely from the hatred of capitalism.

IV. Black feminism

The black feminist's consciousness sprang from the practical African American women's rights deprivations in the social, economic, and political life of the USA because of their gender and race (Simien, 2004). As a result of race and gender discrimination in the US, African American women lagged behind every race type, and they were highly exposed to multiple burdens such as joblessness, gender-based violence, illiteracy, and different forms of oppression (Simien, 2004).

Black feminism is a school of thought that has a stance against discrimination based on sex, race, and class. For them, the discriminations in terms of gender, race, and class are interrelated, and this interaction is called intersectionality (Rose, 2016). According to Rose, 2016, intersectionality in the aspect connotes that multiple forms of differences in terms of color, sex, and class can intersect each other in the lives of black women. Effiong & Inyang (2020) stated that each concept should be understood independently, but they are interdependent, reinforce each other, and have increased the frequency of discrimination against black women. Intersectional analysis and theorizing are the central themes of a black feminist approach.

According to the Black feminists, the struggle towards a patriarchal system should go hand in hand with the struggle against sexism, imperialism, and racism, as well as white men's and women's supremacy over Black men and women. The Black men's movement has joined the struggle against racism with the Black feminists (Brewer, 2016). According to this feminist, Black women have experienced discrimination in terms of race not only from white men but also from white women.

Simien (2004) stressed this feminism recognized the existence of gender inequality and the patriarchal system, which are operationalized in the Black community, and stood to struggle through civil rights movements. Overall, the above scholar underlined that Black feminism is a struggle for Black people's liberation because it stems from a movement to address economic inequality, gender exploitation, racial discrimination, and other issues that are inseparable from the fight for social justice for all.

2. Structural functionalist theory

As outlined by Wienclaw (2011), structural functionalism theory is a sociological theory that

emphasizes the role of active and functional components within a society, such as economic, political, religious, educational, and other institutions, in maintaining social order and stability. According to Wienclaw (2011), functionalists argue that the traditional division of labor within a family, involving both males and females, is a crucial factor in ensuring social stability and harmonious coexistence within the family. They believe that this system ensures stability in both families and society, as society is composed of families.

As stated by Gunawardane (2016), the well-known functionalist scholar Talcott Parsons is concerned with the role of the family in industrial societies. In his view, "the family operates most efficiently with a clear-cut sexual division of labor in which females act in expressive roles, providing care and security to children and offering them emotional support. Men, on the other hand, should perform instrumental roles, namely, being the breadwinner in the family. This complementary division of labor, springing from a biological distinction between the sexes, would ensure the solidarity of the family" (p. 70).

Gender inequality, according to functionalists, is a beneficial effect in a society since it serves as a mechanism for dividing labor and assigning rewards among its members by guiding both genders toward biologically grounded work divisions (Gunawardane, 2016). According to Wienclaw (2011), for the functionalists, most of the task divisions have a biological base and are not problematic for anyone. When they discussed their ideas, the functionalists argued that if both partners in a marriage went and worked outside, obviously competition would occur in the house, endangering the lives of couples and then affecting society as a whole.

Wienclaw (2011) further argued that while this theory was popular in the 1950s and a product of that time's thinking, it is less appropriate for today's 21st-century society, where perceptions of role allocation are shifting and work assigned to men is beginning to be done more effectively by women, and vice versa. According to the aforementioned writer, gender roles must be flexible in order to adapt to changing times in a society.

3. Conflict theory

According to conflict theory, society is a battleground where social groups compete for supremacy in power and resources, and problems arise when the dominant group starts to exploit and oppress

the less powerful groups (Lindsey, 2015). This theory has a very good perspective on how and why disagreements occur between individuals, within societies, and among societies (Paige & Frederick, 2015). This theory has been developed by philosophers such as Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Karl Marx. Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist, attempted to compare the family structure to the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in capitalism, claiming that women had less power in the household than men because they were heavily reliant on men's economy (Lindsey, 2015). For these theoreticians, as conflicts occur in different areas of a society, they can also occur in a family relationship. Particularly, gender roles can lead to conflict in the family unit because they create inequality in that unit (Paige & Frederick, 2015).

According to Paige & Frederick (2015, para. 6), structural inequality is another source of conflict for this theory, and in the case of a family, the structural inequality is expressed like this: "In the traditional family structure, the husband/father or head of the house is prescribed the highest degree of power and control, such as ultimate authority over resources (e.g., finances). The inequality in housework income may create tension and conflict between working parents and, in some cases, lead to divorce." As stated by Gunawardane (2016), conflict theorists argued that gender inequality always benefits men more than women by keeping women in lower positions in society and subordinate to men, and they advocate for a balance of power between the two genders. If inequalities in the family unit are not addressed through equitable power and resource division for both sexes, the tension may lead to divorce, causing the foundations of society and a country as a whole to fall apart (Paige & Frederick, 2015). Friedrich Engels proposed that the same owner-worker relationship observed in the labor market could be found in the home, with women playing the role of the workers. The latter phenomenon resulted from the dependence of women on males for earning fulfillment. According to recent conflict theorists, as women become employed, they acquire influence and say in the family structure and develop more democratic arrangements at home, even if they still shoulder the majority of the household burden (Lindsey, 2015).

2.3.3. Concluding remarks of theoretical literatures

There are various theoretical perspectives on the concept, evolution, effects, and solutions of existing deep-rooted gender inequality that is displayed in all aspects of women's life. In almost all theoretical perspectives, it is found that the traditional patriarchal system and gendered societal

norms are the causes of all types of today's inequality between men and women. All the above-discussed theories present that the system of inequality has to be recognized and addressed to ensure the equality of men and women in their all walks of life. Nonetheless, all the theories proposed different approaches to fight against gender inequality and to bring gender equality including in leadership and decision-making positions. While different versions of feminism provided approaches such as gender mainstreaming, the abolishment of the patriarchal system with the introduction of alternative women-based institutions, and the abolishment of capitalism, racism, and sexism as solutions to abolish gender inequality, conflict theory suggested avoiding power inequality in the household and equal division of roles between men and women to reduce gender inequality in the society.

In a nutshell, men-favored societal orders/practices have had an impact on women's income, social status and decision-making ability, all of which contribute to the current underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership. To solve the issue and promote equitable participation of women in higher leadership and decision-making positions, all stakeholders, from social institutions and policymakers to women themselves, must take action according to the theories.

2.3.4. Theoretical framework of the study

Creswell (2017) stated that a theory can be presented in research as a guiding perspective or a rational argument, and it is described as a set of ideas constructed from evidence to explain a phenomenon in the real world. This study's theoretical lenses are transformative theory and liberal feminism from feminist theories, which were combined to drive the overall work of this study. Both theories have conceptual linkages in demonstrating the need of tackling gender imbalance in many domains, including leadership roles. In this regard, both theories proposed extensive effort to increase women's empowerment and develop value-based practical measures to bring about real changes in advancing women's leadership roles. Furthermore, these theories informed the study both theoretically and policy-wise; hence, they argue for the roles of interaction and interdependence among theory, policy, and practice in resolving gender issues.

Hence, this dissertation employs liberal feminism to analyze the subject of gender inequality from a variety of perspectives, including the evolution of gender inequality, the causes and effects of gender inequality, possible solutions and other related notions. Indeed, this theory helps to grasp the

issue rose by this study.

The study also used transformative theory that shaped the overall research processes. According to Creswell (2017), transformational theory is a distinctive framework for researching issues of discrimination and oppression based on gender, racism, disability, and other factors. Indeed, for this writer, this theory concerns itself with value-based research, such as empowerment approaches. Thus, the research approach, tools, sample selection and ethical considerations of this study were all shaped and informed by this theory. Mertens (2017) asserted that transformative theory also informs analysis of the unfair power and resource distributions among the groups of different identity. According to Mertens (2017), by providing research guidelines/frameworks to investigators, this theory encourages personal, social, cultural, and political environment transformation on various significant inequality concerns.

Mertens (2017) suggests that when applying a transformative theory in a study, four elements must be considered: transformative axiology (ethics), ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge), and methodology (systematic inquiry used in the study). The ontology of transformational theory is based on different/multiple versions/meanings of what is perceived to be real, which is due to a variety of variables. Accepting one version of reality without acknowledging the other is problematic, according to transformative theory. According to the transformative epistemological assumption, researchers must systematically understand and control their privileged power as researchers, as well as their emotions, thinking, and cultural lens, to avoid exerting influence over the study participants. Researchers ought to change themselves to join communities with respect, appreciating the knowledge the participant brought to the research context.

Furthermore, the methodological assumption of transformative theory asserts that there is the need to design a study in a clear way to address the issues of discrimination and oppression. This theory appreciates the applications of multiple approaches, methods, and designs to solve critical societal problems. According to this theory, the data must be obtained from a diverse group, which will aid in the interventions processes and the transformation of numerous people and systems that were previously regarded as hurdles.

Finally, Mertens (2017) explained that the transformative axiological approach requires researchers to engage in ethical investigative techniques. The researchers constantly maintain social justice and

human rights as important themes in their research. As Mertens (2017) underlined, “The starting point for ethical research is to understand the meaning of being culturally respectful in the communities in which we work, consciously addressing inequities, recognizing a community’s strengths and resilience, and providing for reciprocity to the community members” (p. 20). The investigator should ensure participants understand the research's aim clearly, as this is crucial for completing their journey meaningfully and obtaining crucial data.

To summarize, as informed by the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, many facets of gender-based discrimination (in education and employment) resulted in gender imbalance, including in positions of higher political leadership, which influenced policy and decision-making processes. Hence, practical and value-driven initiatives like women's political empowerment are critical. To enhance gender equality in positions of leadership, policy concerns must be addressed, as per the theories presented above. According to both liberal and transformative theories, the coordination and active participation of important stakeholders are also required to bring up social, political, personal, and institutional improvements and to create a better world for women, where women would have equal voice and decision over national, regional, and local issues.

2.4. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.4.1. Empirical literatures on women and leadership at global level

Gender inequality is a significant policy and academic concern, with numerous indicators identified. To study various aspects of women's underrepresentation in higher leadership positions and provide solutions, experts worldwide have chosen the research theme "women and leadership" as their core focus, focusing on various cases. As a result, there is a significant amount of research on women and leadership (political leadership) at the global, regional, and national levels (Ethiopia). To identify the significant gaps in these studies, the researcher of this study examined some of the empirical works that have theoretical, conceptual and methodological linkage to this study undertaken around the world, particularly in Africa and Ethiopia.

Farida Jalalzai, associate professor of political science at Oklahoma State University (USA), is a well-known and advanced writer in the area of women and leadership. The researcher has reviewed her three works (one book and two articles) because of their theoretical and conceptual connection to this PhD dissertation.

Jalalzai (2013) offers a comprehensive analysis about women, gender, and national leadership positions. This scholar's study explores women's success in executive positions globally, using both quantitative and qualitative data. The research focuses on women who achieved executive positions between 1960 and 2010. The findings revealed that Finland, among the world's countries, had actually shattered the leadership glass ceiling by promoting three female leaders to executive positions. Likewise, the glass ceiling was cracked in the UK whereas it remained in the US, implying that many other countries are lagging behind these countries. As a result, the writer concludes that countries must work to shatter the leadership glass ceiling and bring gender equality to executive positions (head of state and head of government). Furthermore, the author finds out that parliamentary system of government is more suitable for women to come to higher leadership positions than the presidential system of government because women are less likely to be elected popularly due to prevalent women's stereotypes and discrimination around the world. Another scholarly work, Jalalzai's (2004), is shows the issue of women and politics at the global level. The author endeavored to examine the case of all women executives who have held positions of power across the globe from 1960 (the first year a woman, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, became Prime Minister

of Sri Lanka) to 2002. The total number of women presidents and prime ministers, the government systems from which they were affiliated, the countries they led, and the educational and political backgrounds of those women leaders have been analyzed. The result shows that European countries and Europe as a region have been dominating the world with an immense number of female leaders since 1960. Moreover, the finding indicated that more than political experience, kinship (familial relationships with male political leaders) is an important path for women to ascend to power in traditional patriarchal and less democratic countries in Asia and Latin America.

Furthermore, Jalalzai and Krook (2010) conduct a thorough analysis of why some nations have a higher proportion of women in their political systems while others lag behind. According to the data, women's presence in political leadership positions varies by region, with some countries performing better than others. The authors explain that the world's leading countries in terms of women's representation have established and improved gender quotas to boost the number of women selected and elected to political office. On the other hand, countries that have implemented quota policies have had varying results, which can be attributed to the specifics of the quota policies themselves, such as their form, wording, requirements, sanctions, perceived legitimacy, and the actors who support and oppose the policy.

In addition to the above-reviewed works of Jalalzai, a book written by Celik and Hager (2021) has been reviewed due to its theoretical and conceptual relevance. The authors expanded on Jalalzai's book's findings to explore the paths of power for women leaders in different countries. The book addressed two questions: the types of paths women leaders take to power and the political and institutional factors affecting their paths. They identified three paths: familial tie, political activist path, and political career path. The authors conducted a mixed-methods analysis (descriptive and statistical) of women executives from 1960 to 2020. Celik and Hager (2021) examined the paths of 136 elected, appointed, and interim female presidents and prime ministers who came to power and ruled countries between 1960 and 2020. The study discovered that 101 out of 136 women leaders have utilized political careers path to gain power, with the political activist path being the least utilized. However, political and institutional issues significantly impact women's power paths. Similar to Jalalzai's (2004) findings, this study further disclosed that usually women leaders used family tie pathways to ascend to power in unstable and less democratic countries rather than political activism or political career paths. In stable, economically developed democratic countries

with low levels of patriarchy, the family tie pathway is less used and less preferred for executive posts. In this regard, the cases of Hillary Rodham Clinton and Maryann Le Pen are the best examples. They did have a family tie with male political leaders, but they did not use that to ascend to power. Moreover, Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala (2022) brought a recent book on women and leadership. The book has 12 chapters that examine the lives and experiences of eight prominent influential female leaders through interviews stemming from Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, to Christine Lagarde, the first woman elected to lead the International Monetary Fund. The authors attempted to examine the structural barriers that are hindering women in leadership positions through the participants lived experience. The authors identified concept to present newly emerging barriers hindering women from ascending to higher leadership and decision-making area, such as the glass labyrinth, besides the glass ceiling and the glass cliff. The book indeed discusses practical solutions for gender equality in leadership positions, based on interviews and descriptive evidence. It also introduces the "you go girl hypothesis," suggesting that early girls' childhood work is crucial for creating future female leaders through empowerment and addressing the societal issues faced by women. According to Keohane's (2020) notable study appreciates the hopeful representation of women in leadership positions in different spheres of life. The writer aimed to answer two issues throughout the work: (1) why has there been such a rapid change in women's representation over the previous half-century? (2), what are the barriers that continue to limit women's opportunities for leadership? The study's result identify expansion of higher education, the invention of women-helping technologies, the availability of birth control methods, and changing attitudes towards women's potential contribute to women's engagement in leadership positions. These factors allow women more freedom to think beyond family matters and contribute to their involvement to leadership roles. However, challenges remain, such as continued chores and poor family workplace-friendly policies, which hinder women's aspirations to become leaders according to the study. Smith (2015) tests the central tenet of glass-cliff theory in a public sector setting. The findings of the study support the tenet of the glass-cliff theory, which holds that women are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions under precarious conditions or when organizational circumstances are at risk of failure.

2.4.2. Empirical literatures on women and leadership in Africa

The 18-year state of knowledge production on African women in leadership and management has been examined by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009). The authors have done an extensive review of existing published research, including journal articles, books, book chapters, and monographs that have been published and presented from 1990–2008 (18 years). This critical examination has been conducted to investigate what has been studied about the status of African women, their leadership styles, and the influence of perceived gender on their leadership journey. The authors reviewed 43 publications, revealing that South Africa has the largest body of knowledge (empirical studies) on women's leadership and management status, followed by Nigeria and Ghana. Most of these publications used qualitative research techniques, while some used quantitative methods. The empirical studies primarily focus on factors affecting women's performance, aiming to elevate them to higher leadership positions. These factors include socialization, limited education, multiple roles, gender stereotyping, subtle discrimination, and organizational policies and procedures. These studies highlight the need for more effective strategies to improve women's performance and contribute to a more inclusive and effective work environment. Overall, the study reveals that women in Africa face numerous challenges that hinder their advancement to higher leadership positions, yet there is a lack of empirical evidence on strategies to address this underrepresentation in public service and political leadership.

Likewise, Darkwah and Patterson (2017) additionally analyze the development of women's political participation after the political transitions that take place in most African countries, notably since the 1990s. The central idea of their work is that since the 1990s, because of the launching of movements like the rights of sexual minorities, African women have been able to access political office in all three branches of government, especially the parliament. Another scholarly work by Ndlovu and Mutale (2013) affirmed a significant increase in women's political participation in Africa, as seen in Rwanda and Algeria. Recognizing this pattern, the authors investigated the positive aspects that have contributed to women's increased participation in leadership positions. Meanwhile, the authors investigated the hurdles to women's engagement and provided alternatives. According to their results, the rise of women's movements, quota systems, multi-party systems, educational possibilities, support from international institutions, global and national grants, conventions, and commitments all contributed to increasing women's political engagement in

Africa. On the other hand, writers identified barriers that continue to prevent women from running for political leadership positions, and as the authors suggested, women's conditions must be improved through changes in patriarchal thinking, positive media coverage, abolition of political violence against women, increased capacity building, and other measures. Bauer and Okpotor (2013), examined the reason why some countries have more women ministers than others, as well as the different cabinet member recruiting procedures used to appoint women ministers in African countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, the authors investigate the influence of African female ministers on substantive and symbolic representation effects. The article's findings reveal that, among the 47 sub-Saharan states, the majority used the specialist model of recruitment (cabinet ministers are primarily selected from outside the legislature) rather than the generalist model of recruitment (prime ministers select cabinet ministers from among members of their parliamentary caucuses) to select their female cabinets. As a result, female ministers in Africa are typically recruited using a specialized model. On the other hand, designated female ministers in Africa have both substantive and symbolic representation implications. However, the authors did not specify how many ministers in Africa had substantive effect, or symbolically, by simply having the title but not the authority to do so.

Amina and Ibrahim (2019) are enthusiastic about women's increasing engagement in leadership roles on the African continent. The fundamental subject of their work has been the mentorship of young African women to leadership positions by influential African female leaders with authority in their country, Africa, and international institutions. The leadership experiences of two prominent African women leaders have been analyzed by writers such as South Africa's Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Africa's first female Head of Government, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia (2006–2018). The authors have reviewed different literatures to reach their findings. The study's findings show that, while African women leaders have a beneficial impact in their country and at the regional level, their track record of mentoring, capacity-building work, and networking with other African women leaders is relatively poor. Finally, they call on successful female leaders to network with other female leaders and young women who are interested in the field since their expertise will help new women enter leadership roles with fewer hurdles.

2.4.3. Empirical literatures on women and leadership in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, there is a wealth of research in the form of journal articles, published and unpublished student graduating papers, monographs, and reports that can inform us about women and leadership in the country from various perspectives and case studies. However, a large number of these studies have focused on the barriers that women experience in attempting to advance to higher levels of leadership. Similarly, the majority of the studies highlighted the opportunities for Ethiopian women to advance to leadership roles. Methodologically, most of the studies used both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, including questioning, interviewing, and document analysis, and descriptive and inferential statistics like correlation and regression. They identify institutional, personal, and socio-cultural factors as the predominant factors affecting women's leadership potential (Worku, 2017; Tesfay, 2013; Shimelis, 2015; Bizualem & Kasaye, 2020; Mekasha, 2017; Endale, 2014; Genet, 2020; Gojjam and Singh, 2015; and Miressa, 2014).

There are also other empirical studies undertaken by researchers investigating women and leadership in Ethiopia from various perspectives, with particular focus on the national context. The first empirical study that appears to have conceptual relevance to this PhD dissertation is Meaza's (2009) work. From a theoretical standpoint, the writer applied feminist theory to examine the role of women in political leadership as a means of achieving gender equality and the well-being of all people. The study intended to answer two research questions: the level of women's engagement in decision-making in Ethiopia and the role of women in developing women-friendly policies through independent organized activism or formal politics. In her paper, she aimed to illustrate women's participation in Ethiopian politics from 1974 to 1991, as well as the number of women parliamentarians in Ethiopia's three succeeding parliaments between 1995 and 2010. Her findings revealed women's underrepresentation in decision-making roles and urged the need for coordination between women-based civil society organizations and formal institutions such as women parliamentarians, women affairs offices, and others to enhance the meaningful influence of women in policy production and welfare distribution. Another scientific study by Ojulu and Melesse (2014) sought to determine Ethiopia's global place in terms of women's political representation in public and political decision-making roles. It also attempted to rank Ethiopia in comparison to other countries in Sub-Saharan and Eastern Africa. The study discovered a 'wider gender gap' in the representation of women in the executive and legislative branches in the last four

consecutive elections from 1995 to 2012, as well as a more severe gender gap in ministerial positions than in the legislative organ (it was less than 10% from 2005 to 2012). Ethiopia was found to be in the "red ranking category" among Sub-Saharan countries in terms of women's parliamentary representation, even without a global comparison. The study does not have methodological clarifications. Likewise, Berouk (2004) explored the actual participation level of women in Ethiopia's higher-level government institutions (HoF, HPR, and Cabinet) and political parties from 1995–2005. The study bases itself on secondary data from books, articles, research papers, and other documents, and it has also assessed the obstacles to women's leadership participation. According to the findings, women's representation in higher governmental institutions, such as the executive, legislative, and political parties, is insignificant, and it needs strong efforts for further improvements.

2.4.4. Concluding remarks and gap findings from empirical literatures

Most of the reviewed scholarly works at the global, African and Ethiopian level are hopeful about women's participation and representation in higher leadership roles, such as executive offices and parliament. However, despite success in some nations and positions, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles and the barriers that women face continue to prevent them from rising to the higher positions. The literature has highlighted the primary contributing variables that have resulted in an encouraging increase in women's representation, as well as those that impede women's capacity to pursue their leadership goals. In the last many years, vast studies have been published and distributed on the course of women and leadership. However, the examinations of these studies show that the scholarly works on women and leadership are predominantly concerned with European and American women leaders, and little attention is given to African women leaders in the world of scholars. According to Nkomo & Ngambi (2009), this occurred because the majority of African women's engagement in informal employment sectors, thus, knowledge production tends to focus on that, compared to the small number of women leaders on the continent. On the other hand, as it has been articulated by Bauer, Darkwah, and Patterson (2017), because of the colonization legacy, most African scholars have focused on the role of women's in the struggle for freedom and national liberation and their post-independence roles. Even the existing literature is over concentrated in some African countries like South Africa and Nigeria. Because of this and similar reasons, very little attention has been given to African women in

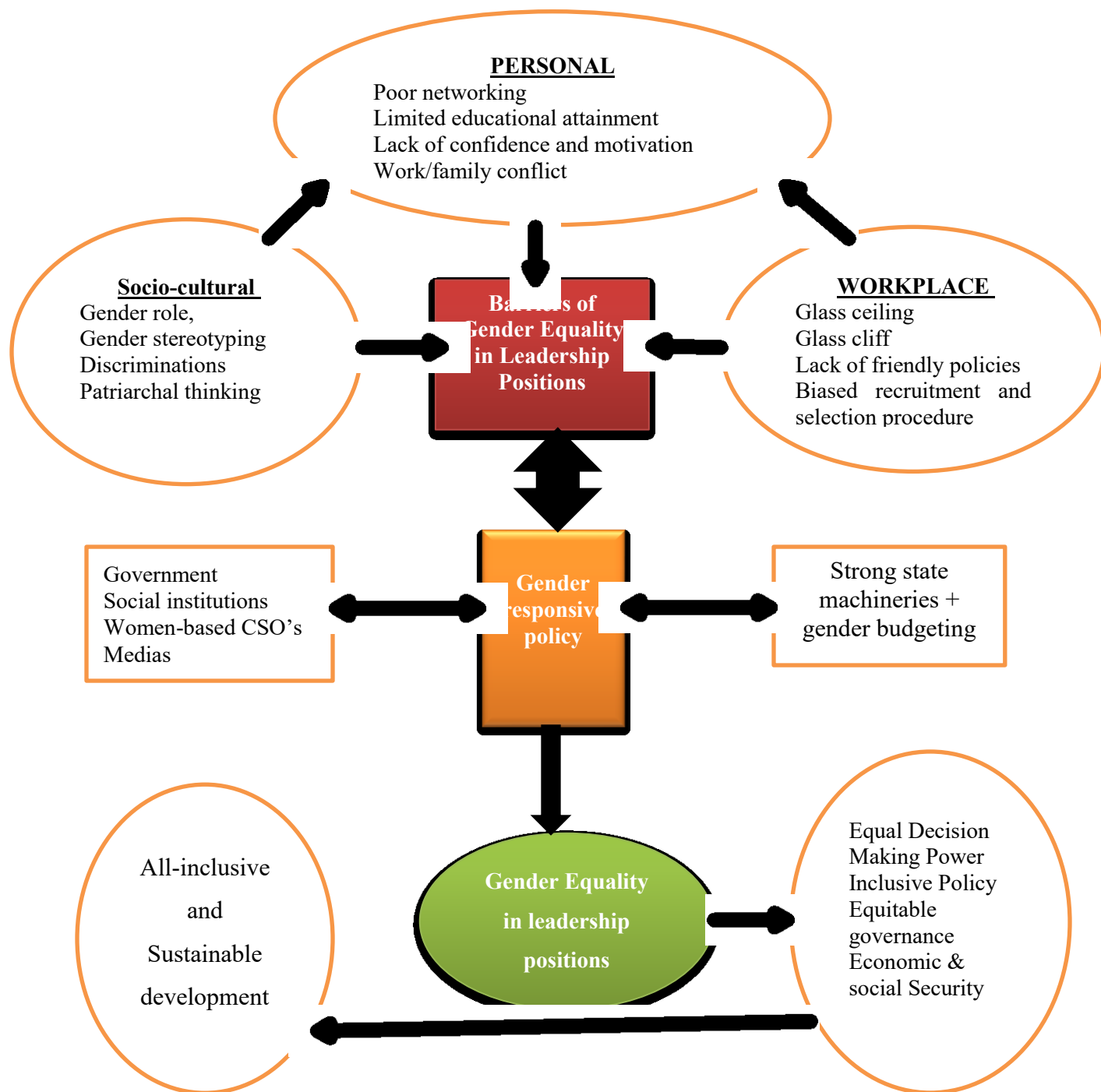
leadership positions in the literatures.

Specifically in the Ethiopian context, research on women and leadership has grown a lot in terms of journal articles, book articles, and monographs. Those studies confirmed the existence of a wider gender gap in higher leadership positions, but on the contrary, there is a dearth of studies concerned with strategies to elevate more women to higher leadership positions. Therefore, this study uncovers the different dimensions of women and leadership in Ethiopia in federal government institutions by focusing on women-based policy content analysis, the emerging status of women's leadership representation, lived experience sharing of women leaders, and barriers still hindering women's aspirations to ascend to leadership posts.

2.5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research's conceptual framework comprises the values of women's higher leadership representation, the role of addressing policy issues, hurdles to women's higher leadership representation, and practical concerns aligned with the study objectives. According to the study's analytical approach, women's paths to higher leadership positions are full of challenges and constraints. However, the most profound and scientifically verified impediments are classified into three categories: personal, socio-cultural, and work challenges. What is most important here is that all of the obstacles are interrelated and interconnected. Personal obstacles of women are mostly socio-cultural and workplace-related. Gender stereotypes, discriminatory role allocations, and patriarchal thinking are examples of socio-cultural barriers that have a detrimental impact on women's educational performance and aspirations for leadership roles. On the other hand, a lack of welcoming workplace regulations exposes women to work and family conflicts, limiting their personal growth in terms of knowledge and abilities. However, while these problems are inevitable, the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies is critical in lowering and eliminating those impediments, according to this study approach. The study's conceptual framework underlined that gender-responsive policies must be developed to enhance inclusive decision-making in a specific country by eliminating stereotypes, discrimination, and different forms of violence against women's empowerment. In this regard, the participation of many players, such as government machinery, social institutions, women-based CSOs, and the media, is critical in shifting from paper-based policy to practical implementation. Finally, the coordinated efforts of those relevant actors, combined with honest policy practices, lead to the improvement of women's leadership roles, which in turn contributes to the flourishing of fair decision-making power in public and political leadership positions, as well as the production of inclusive policy and equitable governance, which undoubtedly improves the social and economic security of society. Last but not least, the goals of sustainable and inclusive development would not be realized and practical without the fair distribution of public leadership positions among two biologically determined sexes, as underlined by this study framework. Generally, the study's conceptual framework was established on the basis of the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature related to the subject under consideration. The framework outlines a number of variables pertaining to barriers, values, policy, and practical concerns consistent with the study objectives. It has been organized in a way to frame the overall study. The following chart shows the conceptual framework of this dissertation.

Figure 2.1: conceptual framework of the study



Source: Own development

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the scientific and systematic procedures used in the investigation to improve the validity, credibility, and trustworthiness of the findings. The first section of this chapter outlines the study's methodology specifications. The philosophical paradigm of the research is conveyed by describing how this study researcher viewed and understood the subject under study, as well as how the study was conducted pragmatically.

Subsequently, research approaches and designs were discussed in accordance with the selected worldview. As a result, the study used a mixed-method approach as an umbrella approach to address the study objectives. In this regard, three types of research designs, namely descriptive, explanatory, and phenomenological designs, were chosen and applied depending on the nature of the specific objectives. Data types, sources, and data gathering tools were developed and implemented in accordance with the design specifications. Depending on this, the primary and secondary data types of this study were identified in this section, and they have been collected using a variety of methods, including interviews and document analysis. This chapter also presented the sampling strategies used in the study, followed by the data analysis techniques and a discussion of ethical considerations. Finally, the study's credibility and reliability were discussed in this section to reinforce the integrity and validity of the research processes.

3.2. Description of the study areas

As stated earlier, this dissertation is concerned with the representation trend of women in federal-level higher leadership positions. The federal-level higher leadership and decision-making roles are concentrated and presented in Ethiopia's capital city where all government ministries, agencies and commissions exist. Thus, the geographical scope of this research is limited to federal government institutions located in Addis Ababa City Administration (AACA). This city is home to the federal legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government. Hence, Addis Ababa was purposely chosen as the subject area for this dissertation due to its concentration of federal government institutions. Additionally, higher-level leadership positions from the aforementioned three

governmental bodies were selected for the study analysis.

Addis Ababa was founded between 1844 and 1913 by the then emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia as the result of the consolidation of a national territory (Erena et al., 2017, and Ezana, 2021). Addis Ababa is one of Ethiopia's two self-governing chartered cities, with the status of a special autonomous area within the national federal government (UN-HABITAT, 2008).

3.3. Research philosophy

Due to the broader scope of the study, including macro-level policy analysis and longer temporal coverage (1991-2022), the study followed a pragmatic worldview in order to approach and analyze each study action from a pragmatic standpoint. As Creswell (2017) illustrated, it is important for a research project with mixed-method approaches to be directed by a pragmatic philosophical viewpoint. This perspective facilitates the researcher's application of all available pluralistic techniques to better understand the issue and provide practical and policy solutions. This worldview (pragmatism) considers the pluralistic view of the topic under study, rather than believing only in the absolute truth/existence of a single reality or the subjective features of everything based on time, place, and circumstance (Creswell, 2017). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) emphasized that the philosophy/principle of pragmatism is 'the end justifies the means,' which implies that whatever the processes or ways, the consequence or end result must be worthy, or in other words, the researcher should use all appropriate scientific methods to justify the findings of his/her final work.

Given the above descriptions, this study utilized a pragmatic worldview in the selection of the study epistemology, perspectives and methodology. Epistemologically, the knowledge for this study emanated from both subjectivism and objectivism. Subjectivism has been applied in order to analyze gender equality efforts in higher leadership positions at different times and conditions specifically from policy perspective. Furthermore, the subjectivist orientation informed the gathering and analysis of data on subjective experiences, as well as lessons learned from role-model (exemplary) women in higher leadership positions at the federal level. Objectivism, on the other hand, was utilized to extract objective figures and facts from relevant documents and information to analyze the levels of women's involvement in higher leadership roles during the previous thirty years. As a perspective, this study has included the perspectives of different actors who are working for gender equality, such as gender experts, practitioners of the Ministry of Women and Social

Affairs (MWSA), women leaders, gender activists, and others. Likewise, as pragmatic research, this study has also used multiple designs, tools, and research approaches.

3.4. Research approach and designs

The study employed a mixed-method approach by incorporating selected qualitative and quantitative methods that fits with the objectives of this research. "Mixed methods approach refers to a research approach in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study" (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p.4). The mixed-method research approach is more than just the debate over qualitative and quantitative research approaches; rather, it recognizes the importance of both approaches and appreciates and incorporates their respective strengths while minimizing their respective weaknesses (Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009).

According to Tashakkori & Creswell, (2007) "A mixed methods study is one that includes a qualitative and quantitative dimension, but difficulties often arise when the researcher attempts to articulate how the two elements relate to one another (p.5)." This question arises from the reality that, the two approaches are mutually exclusive and independent. But as many of the research authors agreed, the answer to this question is that all the features, designs, techniques, methods, tools, and terminologies that belong to both qualitative and quantitative approaches are not expected to be used by the researchers who are using a mixed-method research approach. Rather, some rationally selected designs, terminologies, and tools from both sides that are compatible with the initial objectives of the research need to be selected and applied by the researcher. That is why a mixed-method approach is called pluralistic and pragmatic, that do not overly concern a single approach. It is flexible in accordance with the questions to be answered, the methods to be used, the tools to be implemented, and the objectives to be achieved (Tashakkori & Creswell, (2007).

Despite the fact that this study employed a mixed-method approach, the majority of the research objectives (the first, third, and fourth) were informed by qualitative data. The second research objective, which focused on thirty-year trends of women's higher leadership representation, shows the quantitative section of this study. According to prominent mixed methods and social science scholars such as Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), Bryman (2016), and Creswell (2017), quantitative tracking and analysis of gender disparities using tables, graphs, and descriptive statistics is a

powerful approach for identifying patterns, inequalities, and progress over time. Bryman (2016) draws attention to the value of empirical quantitative data and visual tools (e.g., charts, graphs, tables) in social science research, arguing that such methods can effectively show structural inequalities, including those related to gender. Creswell (2017) further emphasizes the value of longitudinal data, descriptive statistical techniques, and visual representation in uncovering trends and disparities within social contexts.

While this study employed a mixed-methods approach, it did not adopt a conventional mixed-methods design involving integration of qualitative and quantitative data at the analysis stage. Instead, each research objective was addressed independently using either qualitative or quantitative methods, designs, or data sets depending on its specific requirements. The study was predominantly qualitative in nature (approximately 75%), with quantitative components comprising the remaining 25%. Although the data types were analyzed separately, they were conceptually linked in addressing the overarching research objective. This approach aligns with a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2017), in which integration occurs primarily at the levels of interpretation, conclusion, and implication to complement each other rather than during data analysis.

This research, however, has employed descriptive and explanatory research designs from quantitative and qualitative designs. While the descriptive design was used to answer the question “what”, the explanatory design was used to answer the question “why” related to the research objectives. Similarly, as a descriptive research, this research specifically answered the question of what the dynamics of women’s representation looks like in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia; what major policies are in place to empower women. Further, as an explanatory research, this research answered the bigger question why the conditions of women’s representation level is in the way it is which is related with the major challenges/impediments of women’s leadership participation.

The study also used a phenomenological research design to address the fourth objective, i.e., assess the lived experiences of women leaders serving at federal higher-level leadership positions. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the individual's perspective, 'bracketing' commonly held beliefs and ways of experiencing (Lester, 1999). “Lived experience of a group around a specific phenomenon is the central research question in a phenomenological study”

(Pathak, 2017, p.1). Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p.58). According to the work of Moustakas, (1994), descriptions of a phenomenon need to consist ‘what’ and ‘how’ the individual participant experiences and experienced the issue under study. The study employed an empirical or transcendental phenomenology approach among the two approaches of phenomenological research which are hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 2016) and empirical or transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). While hermeneutic phenomenology tends to interpret human experiences from external factors such as history, transcendental phenomenology focuses on describing and analyzing human experiences without interpretation using “epoche” or brackets out previous assumptions (experiences) of researchers and about the external world to focus purely on the phenomena of consciousness. Epoche is specifically about taking care not to influence the research throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

Furthermore, this dissertation is a basic research because its objective is to provide significant value to knowledge development on the situation of women and leadership. According to Paly (2008), basic research is performed for the sake of adding to the stock of information about a certain occurrence, and such types of study have an inherent goal for practical activity such as improved policies. Accordingly, this study engaged in assessing a practical activity i.e., reforms and improved policies, barriers, experiences and facts about women’s representation. In terms of time, this study is a qualitative longitudinal research (using data from 1991 – 2022) that investigates the change of women participation over time at multiple time intervals through descriptive trend analysis. According to Lin (2023), qualitative longitudinal research is an emerging research method used to capture the different experiences of a phenomenon across time and dynamics of events. It also investigates why alteration occurs on a given phenomenon over time.

3.5. Data types and sources

This study has incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data types to meet the research objectives and enhance the substantives of the findings. Quantifiable, statistical, or numerical data were included in the study to answer questions "How many? On what frequency?" While the qualitative data is expressed in terms of language, words, and categorization, and it was arranged categorically by group and interpreted based on its nature.

For this investigation, both primary and secondary data sources were used. According to Ajayi (2017), primary data are data that are acquired directly by the researcher from the field. And it is expected to be accurate and fresh. Secondary data refers to data that are already been collected and prepared by someone and is an interpretation of previously existing primary data. Accordingly, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews were used to collect the primary data for the study, while secondary data has been gathered from government reports, policy papers, websites, books, journal articles, internal institutional records, and other essential publications. The secondary data were further employed to organize numerical data to inform the trend of women representation.

3.6. Sampling and sampling techniques

3.6.1. Target population

The total population of this research (the theoretical population that the researcher wants to conclude about) is all the population in the federal higher decision-making places in Ethiopia, such as the offices of the prime minister, the office of the president, the House of Federation, the House of People's Representative, the judiciary, and all ministerial offices. The target population of the study is both male and female public servants who are serving in the above-listed offices at different levels. The sample frame of this study includes higher leaders from selected government institutions at the federal level.

3.6.2. Sample institutions

Because this research is concerned with women's representation in higher leadership positions at the federal level, in-depth interviews participants of this study came from federal governmental institutions involved in the three branches of government, namely the executive, legislative, and judicial organs. Four of the country's 20 ministerial offices have been chosen to select different levels of officials for in-depth interviews. The four ministerial offices from which women and men in-depth interview participants drawn from are the ministry of technology and innovation, the ministry of education, the ministry of planning and development, and the ministry of women, and social affairs. These ministerial offices were selected based on (1) their role and influences on the socio-economic and technological empowerment of women; (2) Since empowerment is multifaceted, education, technology, planning, and social affairs must collaborate to support all aspects of women's empowerment, including women's public leadership empowerment; and (3)

women's involvement at the minister level in the two of ministerial offices i.e to analyze how they went through all levels of hurdles before obtaining their higher positions and describe how they have managed them as a key lesson for others aspiring to political leadership roles. Meanwhile, the study involved in-depth interview participants from Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to interpret and analyze the issue under study from human and democratic rights perspectives. Meanwhile, legislative members and judges were also among the in-depth interview participants of this investigation.

Besides, the study incorporated the ideas of key informants advocating and working for gender equality, such as people from women-based civil society organizations and gender experts. Among the different CSOs, the study included the ideas of people from women-based and women-led CSOs. In accordance with this, participants from the Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA), TIMRAN, and the SETAWEET movement have been selected for this study. All these women-based associations are working for gender equality and for the socio-economic and political empowerment of women in all aspects, as well as advocating against gender-based violence..

3.6.3. Sampling techniques

Although the unit of analysis of this study is women and women in higher leadership positions, the study has included the perspectives of a variety of research participants, including both men and women public servants at ministerial offices, judges, gender experts, people from women-based CSO's, and others who are believed to be relevant and close to the study objective. Women ministers and other higher officials considered for in-depth interviews have been selected purposefully to deal with the different dynamics of challenges/barriers that hinder them and other women from their careers and life-long experiences. Furthermore, the researcher had key informant interview with gender experts, and women-based CSO leaders to share their ideas from distinctive perspectives about the problems faced by women leaders and other women who are striving to be future leaders and these participants were also selected by utilizing purposive sampling technique considering their expertise and better understanding of gender issues.

On the other hand, for the purpose of the phenomenological inquires of this study, Ethiopian former and existing exemplary female leaders have been chosen using a purposive sampling technique based on their leadership experiences, educational advancement, and achievement in balancing both family and leadership lives.

3.7. Sample size determination

As stated in the table below (3.1), 19 study participants were involved in gathering the necessary data for a specific research objective (objective three) pertaining to the challenges that limit women from holding higher leadership positions in Ethiopia. Data saturation was the rationality in determining the total numbers of participants, i.e., adequate and robust research data have been collected to answer the research question. The following table presents sample participants, the institutions they are affiliated, the sample size and tools utilized.

Table 3.1: Sample size and profile of research participants

Institutions	Target Group	Female	Male	Total	Tools
HoPR	Women Parliamentarian	2	1	3	In-depth interview
HoF	Women members	2	-	2	In-depth interview
Judiciary	Judges from FHC	1	1	2	In-depth interview
	Judges from FFIC	1	1	2	In-depth interview
Female-led CSO's	EWLA	1	1	2	Key informant interview
	SETAWEET	1	-	1	Key informant interview
	TIMRAN	1	-	1	Key informant interview
Ministerial Offices	Women State Ministers and commissioner	3	-	3	In-depth interview
Experts	Gender experts	2	1	3	Key informant interview
Total interview participants = <u>19</u>					

Source: Own calculation

3.8. Data collection tools

The study predominantly used data collection instruments such as key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and document analysis to gather both in-depth qualitative and quantitative information on the study's objectives, as discussed below.

In-depth and Key Informant Interviews: An interview is an inner-view through which the investigator is going to know the inner perception, view, thought, and understanding of people on specific issues (Blown & Bryce, 2022).

To address research question three of this study, the researcher has conducted both key informant and in-depth interviews. The in-depth interview was employed with selected women and men, higher government officials in federal governmental institutions. In additions to in-depth interviews, the study involved key informant interviews with gender experts, CSOs leaders to answer the stated specific research question. Open-ended questions were the kinds of questions that were provided for target participants. Open-ended inquiries are explanatory in nature, and they allow interviewees to react in their own methods and words rather than selecting only the possibilities provided by the researchers. It is also beneficial for the researcher to ask questions back and forth until saturation is reached (Stuckey, 2013). The type of interview executed for this study was a semi-structured interview. 'It has a focus but is adaptable based on the direction of the participant's responses' (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 89). According to these authors, the researchers, like the structured interview, defined and drafted certain crucial questions to assist the interviewees; however, the researchers posed more advanced questions based on the subjects' responses rather than the first drafted questions. Finally, all research questions have been presented to interviewees through face-to-face and virtual interview procedures depending on the accessibility of the research participants.

On the other hand, this study also utilized in-depth interview data collection tool to satisfy the last research objective of the study that deals about the lived experience of exemplary women leaders in Ethiopia. The researcher had in-depth interviews with selected former and existing experienced women leaders of Ethiopia. The major aim of this interview was to take some important lessons from those experienced women leaders to the upcoming women about the dynamics of challenges in claiming leadership positions, the balancing of multiple responsibilities, sharing leadership experiences, and other valuable subjects. As a phenomenology inquiry (investigating the lived

experience of people who have commonly shared a phenomenon), it has involved five prominent Ethiopian women leaders who have shared and commonly experienced leadership or leadership positions for a long period of time at the federal/national level. Data were also collected from those purposefully identified five (5) women leaders. Although the richness of the data is important in determining sample size in phenomenology studies, most research experts recommend a minimum of 5 people who have all experienced the phenomenon (Van, 2016; Moustakas, 1994 and Polkinghorne, (1989) as cited in Creswell, 2007). Open-ended questions were presented to the selected participants using an unstructured interview type.

Document analysis: In addition to implementing the above primary data collection tools, the secondary data of the research have been gathered through document analysis. In this regard, the researcher has examined various documents, such as policies, proclamations, and strategies that are drafted in accordance with the FDRE constitution in order to promote gender equality in Ethiopia. On the other hand, in order to gain insight into the past and present statuses of women's participation and representation at higher decision-making levels (quantitative data), the researcher examined various government documentation and publications. Most of the documents for this purpose have been gathered from FDRE, House of Federation (HoF) and House of Peoples Representatives (HoPR). Although they have unstructured and dispersed data, these institutions provided the quantitative data of this study by putting in a lot of effort, which was helpful to convey the pattern of women's political leadership participation over the past thirty years.

3.9. Data analysis techniques

Data analysis is the process of converting the already-gathered data into meaningful information to answer research questions (Taherdoost, 2022). This scholar indicated that in qualitative research, data analysis and report writing are usually performed simultaneously, whereas in quantitative research, report writing comes after the findings produced in supporting with different quantitative data analysis instruments such elements of SPSS.

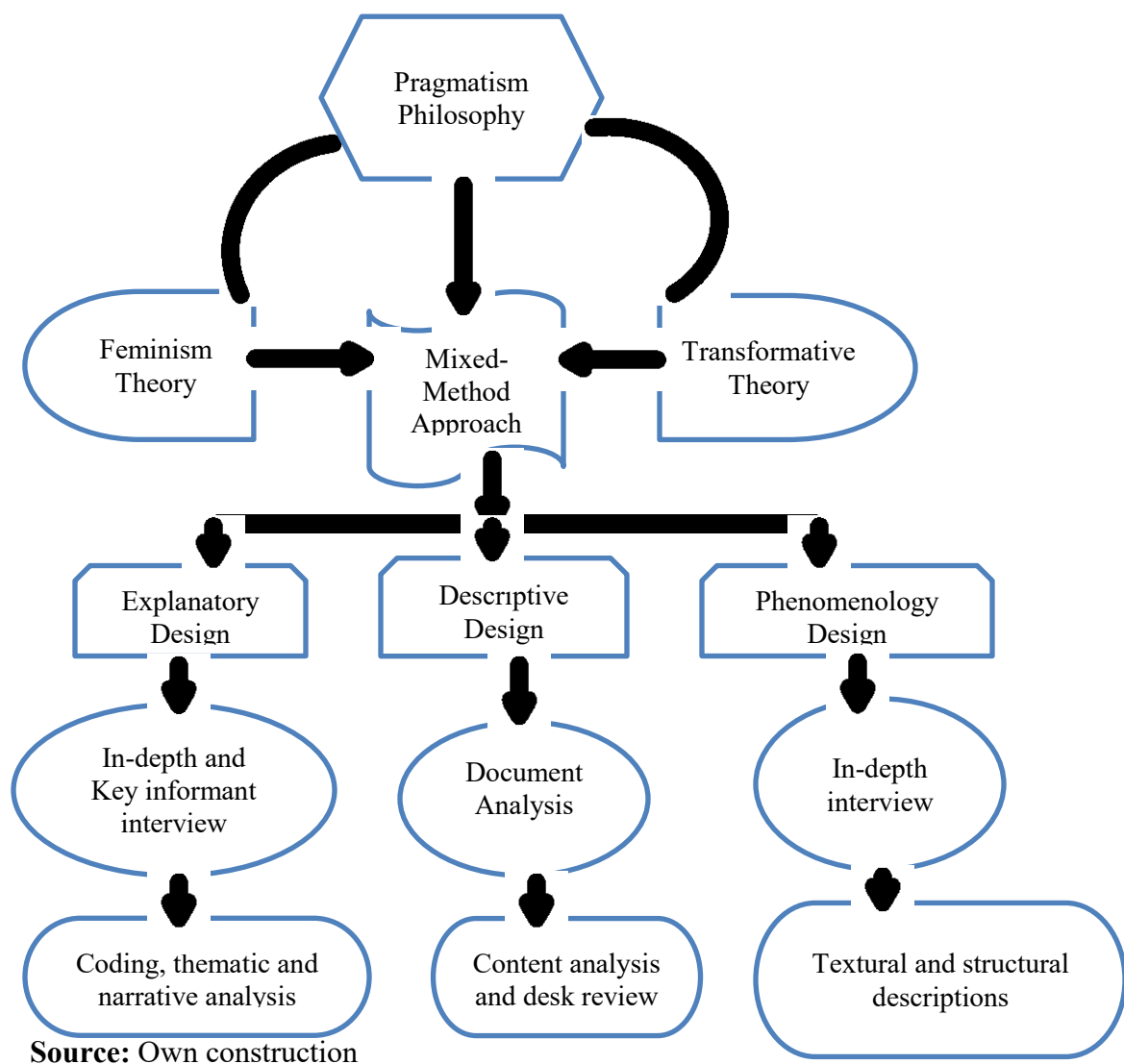
As previously indicated, the primary data collection strategies for this study include interviews and document analysis. During data collection, the data acquired through an in-depth and key informant interviews were tape-recorded, and the researcher was taking some important notes alongside the tape-recording. The short notes incorporated facial expressions, items highlighted by participants,

and other relevant information that cannot be represented in an audio segment. Nonetheless, the data gathering system was more focused on recording in order to have a better dialogue with participants. After the data acquired through interviews, the following stage was to transcribing the data in written form, which entails transcribing each and every word of the research participants. Coding and theme analysis follow, or organizing all of the data differently by assigning topics depending on the study questions. Following the classification of the data, narrative analysis has been used to begin the data analysis. The findings or outcomes are presented in the study in a variety of formats including direct quotes. Additionally, in the case of the phenomenological data analysis, the researcher has used both textural description (what participants experienced) and structural description (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context) through horizontalization (interview transcriptions and highlighted significant statements or quotes) as recommended by the research scholar Moustakas (1994). Following that, the researcher created a textural description of the individuals' experiences, a structural explanation of their experiences, and a combination of the two that reflects the general essence of the experience. For this study, another data collection strategy was document review. Regarding analysis, the researcher was expected to see many key published and unpublished documents through content analysis, and then, after situating the data in line with the research questions, the researcher had conducted a desk review of the documents. The major data analysis technique for this study was descriptive data analysis.

3.10. Methodological framework of the study

The following diagram shows briefs of the overall methodological approaches of this study.

Figure 3.1: Methodological framework of the study



3.11. Ethical considerations

As a scientific research, this study follows the scientific writing procedures. Starting from problem statement to data analysis technique selection, the study has adhered to guidelines developed by Addis Ababa University. At any stages of literature parts of the dissertation, the writers of books,

journal articles and reports have been duly acknowledged to the best of the researcher's knowledge. Usually research requires collecting data from the people, about the people, and to the people, and as rational and big creatures, people deserve respect. Hence, the people who are willing to participate in this study were treated respectfully and justly.

Prior to data collection, the participants have signed the informed consent form prepared by the investigator, and this was done for two reasons. Firstly, to make sure the proposed idea is not exposed to potential risk to the informants, and secondly, to show the legality of the study and to guarantee the informants about their privacy and right to protection. In this informed consent form, the research participants were clear about the outcome of the study and their impacts on the study, and at the same time, they also know the extent of time to stay with the researcher. This was very crucial for them to manage their work and give appropriate time and attention to the study.

Furthermore, the researcher followed the rules and regulations of the data gathering sites. During interview time, the researcher could make every effort in terms of place and time selection, as well as setting up arrangements in accordance with the institution's requirements, so as not to interrupt the institution's everyday operations. Moreover, during data analysis, the names of participants were certainly being separated from their responses in order to preserve the participants' identity. The data were presented with proper authentication from participants during the interpretation steps.

Last but not least, prior to any data collection activities, this dissertation's proposal and data collection tools were presented to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and ethical clearance was granted by Addis Ababa University, College of Development Studies Institutional Review Board, known as IRB-CoDS.

3.12. Data reliability and validity

Validity and reliability are critical components of all scientific studies. Hence, researchers should use scientific methods to determine and validate the credibility and dependability of their findings (William, 2024; Coleman, 2022; Sousa, 2014). William (2024) defines reliability as the extent to which consistent procedures and processes are applied in research. Depending on this, the researcher described and clarified the research methodology, strategies, techniques, and data-gathering tools in the study. Indeed, appropriate theoretical lenses, worldview, and sampling

strategies were used to ensure that the study followed scientific processes. Likewise, the approaches used in this investigation are systematic, rigorous, well-defined, and appropriately justified. Similarly, validity refers to the research's trustworthiness and genuineness in persuading readers (Coleman, 2022). To ensure the validity of this study, the investigator used a variety of strategies.

First, before beginning comprehensive and full-scale data collection, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the data-gathering instruments to identify issues and refine the questions. In this regard, to ensure the clarity of questions and its persistent nature towards the research objectives, the investigator had a pilot test interview with 4 individuals. The pilot test participants were government officials from the selected ministerial offices and a participant from the identified CSO's. Furthermore, by enabling a large number of participants on specific goals, the researcher can present varied perspectives and views on the topics being studied, making the results more realistic and rich. Additionally, the data analysis reports have been demonstrated using direct quotes from participants in order to convey their real-life experiences. *Second*, data triangulation was employed to increase the research's validity. To support the study's findings, the researcher used a variety of data sources, including primary and secondary data. Besides, secondary data for the study were collected from government bodies such as the HoF and HoPR. In some cases, various data-collection methods (in-depth and key informant interviews) were used to acquire information about a specific goal in order to integrate and enrich the results. Furthermore, some specific descriptions of themes and transcriptions of interviews have been sent and commented on by the respective research participants to determine the accuracy of the collected data and to give them the opportunity to review their data correctness. *Third*, during the data collection and analysis stages, in order to avoid imposing on the study's results and potential biases (reflexivity or self-awareness), the researcher deliberately attempted to detach the research goals from the researcher's personal gender, academic, cultural, and historical background. Although positioning and biases are common and unavoidable in qualitative research, it can be reduced by adhering to important scientific procedures according to research scholars.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN BASED POLICIES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN ETHIOPIA SINCE 1991: WOMEN’S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

To address the different needs of men and women, promote gender equality, and empower women, gender-responsive public policies are vital (IRI & WDN, 2020). Mousmouti (2023) argues that gender-responsive legal/policy frameworks have positive effects on promoting gender equality and abolishing discrimination and stereotypes related to women’s participation in politics. In this regard, a gender-sensitive parliament or legislature plays a key role by mainstreaming a gender perspective in policymaking processes, formulating a gender equality-based policy framework, and ensuring oversight instruments that reflect the interests, experiences, and values of both genders (Mousmouti, 2023). Effective formulation and implementation of gender-responsive policies require the participation of several stakeholders and the unique influence of those who possess the relevant legal qualifications (Tiasha, et al., 2023). In accordance, gender-responsive global, regional, and national legal frameworks (policies) have impacts on the advancement of women into political leadership positions. Overall, gender-responsive or women-based policies specifically are necessary to bring gender parity by prioritizing and underlining works for the socio-economic and political empowerment of women.

This research chapter examined selected Ethiopian women-based legal frameworks from the perspective of women's political empowerment. It aimed at assessing the extent to which the policies and strategies in place improve women's political empowerment (leadership empowerment). This chapter primarily utilizes a qualitative approach. The Variety of Democracy Women’s Political Empowerment Indicators (V-Dem Index) were used to review the content of the selected legal frameworks of Ethiopia since 1991. Using the indicators, the 1995 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution, the 1993 National Policy on Ethiopian Women, and two other strategy documents were specifically examined. The Variety of Democracy (V-Dem) approach was utilized to interpret the contents in the documents and discern the gaps and improvements.

4.2. Specification of measurements of women's political empowerment

From existing literature, the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) were the two key global measures and indicators of women's empowerment. However, the UN introduced the revised indicators and replaced them with the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2010. To some extent, the UN recently introduced an inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) (Sundström et al. 2017). But these are all criticized because of the extensive nature of their indices, which include all facets of women's empowerment (economic, political, educational, and mental/physical). Sundström et al. (2017) argued that separate measurement by domain allows separate assessment of women's progress in each.

The Variety of Democracy (V-Dem) index was introduced recently (Sundström et al., 2017). This index, according to the authors, is suitable to assess women's political empowerment adequately. According to Sundström et al., (2017), the index measures women's political empowerment in a precise, understandable, and targeted manner. Additionally, it is relatively a recently developed index compared to the aforementioned index and it also takes into account the context of developing countries, including their wide spatial coverage. This measurement was used as a lens to evaluate the content of the selected policy frameworks in terms of facilitating women's political empowerment in Ethiopia. It is aimed at finding out the degree to which Ethiopian women's participation in political and decision-making processes is being facilitated by the current policy frameworks.

The V-Dem Women's political empowerment measurements has three sub-indexes (Sundström et al. (2017 p.1).

1. ***The women civil liberties sub-index:*** It includes indicators of women's freedom of domestic movement, freedom from forced labor, property rights, and access to justice.
2. ***The women civil society participation sub-index:*** it includes indicators of women's freedom of discussion, participation in civil society organizations (CSO), and representation in the ranks of journalists.
3. ***The women political participation sub-index:*** reflects the extent to which women are represented in formal political positions, both in terms of presence of women in the

legislature as well as political power distribution by gender.

4.3. Examining women-based policy frameworks in Ethiopia from women political (decision-making) empowerment approaches

A. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution

Since its ratification in 1995, the constitution has governed Ethiopia and its people. By including the issue of women's rights in the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), the Ethiopian government affirmed its commitment to gender equality. The constitution's Chapter 3 addresses everyone's (men's and women's) fundamental human and democratic rights.

According to the V-Dem index, the first measurement of women's political empowerment is legitimizing women's civil liberties. Among the different indicators of women's civil liberties as identified by the V-Dem Institute, the right to liberty of movement and freedom from forced labor are the first two, and these rights are acknowledged by the FDRE Constitution under Articles 32 (1) and 18 (3), respectively. Indeed, the constitution has given due concern to the civil liberties of Ethiopian women by stipulating separate provisions that aim to address deep-rooted discrimination against women in the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of the country. In this regard, Article 35, with its various sub-articles, outlined the rights of Ethiopian women's.

In Article 35(1), the FDRE constitution allowed the equal enjoyment of all constitutional rights and protections by women. Again in this article, sub-article (2–9), the constitution perceived equal rights of women in marriage, entitlement to affirmative action measures, right to maternity leave with full pay, right to consultation in projects affecting their lives, property rights (to acquire, administer, control, use, and transfer), right to equality in employment, and right of access to family planning education, information, and capacity. Besides this, a woman's right to property is also explicitly stated in Article 40(1) of the FDRE Constitution. Lastly, as an indicator of women's civil liberties, the right of access to justice for Ethiopian women is also recognized by the constitution under Article 37.

On the other hand, there is another way to measure women's political empowerment, and that is through their participation in civil society. This approach utilizes the three indicators mentioned

above. What matters in this case is how these indicators are addressed within the FDRE constitution. The first indicator is freedom to discussion. Article 29 (1 & 2) of the 1995 FDRE constitution recognizes this right by declaring that everyone in Ethiopia has the right to express themselves freely and to hold beliefs without hindrance. Article 31 (Freedom of Association) of the constitution grants women the right to participate in civil society organizations, which relates to the other indicator. The equal work and equal payment of women are also acknowledged by this supreme law as an additional indicator of the grant of women's civil society participation.

The final measure of women's political empowerment consists of two key components that each state should execute: the representation of women in the legislature and in the allocation of political power at all levels. There is one sub-article under Article 35 of the FDRE constitution that focuses on the right of women's consultation on projects affecting their lives. It is worthwhile to consider the views and interests of women in policy and strategy development. On the other hand, women in Ethiopia have the right to vote and to be elected (Article 38). The constitution appreciates positive/affirmative measures to enhance the participation and involvement of women in the political and public affairs of the country. In this regard, pursuant to the FDRE constitution, the 2019 Ethiopian electoral proclamation grants incentives to political parties on the basis of the number of female candidates it nominates, the number of female party members, and the number of females in leadership positions. Therefore, those criteria are determined to promote women's engagement in the political processes of the country.

In sum, it is sound to deduce that all indicators of women's civil liberty, women's civil society participation, and, to some extent, women's political participation indicators identified by the V-Dem Institute are acknowledged by the FDRE constitution, and it is a good benchmark at the policy level to do further work on women's political empowerment and this granting implies government commitment to gender equality. This result validates the conclusion made by Tefera and Wondosen (2022), who claimed that getting constitutional attention for a certain matter is essential before pursuing a particular course of action by various legal methods, such as policies and strategies. This finding also affirms the result revealed by Sindhuja and Manimekalai (2018), who claimed that legal recognition of equality between men and women needs priority before actual implementation. Furthermore, recognizing these rights is essential to guaranteeing women's legal protection and equal opportunities in various areas of employment, education, social services, justice, and other

liberties that would enhance women's ability to make decisions. In particular, the country's supreme law's granting of these rights is essential for combating gender prejudices and stereotypes, offering assistance, encouraging women to take part in all positions, strengthening women's organizations, and taking other constructive actions that help to make women active participants in policy-making and decision-making activities. In conformity with this study finding Gennet (2014) stated that, while acknowledging rights is indeed an important step, merely recognizing them is not enough; enforcing these rights requires addressing structural and institutional obstacles, as well as laws, norms, and values that restrict women's participation in political, social, and economic areas of their communities.

B. The 1993 National Policy on Ethiopian Women

Ethiopia got its first policy on women's affairs in 1993, named the National Policy on Ethiopian Women (NPEW). This policy recognized the deep-rooted patriarchal system as a basic cause of the prevalent lower status of women in the social, economic, and political practices of the country. This policy also aimed to promote the socio-economic and political rights of women by establishing institutional machinery. The national women's policy bases itself on respecting the fundamental human and democratic rights of women recognized by the FDRE constitution. The government disclosed its commitment in its policy to facilitate conditions that can speed up the closing of gender gaps in the social, economic, and political spheres.

The political empowerment of women is one of the policy's objectives. The primary objective of the policy in this regard is to provide women with an opportunity to hold public office and take part in decision-making at all levels. The government committed to dealing with laws, regulations, and customs that promote male dominance and women's subjugation in this area. Based on this, according to UN Women, (2014), amendments have been made to some critical legal laws in Ethiopia that were discriminatory and undermined the roles of women in all spheres. Among them, the former Family Law, Criminal Law, and Penal Code were upgraded and amended in the 2000s to facilitate gender equality between the two genders and to abolish any forms of discrimination and violence against women (UN Women, 2014). Meanwhile, the policy aimed to increase the participation of women in the formulation and implementation of laws, policies, and projects that could positively affect women's themselves and society at large. Another objective of the women's

policy is to safeguard women's property rights. The motive behind this is to recognize women for their efforts and allow them to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

The national policy on Ethiopian women has its strategies to implement the identified objectives of the policy. Among the strategies, the realization of human and democratic rights for women has been given priority. As explicitly determined in the policy, all necessary measures need to be taken to ensure women's freedom of speech, writing, peaceful assembly, and forming associations, as well as their right to vote or be elected.

The researcher examined the National Policy on Ethiopian Women using the V-Dem index (Women Political Empowerment Approaches), as it has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs. The examination's findings demonstrate that most of the indicators of women's political empowerment are incorporated into the policy, but not all. Hence, the policy effectively addresses indicators of women's civil liberties and civil society participation, but falls short in addressing women's political participation indicators. The policy underlines the essence of ensuring women's participation in public administration and decision-making positions. However, it does not specify the extent to which special reservations are to be reserved for women in the different organs of government (gender quota). The work of Jalalzai & Krook (2010); O'Brien, & Piscopo (2019) and Ndlovu and Mutale (2013) confirm gender quotas as a distinctive public policy that promotes women's representation in positions of decision-making. The success of this strategy has been demonstrated in over 100 countries, including Rwanda, Finland, and Norway, which are exemplary in their representation of women in public bodies (Jalalzai & Krook, 2010).

The ways of promoting women's leadership (decision-making) roles have also never been included in the Ethiopian national women's policy. This result supports the finding of Wondemagegn (2013), which stated that "in Ethiopia major areas of underrepresentation of women in agriculture (land use, for example), business opportunities, and higher-decision making have not been covered by existing measures of existing ordinary policies (P.175)." Meanwhile, as Wondemagegn argued, specific measures are not envisioned in the policy frameworks to elevate women's to decision-making areas. However, according to Sindhuja and Manimekalai (2018), in addition to other courses of action, ordinary policies and codes of conduct need to specify measures regarding women's political participation and ways of abolishing discrimination in any political process.

Thus, since the indicators of women's political participation identified by the V-Dem are not included in the policy, all women's political empowerment approaches are not entertained in the National Policy on Ethiopian Women, which could affect Ethiopian women's political participation and decision-making role.

C. National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAP-GE) 2006-2010

This action plan for gender equality was initiated and formulated by the then-Women's Affairs Office (WAO), and it was assumed to be an Ethiopian government commitment to bring gender equitable development to the country. The NAP-GE was incorporated into the broader development policy of the country, which was a Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP). It was aimed at including gender equality in the processes of poverty reduction. Particularly, the NAP-GE has been targeted to attain the objectives underlined in the 1995 FDRE Constitution, PASDEP, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), the 2000 Beijing+5 Political Declaration and outcome document, and other governing principles in the national and international legal frameworks.

The principal objective of this five-year action plan was to support Ethiopia's social, political, and economic development by promoting gender parity. It also had strategic objectives in order to achieve gender parity in various aspects of the country. Under democratization and governance, one of the plan's key objectives was to increase women's access to decision-making at all levels, especially in the political and public spheres. The government set the following specific objectives to boost women's involvement and representation in public and political leadership positions: 2006–2010.

- a) Enact gender sensitive electoral law: to enforce this, the plan aimed to assess the existed electoral law and planned to develop a revised all-inclusive electoral law and lobby for its enactment.
- b) Implement constitutionally guaranteed affirmative action measures to rectify gender imbalances in political representation and decision making. The government has planned several kinds of measures to carry out this strategic goal, from improved capacity-building efforts to increase women's political knowledge. Hand in hand with this, it has been planned to enhance women's engagement in the three organs of government

decision-making positions by forming lobby and advocacy groups. The government declared in the action plan to uphold women's and men's equal rights in all political endeavors, including freedom of association.

- c) Build women's and girls' capacity in leadership and managerial skills and in exercising their rights. To bring this to the ground, many activities had been planned to be practiced. Among these, the government showed its commitment to providing continuous leadership, management, self-esteem, and capacity-building training to make women equally competitive in leadership positions.
- d) Initiate specific measures to increase gender balanced representation within the political and public sphere. The action plan calls for the implementation of gender-sensitive selection criteria and positive discrimination in different government organizations in order to advance women into positions of decision-making.

According to the V-Dem women's political empowerment measurements based analyses, the NAP-GE Ethiopian gender equality action plan is more oriented toward the indicators in the women's political participation sub-index among the three sub-indices (women's civil liberties, CSO participation and political participation indices) that are not found in Ethiopia's women's national policy. This action plan is more concerned with the promotion of women's engagement at all levels of public and political decision-making positions. The action plan, however, while concerned with promoting women's political participation, fails to adequately address women's civil liberty and civil society participation indicators, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment.

D. The 2017 Ethiopian Women's Development and Change Strategy (EWDCS)

As officially proclaimed in the document, the aim of this strategy is to promote gender equality and ensure women's equal participation in social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. Furthermore, safeguarding women's fundamental rights, building an atmosphere that supports women's associations, working toward building capacity, ensuring that women are represented in positions of decision-making, and monitoring the inclusion and enforcement of women's issues in development policies, strategies, and legal frameworks are among the strategy's key objectives.

As mentioned above, one of the significant objectives of the Ethiopian women's development and change strategy is to increase the role of Ethiopian women in decision-making areas. The plan recognizes that increasing women's political involvement and strengthening women's organizations can help increase the number of women in political leadership positions.

As per the strategy, women's political participation could be achieved by: (a) strengthening women's associations and groups i.e. improving the current and establishing new women's organizations, allows women to collaboratively question issues related to development, democracy, and good governance. This strategy highlights the importance of women's organizations as a source of emerging female leaders. (b), the strategy also places a strong emphasis on advancing women in leadership and decision-making positions. In this sense, the plan concentrates on boosting the participation of women in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches at all levels of decision-making positions. Moreover, as it emphasizes, it proposes taking measures to encourage women to actively participate in positions of leadership. Beyond this, another aspect of the plan is advance women's political involvement is to mitigate gender-based discrimination, injustice, rights violations, and harassment through a series of struggles against customary law, patriarchal thinking, and stereotypes. The last but not least point of focus of this strategy is the institutionalization of women's issues in public institutions with sufficient funding to address women's concerns and advance women's interests.

The 2017 Ethiopian women's development and change strategy has been assessed based on the V-Dem women's political empowerment measurements, just like exhibited in the previous legal framework. As a result, the strategy laid a greater emphasis on indicators of women's political participation and women's participation in civil society. Although it was thought to be essential for women's political empowerment, the strategy did not fully address indicators of women's civil liberties. The document specifically emphasized expanding women's political involvement as a way to increase the number of women in positions of political leadership. According to the V-Dem approach, emphasizing exclusively on women's associations and political involvement is insufficient to accomplish women's political empowerment. Instead, women's civil rights must be appropriately valued in order to advance women's freedom and justice, which in turn affects women's political empowerment.

4.4. Chapter Conclusion

Ethiopian women-based policy frameworks have been examined using the V-Dem women's political empowerment measurement indices. From the perspective of women's political (decision-making) empowerment, the provisions of the FDRE 1995 constitution, the national policy on Ethiopian women of 1993, the 2006 national action plan for gender equality and the 2017 Ethiopian women's development and change strategy have all been reviewed. The V-Dem index-based review of those policies reveals that Ethiopia lacks a women-based strategy or policy that comprehensively acknowledges and effectively addresses the basic indicators of women's political empowerment. The assessment using the V-Dem sub-indices specifically indicates the gaps. The indicators that are related to women's civil liberty and women's civil society participation are often the focus of the majority of women-based initiatives, policies, and strategies in Ethiopia. The 2006 national action plan for gender equality and the 2017 Ethiopian women's development and change strategy place relatively better emphasis on the indicators of women's political participation. Thus, policy development related to women's political empowerment is advancing but not comprehensive and all-inclusive content-wise. Indeed, all those policy frameworks did not include specific measures such as quotas and other specific affirmative action measures acknowledged by continental initiatives (e.g., Agenda 2063) with their indicators that are vital to increasing women's decision-making role. In Ethiopia, these shortcomings of women-based policies were found to be a bottleneck in the struggle to bridge the gender gap in decision-making positions.

The women's civil liberty, women's civil society participation, and women's political participation indices are interdependent and interconnected; mainstreaming them into frameworks can boost the visibility of women in politics and positively impact gender equality measures. In order to support women and enhance their agency to influence the nation's political life, a distinct and comprehensively gender-responsive policy framework that included the basic induces are needed. Hence, national policymakers need to take into account an alternative set of legislation that addresses women's political engagement issues. Among others, the institutions for collaboration, the timetable for the goals to be achieved, the parties to be involved in the policy, the resources required, and the precise measurement indices to track progress are also needed. Additionally, from formulation through execution to evaluation, every step of the policy-making process should take into account the interests of both sexes in order for it to be considered effective.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN HIGHER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN ETHIOPIA IN THE LAST THREE DECADES SINCE 1991

5.1. Introduction

This chapter primarily aimed at investigating the representation journey of women in the Ethiopian higher decision-making positions over the last thirty years, since 1991. The three federal organs of government (law-formulating, law-enforcing, and law-interpreting bodies) were the focus of the analysis. Specifically, the women’s leadership representation trend in the two federal houses (HoF and HoPR), parliament speakers and standing committee chairs, prime minister and president positions, ministerial posts, and the three federal-level courts have been analyzed in this chapter. Secondary data sources from relevant government institutions were mostly used. The data was analyzed through content analysis of documents and presented via descriptive data-presenting techniques. The study's findings show that, while women's representation in decision-making positions has improved significantly in recent years, the average empirical data over the previous thirty years showed that women were underrepresented in higher leadership positions within Ethiopia's federal government. Thus, substantial policy and practical initiatives are needed to remove institutional, social, and economic barriers to boost women's advanced visibility in senior leadership roles.

5.2. Women’s representation in the two houses (HoPR and HoF)

5.2.1. Women’s representation in the federal legislature (HoPR) of Ethiopia post 1991

According to the FDRE constitution, the HoPR is one of Ethiopia's bi-cameral parliaments formed under Article 53 of the FDRE constitution and are known as the lower house. Members of the HoPR should not exceed 550, with at least 20 seats reserved for minority nationalities. According to Article 54 of the Constitution, members of the HPR are elected for five-year terms through universal suffrage. The house has diverse powers and functions. Among the different, some are concerned with land and natural resources, international trade, transportation and communication, nationality and immigration, labor, and political and civil rights. General strategies pertaining to economic and social growth, fiscal and monetary issues, international agreements, and the

appointment of ministers, federal judges, commissioners, and others cannot be executed without authorization of the HoPR.

Women's representation in the Ethiopian national legislature (Parliament) varied throughout the past thirty years. Despite a recent notable increase, women's participation in the legislature has been slowly increasing since the first round of national elections in 1995 and the establishment of the federal state structure and parliamentary system of government. For instance, when the House of Peoples Representatives first assembled in 1995, its membership consisted of 97% men and 2% women. This implied that female members' ability to change policy or convey their experiences, ideas, or interests on a wide range of national affairs was minimal.

Table 5.1: Female representation in the House of People's Representative's (HoPR) membershi and speakers positions (1995 – 2026)

No.	Election Terms (Years)	Total seats	Male MP	Female MP	Male Speakers	Female Speakers	Male Vice-speakers	Female Vice-speakers
1	1995-2000	547	533 (97%)	14 (2.6%)	1	0	1	0
2	2001-2005	547	505 (92%)	42 (8%)	1	0	0	1
3	2006-2010	547	430 (79%)	117 (21%)	1	0	0	1
4	2011-2015	547	395 (72%)	152 (28%)	1	0	0	1
5	2016-2021	547	334 (61%)	213 (39%)	0	1	0	1
6	2022-2026	472	275 (58%)	197 (42%)	1	0	0	1
Total Part.	1995-2026		77%	23%	83%	17%	17%	83%

Source: FDRE, HoPR Teaching & Communication Directorate

As presented in the table, from the second to the sixth round of national elections, women's representation continued at a gradual but promising pace, with 8%, 21%, 28%, 39%, and 42% of parliamentary seats being held by female legislators, respectively. According to the study's findings, there has been a 6.6% rise in the average representation of women in the HoPR through the

previous 30 years. In addition, women have only made up 23% of the seats in the Ethiopian national parliament on average over the past thirty years, with men holding the remaining 77% of the seats. In addition to parliament membership, speaker and deputy speaker positions are among the other higher decision-making positions in the Ethiopian legislature. Women had a higher representation in the deputy speaker roles (83%) throughout these election terms; in reality, during the last 30 years in the HoPR, there has only been one female speaker. Men tend to occupy speaker positions more frequently. Overall, this study's findings show that, despite women's representation growing over time, men have typically constituted an excessive number of legislators in Ethiopia. This conclusion also harmonized with the study results produced by Meaza (2009), Berouk (2004), and Ojulu and Melesse (2014), which indicated that women's presence in senior political decision-making positions in Ethiopia is insignificant.

This research finding implies that the problems, interests, ideas, values, and roles of women have been overlooked by the legislature because of their underrepresentation. According to Oyindamola and Olaniyan (2020), men have little concern and attention for women's issues as a result of gendered socialization. In line with this, Shimelis (2015) raised the experience and interest arguments, and according to these arguments, women's experiences, perspectives, and interests are different from those of men's, which influence policy decisions in different ways, so representative institutions are essential to articulating the concerns of women. The other implications of this finding are that half of the population of the country is not well represented in parliament, given that women constitute over 50% of the nation's total population. On the other hand, as Oyindamola & Olaniyan (2020) discovered, fewer women in the legislature entails less attention to social policy (human trafficking, issues of children, youth, and seniors), gender equality, and family policy. An empirical study conducted by Devlin and Elgie (2008) and O'Brien & Piscopo (2019) also gives support to this argument, acknowledging that a higher representation of women in parliament has a significant impact on the legislative agenda and environment (women-friendly working hours and calendar). Finally, as argued by Ballington and Karam (2005), the insignificant representation of women in parliament is a manifestation of poor democracy. A democratic institution devoid of women's full participation is retrograde, and any country that upholds it cannot advance politically or flourish economically (Oyindamola & Olaniyan, 2020). On the other side, gender disparity in the parliament speaker and vice-speaker positions affects the members' equal opportunity to voice opinions, interests, and perspectives within the patriarchal society (all members might not gain

equal opportunity to speak). Likewise, it can also affect women's aspirations to those positions due to the absence of role models (International IDEA, 2024).

5.2.2. Women's representation in the standing committee chairs in HoPR Since 1991.

The information presented in the table below shows how the number and purview of standing committees have changed over time in response to Ethiopia's changing political and socioeconomic landscape. As a result, the number of standing committees varies throughout time. The largest standing committees (20) were formed in 2018 on a variety of areas; however, when a new structure (the creation of multiple subcommittees on several grand committees) was implemented in 2019, the number of standing committees dropped to 10. As can be seen in the table, men significantly outnumber women in Ethiopian parliament standing committee chair and deputy chair posts held after 1991. To put it numerically, in the past 30 years, the proportion of women as chairperson in the HoPR standing committees has been merely 31.5%. The participation of women as vice chairpersons is lower than this number, at 30%. Unlike the HoPR deputy chairperson seats (which appear to be reserved for female lawmakers), this post in the standing committees is overwhelmingly held by men. As a result, women have accounted for only 30.5% of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons over the last three decades, with male members of parliament holding the remaining 70%. Thus, women have a small presence among the chairs of the standing committees in the HPR, much like they have little representation among parliamentarians.

Table 5.2: Female Representation in HPR Standing Committee Chairs (1995 – 2022)

Number	Service Years	Number of Standing Committees	Chairpersons		Vice Chairpersons	
			Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
1	1996-2000	9	8 (89)	1(11)	8(89)	1(11)
2	2001-2005	12	11 (92)	1(8)	11(92)	1(8)
3	2006-2010	13	10 (76)	3(23)	9(69)	4(31)
4	2011-2015	16	12 (75)	4(25)	11(69)	5(31)
5	2016-2017	18	11 (61)	7(39)	8(44)	10(56)
6	2018-2019	20	12 (60)	8(40)	10(50)	10(50)
7	2019-2021	10	4 (40)	6(60)	8(80)	2(20)
8	2022	11	6 (55)	5(45)	7(64)	4(36)
Total Chairs			68.5%	31.5%	70%	30%

Source: FDRE, HoPR Teaching & Communication Directorate

According to Benda (1997), given differences in their type, duties, and significance, most countries in the world adopted parliament (standing) committees that specialize in various matters, and they are usually created for the effectiveness and efficiency of the large work of the legislature. Gaines et al. (2019) stated that parliamentary chairs are considered important policy actors, and they play an important role in parliamentary political leadership positions. A legislature with strong committees and chairs has an impact on shaping government policies. According to Fortunato et al. (2019), committee chairs can play two important roles by using their agenda powers: encouraging opposition political parties to examine proposed government policies and enabling the ruling parties to provide better policies to the public. To sum up, women chairs are essential to the advancement of gender equality, inclusive governance, and the development of policies that are advantageous to society at large because of their concern for grassroots agendas (Wängnerud, 2009).

Therefore, the underrepresentation of women in committee chairs and other political leadership roles inside the parliament has implications of its own. The first is the absence of female role models, which would deter women from entering the political arena and positions of leadership. Secondly, inclusive decision-making would be missing. Their limited presence in political leadership roles within parliament undermines inclusive decision-making procedures that welcome a range of viewpoints and opinions. The third implication is that there would not be policy prioritization, i.e., women are more likely to focus on policies that address women's rights, gender equality, social welfare education, and other related issues.

5.2.3. Women's representation trend in the House of Federation (HoF) Post 1991

Unlike the lower house (HoPR), the upper house (HoF) in Ethiopia is composed of representatives from nations, nationalities, and peoples. According to the Constitution Article 61, "each nation and nationality shall be represented by one additional representative for each one million of its population." Members of the House of Federation are elected by the State Councils. According to Article 61-63 of the FDRE Constitution, the powers and functions of the Ethiopian House of Federation include interpreting the Constitution, organizing the Council of Constitutional Inquiry, deciding on issues of self-determination, and disputes between national/regional states and others.

The table below presents data on women's representation in Ethiopia's House of Federation, the country's second chamber of parliament. The member of the HoF varied across different terms. This usually happened due to the recognition of new ethnic groups by the regional councils and through the restructuring of administrative boundaries. In the past thirty years, Ethiopia has held six consecutive national elections. Only seven women were elected to the House of Federation during the first national election in 1995, with 103 seats being held by men, according to the facts shown in the table. Over the last six terms, unlike the case of the House of Peoples Representatives, the highest number of female representations in the upper house (HoF) registered in the 2015 national elections, constituting 50 (32.6%) of seats. The number of female representatives in this house did not exceed 50 of the total members. However, this figure was again reduced to 43 (30%) in the recent 2021 national election as a result of the absence of Tigray regional state representatives due to the war between the federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which started in November 2020 and ended in November 2022.

According to the results of this study, males and females were represented in the House of Federation by 81% and 19%, respectively, over the last thirty years (six terms). This shows that, on average, women were underrepresented in the House of Federation compared to even the representation level of women in the House of Peoples Representatives.

Table 5.3: Females representation in HoF over the six terms of elections (1995 – 2026)

Numbers	Election Times	Male members	Female members	Total
1	1995	103 (93.3%)	7 (6.7%)	110
2	2000	104 (92.9%)	8 (7.1%)	112
3	2005	98 (81.7%)	22 (18.3%)	120
4	2010	111 (82.3%)	24 (17.7%)	135
5	2015	103 (67.4%)	50 (32.6%)	153
6	2021	101 (70%)	43 (30%)	144
Total women's representation over the six terms	1995-2026	81 %	19%	774(100%)

Source: House of Federation Women and Children Affair's Office

The findings of this study further revealed that, despite the dynamics of the number of female representatives at different terms, female representation in the upper house has increased by 3.88%

over the course of the past six terms. Generally, given their underrepresentation in both houses, the above data discloses that women are insignificantly represented in the House of Federation compared to the House of People's representatives.

Meanwhile, women make up a minor portion of the House's standing committees in addition to being members of the House of Federation. Data from 2010 to the most recent election (2021) showed that, on average, women's participation in standing committees was only 17% throughout the previous three terms. Women are likewise disproportionately underrepresented in the working four standing committees, with the standing committees on revenue affairs, budget, and subsidies having the lowest representation, followed by the council of constitutional inquiry.

This finding supports the results released by Atsedo, Aemro, and Eyayu (2022), who argued that despite attitudinal changes and governmental efforts regarding women's political participation enhancements, "nevertheless, facts and figures show that, even currently, the participation of women is not at an equal level with men in the highest decision-making spheres" (p. 75). And this finding implies that without a fair and equitable representation of women in the political process, the objectives of democracy, good governance, human rights, gender equality, and development would not be realized. It is because, as argued by Wubante (2021), the involvement of women in political leadership is essential for promoting democracy and establishing effective governance. On the other hand, women's lower engagement in the HoF means the absence of women's voices during constitutional interpretation, constitutional amendments, and on the issues of the rights of nations, nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia, which has an adverse effect on the impacts of women's participation in national and regional agendas.

5.3. Women's representation in the law enforcing (executive) body

5.3.1. Women's Representation in Chief Executive and President Positions

National executive positions such as head of government are the highest political leadership positions of a state in which important national-based decisions are undertaken and are responsible for the supervision and implementation of policies and laws made by the legislature. In the Ethiopian context, these positions are mostly occupied by male executives such as male prime ministers, male presidents, and male deputy prime ministers. As per the figures below pointed out,

there was no female prime minister and there were no female presidents (until President Sahle-Work Zewde was elected as the first female president in 2018) in Ethiopian history post-1991. Meanwhile, only one female deputy prime minister served in the position of 2nd deputy prime minister from 2014–2016, while all deputy prime minister positions were held by male executives after 1991. And her tenure was not longer than two years.

Table 5.4: Female Representation in Chief Executive and President Positions (1991 – 2024)

No.	Term of office	Prime Ministers		Deputy Prime Ministers		Presidents	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	1991-1995	1	0	1	0	1	0
2	1995-2012	1	0	1	0	1	0
3	2012-2018	1	0	1	1	1	0
4	2018-Present	1	0	1	0	0	1

Source: FDRE, HoPR Teaching & Communication Directorate

The findings of this study revealed that women have been severely underrepresented in Ethiopian executive posts since 1991, which contradicts the findings of Farida Jalalzai's (2004) global-based work, in which she concluded that women have rarely been presidents or prime ministers worldwide; however, more women have been reaching these high positions since the 1990s. Her finding is invalid in the context of Ethiopia. On the other hand, the findings of this study contradict her other finding, which claimed that women are more likely to access executive positions in the parliamentary government system than in the presidential system (the argument having that women are less likely to be elected directly by the public due to patriarchal society) (Jalalzai, 2004). Her finding appears to be unsound, given that Ethiopia's parliamentary system experience over the last thirty years has not provided opportunities for women to advance to such top decision-making positions.

According to the 1995 FDRE constitution (Article 72/1), the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers have the highest executive authorities of the Federal Government of Ethiopia, and the Prime Minister in particular has crucial national powers. This implies that women's absence as prime minister since 1991 means that over the past 30 years, women's did not organize cabinet ministers (councils of ministers) for different departments; women's never been the commander-in-

chief of the national armed forces (all past 30 years, defense force movements and war-related decisions have been done by males); posts of commissioners; the president and vice president of the federal supreme court; and the auditor general have never been selected by females. Thus, the existing economic condition, justice system, diplomacy, and peace trend are or were the result of men's political leadership. This implies that this and related conditions could have been different if male leaders collaborated with females and considered gender inclusivity in leadership positions.

5.3.2. Post 1991 Women's representation at the ministerial positions and their portfolios

Government ministries are mainly responsible for the implementation of laws and regulations and for the administrative functions of the national government. As it is observed in the table, through the course of the last 30 years, in Ethiopia, the number and nomenclature of ministerial offices have been changing to cope with the socio-economic, political, and technological changes of different times.

Throughout this journey, the biggest number of female ministers was 3 (13%) until 2012, while male ministers occupied 20 (87%) of ministerial positions. Since 2013, the proportion of female ministers has increased to 5 (22%) or more. The highest number of female ministers were appointed in 2019, when the percentage of them increased to 10 (48%), or nearly half of the total share. This time, the male/female minister ratio was 10 (48%)-11 (52%), which was admirable nonetheless; the number of female ministers in ministerial positions was recently lowered to 8 (36%) in 2022. According to the study's findings, female representation in ministerial positions has averaged 19% during the last thirty years. Furthermore, the average female's leadership in ministerial positions increased gradually by 3.44%.

This research comes up with the finding that, though currently the engagement of females at the ministerial posts is increasing and encouraging, there was no significant representation of women before 2019.

Table 5.5: Female Representation in Ministerial Positions and their Portfolio (1995 – 2022)

No.	Term of Office	No. of Ministerial offices	Female Ministers	Male Ministers
1	1995-2001	17	1 (5.8%)	16 (94.2%)
2	2002-2005	18	1 (5.5%)	17 (94.5%)
3	2006-2008	20	2 (10%)	18(90%)
4	2009-2010	21	1 (4.76%)	20 (95.24%)
5	2011-2012	23	3 (13%)	20(87%)
6	2013-2015	23	5 (22%)	18 (78%)
7	2016-2018	30	8 (27%)	22 (73%)
8	2019-2021	21	10 (48%)	11 (52%)
9	2022	22	8 (36%)	14 (64%)
Total in 30 years			19%	81%

Source: FDRE, HoPR Teaching & Communication Directorate

On the other hand, according to the data obtained from the FDRE House of Peoples Representatives, women in Ethiopia have been appointed in every ministerial office at least once over the last thirty years, but the top three departments (ministerial positions) that are frequently headed by female ministers are the ministries of women, children, youth, and social affairs (over eleven times), culture and tourism (five times), and urban development and construction (four times). The results of this study showed that, despite the fact that these ministries contribute to the socio-economic and political advancement of a nation, women in Ethiopia have not held the leadership positions in important and high-profile political posts, such as those related to science and technology, foreign affairs, finance, defense, and justice across the past 30 years. Nonetheless, currently this trend is changing with a few female leaders taking on significant positions in the identified areas. According to Barnes & Taylor-Robinson (2018), these high-profile positions allow ministers to represent their nation at significant global forums, and prime ministers and presidents frequently use them to express the general direction of their government's policies.

Nevertheless as concluded by Krook and O'Brien (2012), women have held fewer cabinet positions, and when they did, they were frequently assigned to portfolios associated with lower status and "feminine" attributes. The finding of this study affirmed the report by Africa-Barometer claimed that women in Africa tend to hold portfolios on women, family and children affairs, social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority affairs

(International IDEA, 2024, P. 175). This study also confirms the findings revealed by Barnes & Taylor-Robinson (2018); although the importance of cabinet portfolios varies across countries, the most common high-profile posts are defense, finance, and foreign relations. Even though these authors underlined the importance of women's presence in powerful positions as, "women's presence in top cabinet posts is positively associated with both women's and men's satisfaction with and confidence in government" (Barnes & Taylor-Robinson, 2018 p.19). However, it is not common for women to hold these important positions; in particular, certain leaders in Asia, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa have never proposed a woman to take any of these positions (Barnes & Taylor-Robinson, 2018).

5.4. Women's representation in the federal law interpreting body

5.4.1. Women's representation trend in the federal courts since 1991

Below in the table, figures reveal the share of males and females as respected judges and in the positions of president and vice president in the three levels of federal courts, such as the Federal First Instance Courts (FFICs), Federal High Courts (FHCs), and the Federal Supreme Court (FSC). As per the data in the table, the federal government has appointed a total of seven presidents in the three federal courts over the last thirty years. Among the seven presidents, only one was female, while six of the total presidents were male. According to the finding, Meaza Ashenafi was not only the first female president of federal courts but also the only female chief justice (president of the Federal Supreme Court) in Ethiopian history. Aside from that, 11 vice presidents have been appointed in those years, including 9 men and 2 women. During these years, female leaders accounted for 14% and 25% of the federal courts' president and vice president positions, respectively.

On the other hand, across the last 30 years since 1991, a total of 805 judges have been appointed to the federal courts, and among them, the proportion of female judges was 197 (24%), while the number of male judges was 608 (76%). Meanwhile, independently, the share of female judges in the Federal First Instance Courts (FFICs), Federal High Courts (FHCs), and the Federal Supreme Court (FSC) across the last thirty years was 27%, 21%, and 22.3%, respectively. From this, it is sound to deduce that the representations of female judges are better at the federal first instance court than the other two federal courts.

Table 5.6: Female Representation in the Federal Courts (1996 – 2021)

Years	Federal Courts	Presidents		Vice-presidents		Number of appointed Judges		Total number of appointed Judges
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1996-2001	Federal Supreme Court	1	0	1	0	12 (75%)	4 (25%)	16
2002-2008		1	0	1	0	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	10
2009-2015		1	0	1	0	17 (94%)	1 (6%)	18
2016-2021		0	1	1	0	21 (66%)	11 (34%)	32
1996-2001	Federal Highest Court	1	0	1	0	48 (87%)	7 (13%)	55
2002-2008		–	–	1	0	38 (88%)	5 (12%)	43
2009-2015		1	0	1	0	39 (80%)	10 (20%)	49
2016-2021		1	0	1	1	87 (72%)	34 (28%)	121
1996-2001	Federal First Instance Court	1	0	1	0	88 (83%)	18 (17%)	106
2002-2008		–	–	1	0	40 (69%)	18 (31%)	58
2009-2015		1	0	2	1	70 (71%)	28 (29%)	98
2016-2021		1	0	2	1	139 (70%)	60 (30%)	199
Total judges	Three courts	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	75% 2 (25%)		608 (76%)	197 (24%)	805 =100%

Source: FDRE, HoPR Teaching & Communication Directorate

In a nutshell, for the past thirty years, there have only been 24% of women serving as federal judges, and only 14% and 25% of them have held leadership roles as president and vice president, respectively. The study's main conclusion was that women are underrepresented in Ethiopia's legal system, both in leadership roles and in arbitration. This finding is consistent with the conclusion of Addadzi-Koom & Gage (2022), which announced that in the three levels of Ethiopian federal courts, the total number of female judges is outnumbered by male judges. This finding is also consistent with the global-based empirical research by Castillejos-Aragón (2021), which affirmed that despite the growing participation of women in the legal profession, the gender gap remains prominent, and according to this writer, women's are still underrepresented in top-ranking positions of the judiciary, even in countries where more women are appointed as judges.

As pointed out by different writers, the lower representation and participation of women in the judiciary body have their own implications. As argued by Castillejos-Aragón (2021), women's absence in the judiciary reduces the responsiveness, inclusivity, and participatory nature of decision-making at all levels. It also has an impact on women's equal visibility, diversity of viewpoints, and gender-sensitive judicial institutions. Additionally, the legitimacy of the judiciary would be reduced by the lack of women in this body and last but not least, it neglects women's inherent right, acknowledged by various international frameworks, to participate equally in all public institutions (Castillejos-Aragón, 2021).

5.5. Chapter Conclusion

In Ethiopia, women's representation in senior leadership roles within the federal government was and remains insignificant. These roles include head of state and government, cabinet positions, membership in the House of People's Representatives and House of Federation, chairs of standing committees, and the judiciary body. Women do not hold certain higher-level decision-making roles, such as the Prime Minister position, which seems to be closed to women.

The percentage of women serving in Ethiopia's national legislature, or Parliament, has increased since 1991. The study's findings indicate that the proportion of women in the HoPR has increased by an average of 6.6% over the preceding thirty years. Furthermore, throughout the preceding 30 years, women's representation in the Ethiopian national parliament has averaged only 23%. In the meantime, women have a stronger representation in the deputy speaker roles during this election term. Speaker roles are typically occupied by men. Overall, this study's findings show that, despite women's representation growing over time, men have consistently constituted an excessive number of legislators in Ethiopia. According to this study, female membership in the HoF constituted solely 19% in the last three decades. This demonstrates that women's presence in the House of Federation is negligible when compared to the representatives in the House of People, considering their underrepresentation in both houses.

High executive positions in Ethiopia are typically held by men, including those of presidents, deputy prime ministers, and prime ministers. Amazingly, throughout Ethiopian history since 1991, there has never been a female prime minister or president (before President Sahle-work Zewde's election as the country's first female president in 2018). Over the past thirty years, the average percentage of women holding ministerial positions has been 19%. On average, there has been a modest increase of 3.44% in the number of women holding ministerial positions. The ministry of women, children, youth, and social affairs; the ministry of culture and tourism; and the ministry of urban development and construction are the top three departments (ministerial roles) that are frequently headed by female ministers, according to this study. The study's primary finding also demonstrated the minimal representation of women in leadership roles and arbitration within the Ethiopian legal system. During the entire year, the judiciary organ had 14% and 25% of female leaders in the positions of president and vice president of the federal courts, respectively.

Furthermore, of the total 805 judges over the last thirty years, the proportion of female judges was solely 197 (24%).

All in all, the data and statistics presented in this study point to a hopeful increase in the representation of women in positions of decision-making. For women to effectively participate, however, substantial policy and practical initiatives including appropriate monitoring and evaluation are needed to remove institutional, social, and economic barriers as well as increase women's advanced visibility in senior leadership roles.

CHAPTER SIX

BARRIERS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN ETHIOPIA

6.1. Introduction

This chapter distinctively deals with the challenges of women's advancement into higher decision-making positions in Ethiopia. Apart from that, it has focused on possible ways to nurture women's representation in leadership positions. To achieve this, it has mainly relied on primary data sources, including in-depth and key informant interviews.

The findings of this chapter disclosed the rationale for women's equal representation in higher-level decision-making positions, as well as the implications for Ethiopia's socioeconomic and political progress. The findings revealed that women's participation in higher-level government decision-making positions has significant benefits, including inclusive decision-making, gender-sensitive policy initiation that considers distinct women's values and perspectives, human rights protection, and women's empowerment.

Besides this, the study finding uncovers women's major challenges in their attempts to elevate to higher leadership positions. According to the results, socio-cultural, institutional, personal, and workplace barriers are identified as major constraints limiting women's ascendance to top leadership positions in Ethiopia. Meanwhile, the study's findings indicate that the government, social institutions, women themselves, women-based CSOs, and society as a whole have the potential to address the issue of elevating women to positions they deserve and ensuring that women contribute to various aspects of the country. Alongside, changes must promote coherence in government actions by financially strengthening institutional machinery and educating human capital. Indeed, as indicated by the responses, strong and mandatory legislative frameworks to provide remedies for women's underrepresentation are crucial.

6.2. Perceptions on gender equality in higher leadership positions and its trend in Ethiopia

Perception and understanding of the most important components of gender equality by policymakers, bureaucrats, society, individuals, and women themselves is critical for ensuring and

promoting women's representation in leadership and decision-making positions. According to UN Women (2018), a solid knowledge of gender equality helps to raise awareness about gender issues and encourages individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and strive toward gender equality. Most of the participants in this study grasped the phrase "gender equality" in an adequate manner and had a positive outlook on the subject matters. Most of the participants asserted that gender equality has an inherent foundation in the principles of basic human rights. In this regard a female KI from EWLA underlined that "First of all gender equality is among the fundamental human rights to be ensured and promoted, since we all are born free and equal; It is an innate right of women that could not be alienated from them" (KI-04:From EWLA). Other participant underlined gender equality as fundamental human rights that can help advance other rights. "It serves as a pillar for the exercise of other rights, such as the right to education and political participation" (RP-08: Ethiopian Human Rights Commission).

Women's equal representation in leadership positions is one aspect of the right to gender equality. Gender equality in this case is the equitable allocation of decision-making power between men and women in all sectors. Gender equality in decision-making roles is determined by the equal roles and responsibilities that women are entrusted to fulfill rather than by the number or percentage of female representation in confined positions, according to the responses of participants. This statement has been strengthened by a key informant as "Gender equality in higher leadership positions is about the existence of equal voice, participation, and contribution by both males and females, making qualification its center of inclusion" (KI-05: Gender expert). It also requires the removal of all barriers to qualified women's access to power and leadership, including their equal right to aspire and compete for the highest office as president or prime minister if they fulfill the same requirements as male candidates. The key informants of the study underlined the conventional trends in the appointment of women to leadership positions in Ethiopia, and they criticized the government's focus on building mass appointment of women entering the public domain with less attention to the glass ceiling that prohibits their rise to higher levels of power and leadership. According to Lockwood (2004), the glass ceiling is a way of putting invisible challenges in front of women in their work journey and limiting their options to the limited and specified ranks assumed for them. This hard-to-see informal barrier makes women restricted by what they have rather than thinking and acting to hold higher positions, higher pay, and further opportunities.

Furthermore, beyond the number of women versus men leaders, gender equality is about the respective mandates and authorities they are assigned to hold and aspire to reach. According to the findings of this study, usually women in political positions may act on the principle that ‘the tree that hides the forest’; it is to emphasize that women in high positions are often isolated tokens with no real political power to transform the status quo, and it is further to emphasize that holding a position does not imply exerting political power but rather fulfilling prescribed roles.

The information from the key informant further pointed out that there seem to be misunderstandings and stereotypes by the society concerning the concept of 'gender equality' among various people. Some interpreted it as a movement against the established social system and men themselves. Despite decades of progress in expanding women's rights, bias against gender equality persists in some countries. Indeed, 91% of men and 86% of women showed some form of clear bias against gender equality in all aspects of life (United Nation Development Program (UNDP), 2020). According to the responses, this type of perspective must be challenged in order to promote women’s representation in leadership and decision-making positions. Besides, women’s representation should be viewed favorably as a means of creating equal and fair playing fields for both sexes, in which the effectiveness of both men and women is measured based on personal efforts and merits.

Regarding the trend, most of interviewees agreed that women are underrepresented in senior decision-making positions in Ethiopia. Women's political participation was hoped to increase, particularly following the country's 2018 reform. However, as a participant pointed out, "Women's involvement in higher positions is not as we had celebrated 6 years ago. It is currently falling" (RP-08: from Ethiopian Human Rights Commission). In Ethiopia, despite recent modest numerical advances in women's representation in higher leadership positions, crucial higher positions in the law making, law enforcing and interpreting bodies have and continue to be dominated by men according to the responses. A key informant from Setaweet (a CSO) stated, "I do not believe that gender equality is ensured in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia, such as in public institutions, universities, banks, and the justice system" (KI-02). A male informant demonstrated this, pointing out, "Since I know, we never had a woman prime minister and president, except for the coming of some women ministers and directors as a result of the existing reforms" (KI-03: From EWLA). Similarly, a woman KI underlined the underrepresentation by expressing,

Gender equality, I believe, is not ensured in Ethiopia, particularly in higher-level posts. For example, when we go to parliament to change discriminatory and unjust legislation affecting women, guess what happens? The vast majority of the house consists of men. Similar cases are also exhibited in law enforcement and interpreting institutions (KI-01: Gender expert).

This finding supports the findings of Wubante (2019), Gebeyehu and Ayesheshim (2022), Berouk (2004), Zeynie and Filmon (2024), and Shimelis (2015), who found that women's participation in key national executive and legislative leadership positions in Ethiopia was low, with little involvement in decision-making and public policy formulation processes.

6.3. Why we need gender equality in to higher leadership positions in Ethiopia?

There are many reasons that can justify the importance of women's equal involvement in leadership positions. As per the findings of this study, the following are the fundamental reasons for women's involvement in senior-level decision-making positions:

Rights protection and promotion: As emphasized by the interviewees, first and foremost, women deserve equal participation, considering that they are born equal to men and free as men. Women have the right to meaningfully participate in all leadership positions. In other words, ensuring and promoting gender equality in all spheres entails guaranteeing and protecting both genders' fundamental human rights. This argument was supported by a high-ranking female official from a public institution, who stated, "The issue of gender equality is primarily a matter of human rights; other things come next" (RP-07: A state minister).

Diversified interest and value considerations: Equal participation and representation of women in leadership roles are critical for public institutions to consider the perspectives, opinions, and interests of women and girls when developing and implementing policies, according to this study finding. On this matter, a female participant notes that "women have different interests, views, and experiences about things that men cannot express; therefore, men can never represent women in decision-making processes" (RP-12: Female HoF Member). Indeed, "naturally and socially, women are closer to the problems and interests of women than men" (KI-06; TIMIRAN CSO). Thus, women's participation is critical to ensuring an inclusive and comprehensive decision-making

process. This study's findings are consistent with those disclosed by Babugura (2017), who found that women had varied skills for responding to various development-related challenges.

Gender-sensitive policy formulation: According to the responses, women's involvement in key decision-making positions is essential for enacting and implementing gender-sensitive legislation and policies that promote gender equality. To provide an example, a female informant notes that, "For instance, former president of the federal Supreme Court, Mrs. Meaza Ashenafi, had determined to have special courts to hear cases related to harassment, and I remember, during March 8 (International Women's Day), there was a bench run only by female judges" (KI-02: From Setaweet CSO). Likewise, the study's findings show that equal representation of women in decision-making positions has a significant impact on the abolition of discriminatory legal frameworks, unfair institutional structures, and abusive working conditions. On the other hand, most interviewees stated that women's participation in leadership roles, particularly in the legislative branch, is critical for providing adequate attention to social issues affecting women, girls, youths, elders, and children because they are more familiar with societal issues and social affairs. This study result affirmed the conclusion made by Klugman et al. (2014): women's involvement in decision-making areas is crucial for policy priority considerations and to underline the types of solutions proposed.

Inherent values of women: According to the interviewees, women's participation in public leadership positions involves building trust and satisfaction in the hearts of the people. Emotional intelligence, multitasking, and balancing are among the distinguishing characteristics of women leaders, as per the findings of this study. A male informant stated that "women leaders are more honest, truthful, and empathic than men leaders, and they are far from immoral and illegal conduct, such as corruption" (KI-03: From EWLA). Another participant emphasizes these females' characteristics, stating that "women are very wise in running leadership roles. We need not go anywhere other than their house to see their wisdom" (RP-19: Female judge). Indeed, numerous scientific studies have demonstrated the effective and convenient nature of women's leadership styles. In this regard, Harris (2019) points out that women are better known for their honesty, work ethic, compassion, communication, generosity, goal-achieving, cooperative, and democratic leadership styles in their leadership courses. Similarly, the findings by Appelbaum, et al. (2019) and International IDEA (2024) demonstrated that the effective nature of women's leadership in goal-

setting and achievement, concern for others, collaborative working, and societal interest-based performances are worthwhile.

Role modeling and empowerment: Another benefit of women's leadership involvement, according to the study, is having female leader role models who may inspire young women to become future leaders of the country. In this context, a female KI from a women-based CSO noted that "bringing more women into leadership positions is useful to inspire fellow females to come into such positions and to change their conventional attitudes" (KI-06: from TIMIRAN CSO). This study result affirms the idea that without visible examples of women effectively assuming high-level positions, the future female leaders may find it difficult to imagine themselves in similar positions (Thelma & Ngulube, 2024).

Bringing development: Gender equality, in addition to ensuring women's rights, contributes to a country's overall development. Women's participation in senior leadership roles is also beneficial to a country's economic development because they account for half of the population and labor force. A female higher official emphasized this statement: "Gender equality has an economic aspect; further, the goals of peace, democracy, good governance, and other dimensions of development could not be realized by ignoring the voice of half of society" (RP-07: State minister). Another higher government official from a federal institution demonstrated this idea by stating, "A country that disregards half of its people becomes weak and unable to overcome poverty" (RP-08: from Ethiopian Human Rights Commission). This finding confirms the result revealed by Babugura (2017), which stated the fate of a nation's success depends on the utilization of both genders attributes in the developmental activities. Furthermore, as asserted by International IDEA (2024), nations characterized by a greater representation of women within political institutions often experience reduced levels of corruption, resulting in a more effective allocation of resources towards enhanced service delivery.

6.4. Barriers to women's representation in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia

Women in Ethiopia face numerous obstacles at various levels as they strive to attain higher leadership positions. While the challenges women encounter can be both profound and superficial, the primary obstacles can be categorized into the following groups, as emphasized by both in-depth interview and KII participants.

1. Socio-cultural and religious barriers

These issues stem from societal cultural norms and beliefs. According to Gebeyehu and Ayesheshim (2022) and Meseret and Befekadu (2020), profoundly established cultural and social constraints remain in Ethiopia, despite the fact that a growing number of women hold leadership positions. According to the findings of this study, sociocultural problems can take numerous forms, including the following.

A. Patriarchal thinking

According to this study, Ethiopia's persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is the result of deeply ingrained patriarchal thinking that gets passed down through the generations. As the informants pointed out, the impact of patriarchal thinking began with the birth of a baby girl. Some of community members do not welcome the birth of a baby girl. This has its own effects on the childhood lives of girls. An informant stressed this: “We are shaped by the level of what we hear. No one has encouraged girls when they try to go to school. Thus, we need not be surprised by today’s levels of women’s underrepresentation” (KI-05: Gender expert). Indeed, participants underlined on the challenges that arise from how we socialize and grow up in society. This finding directly affirms the conclusion that the perceived inabilities among women can also be connected to the socialization of girls in different cultural settings (Kiamba, 2009), and according to this author, the boy child is prepared for leadership roles at all levels in many African cultures through rituals and traditions.

The other face of patriarchal thinking in society is that, due to well-established thinking, society perceives leadership roles established more for male than female. Most of the participants agreed that the society perceived a successful woman as the one who fulfills household responsibilities adequately and keeps her family happy by staying at home all day, without due respect to her childhood dream. A participant emphasized this, saying,

The society does expect independent roles from the two genders. Females are expected to undertake household responsibility since childhood, and males are encouraged to go out and play with friends, to learn, and to accomplish something outside the home. Often, girls

are prepared by their family to be good wives, not good leaders (RP-10: Female parliamentarian).

This conventional thinking was also conveyed as a key factor in the work of Bari (2005), who argued women continued to be excluded from public and political decision-making roles due to society's perception of women's role as private (homemaker), not public. Furthermore, despite their skills and abilities, women may be neglected or devalued because of stereotypes about gender roles and leadership abilities (Thelma & Ngulube, 2024). Likewise, the findings of this study also consistent with the findings of Gebeyehu and Ayesheshim (2022), and Kiamba (2009), who stated that cultural perceptions of women in public leadership roles and politics are unfavorable. As articulated Gennet (2014), the idea of separate sphere demonstrate how genders interact in numerous areas of Ethiopian culture, where men are seen as providers and leaders of the family, representing them in public, while women are assigned to household duties, caring for children and managing the family's well-being. This division into distinct roles results in the reinforcement of roles and limits on women's independent decisions, which is a characteristic of patriarchy.

The other thing is that, due to well-established patriarchal thinking, society has a lower attitude towards women's leadership ability and performance to do things. In this regard, a male informant supported this with the following example:

A female judge (my colleague) received conflict cases between two individuals, and she gave a decision based on the country's law, but the one who breached the law insulted the judge and said women do not deserve to be judges. You know, the law, not a judge determines the decision, but because of his unfavorable attitude toward women's abilities, he refused to recognize it" (KI-03: From EWLA).

Furthermore, society's lower view of women's leadership ability is evident throughout the election periods. A female informant from Setawet CSO illustrates that "during elections, the society prefers male political candidates rather than female candidates, regardless of their educational or political qualifications, because people do not believe in women's leadership ability" (KI-02). This finding confirmed the conclusions made by Mauchi et al. (2020): the society has negative and insensitive views about women in leadership roles and recognizes their roles less.

B. Religious teachings

According to the study's finding, some religious beliefs have their own consequences in undermining women's leadership abilities, capacities, and performances. Some of the principles discourage and limit women's leadership possibilities. For instance, some beliefs state that a woman is obligated to fulfill all of her husband's commands and demands. There are also religious teachings that restrict women's ability to speak and preach publicly; as a result, most people still associate leadership qualities with men. Participants further emphasized that misuse of religious teachings is one of the main problems. Cultures employ various spiritual tenets to devalue and subordinate women, which is completely wrong when we examine real teachings. In this regard, one of the participants stated that, "The society is so selective about religious teaching. For instance, society perceives a husband as the head of the house while forgetting a woman as the crown of her husband" (RP-11: Female parliamentarian). Consistent with this study result, the impact of religious beliefs is also underlined by the work of Mauchi et al. (2020), religious beliefs suggest men are natural leaders, while women are expected to follow their leadership, and it is believed that putting women in positions of leadership is considered against God's command. Similarly, according to Kiamba (2009, p. 95), "Unlike men's, in various religions around the world, women's do not enjoy privileges and are disempowered by religious structures and practices".

C. Negative attitudes towards female leaders

According to the finding from key informants and in-depth interview participants, society has negative opinions toward female leaders, which has a detrimental impact on women's career advancement and the interest of other female workers in becoming leaders. Regarding this, a female informant stated that "when female leaders reach decision-making positions, some people forward negative comments and reactions that can undermine female leaders, which is discouraging to other fellow middle-level leaders" (KI-02: from Setawet CSO). Another participant also added "If you notice, unlike men's, women leaders are subject to criticism by everyone when she speaks, walks, reacts, or dresses. Because of this, some women opt to stay quiet rather than be prominent and visible on various platforms" (RP-08: from Ethiopian Human Rights Commission). As confirmed by the finding of Meseret and Befekadu, (2020) employees of all levels and service users frequently express uncomfortable opinions and subtle remarks towards women leaders and they remind women of their roles as subordinates in the patriarchal society.

The other discouraging negative perceptions usually forwarded are on women's paths to leadership positions. According to this study, some people's opinions about women's paths to power and representation are discouraging and disturbing. When women come to leadership positions, everyone wants to raise questions about them, which were never raised in the case of men's appointments. A participant emphasized, "A woman coming to top positions has to go through with disgusting comments such as 'How did she gets in touch with the top men leaders?'; 'She may have had another affair with her boss'; and others that are depressing and disappointing" (RP-12: Female HoF member). This study result is harmonized with the finding affirmed by Thelma & Ngulube (2024) that asserted feedback and criticism that are biased and stereotypical might hinder a woman's ability to advance in her work and prevent her from assuming leadership positions and developing her potential.

These negative views and preconceptions can lead to poor cooperation between workers and female bosses. According to the study's findings, people's attitudes toward cooperating with female leaders and enforcing their commands differ significantly from those of male leaders. A KI demonstrated this: "Let alone men's; women colleagues are not interested in doing things with women leaders" (KI-03: From EWLA). As a result, sometimes women leaders exhibit strange behaviors that are not inherent to them by nature, such as aggressiveness to be respected by fellow workers. This study finding confirms the conclusions reached by the existing empirical works, such as by Meseret and Befekadu (2020), which stated male and female coworkers don't collaborate as much as they should for female leaders. Women leaders are not appreciated by other women, not only by men. Moreover, as emphasized by these authors, women's leaders usually face difficulties in their decisions and proper implementation. Similarly, as argued by Thelma & Ngulube, (2024) stereotypical views of women as less capable can lead to their ideas being overlooked or surpassed, limiting their ability to express themselves as leaders.

Additionally, there are biased attitudes (fear) towards educated and high-status women in a society. According to a participant, "No man wants to marry a woman who has a higher professional, economic, and educational status than him. They see it as a failure" (RP-16: Female judge). This stems mostly from society's negative attitude toward women, which requires them to be under the authority of men in any form. Meanwhile, the society has unfavorable view of female politicians. Often, the people believe women politicians are outside the rule of society because all of the time,

efforts, and commitments that ought to be utilized for family purposes will be shared by public responsibility. As underlined by a KI from TIMRAN (CSO), “The society believes women leaders as negligent of their families” (KI-06). This discovery of the study is consistent with the existing literature that disclosed women who run for public office have the possibility of being regarded as irresponsible or unsuited to be wives and mothers and socially stigmatized (Kiamba, 2009).

In a nutshell, gender stereotypes and negative attitudes have an adverse effect in the efforts of advancing women to leadership positions. Meseret and Befekadu's (2020) findings support this obstacle. As these writers underlined, despite some changes, gender stereotypes are still reflected in Ethiopia at all levels of society, implying that gender equality works at all levels would be endangered as a result of this thinking when manifested in the behaviors of voters, bureaucrats, leaders, media, CSOs, and so on.

D. Much Burden and multiple responsibilities

According to the findings of this study, the most significant challenge for any woman in Ethiopia is balancing work and family life in marriage. In Ethiopia, practically all professional women experience the same dilemma as a result of the entrenched patriarchal structure and ways of living, unless a woman is blessed enough to live an exceptional life with an incredible spouse. This study's findings support the assertion that conflict between family and work is a significant source of stress for African women (Kiamba, 2009).

Due to the established patriarchal system, women are expected to take on practically all domestic chores and responsibilities in addition to their work burdens. This is viewed as normal by society but severely restricts women's job advancement. On this point, a female KI emphasized that “women’s responsibility for their kids and husbands is a hundred percent incomparable challenge for them to advance themselves in everything, irrespective of their educational qualifications” (KI-04: From EWLA). There are expectations predetermined by their husband and family-in-law, according to the participants. To render this, women might be obliged to sacrifice their professional journey for the sake of household responsibility. The above informant also provided an example from her own life experience, stating as follow,

For example, when I was growing up, I looked at my mother; she had very good educational qualifications up to an MA, but her professional journey was never appraised to a significant stage. However, some junior male government officials advanced to the highest level in a relatively short period of time. Obviously, she falls behind her coworkers due to lateness, lack of networking, and poor performance due to family obligations.

According to the participants' responses, women must devote the majority of their time to family and household responsibilities, which can require a significant amount of time and effort. This dilemma of a woman is depicted by an author, Mauchi et al. (2020), as women leaders struggling with balancing work and family duties. As a result, they are forced to choose between being a successful leader or mother. Likewise, this finding also confirms the result revealed by Bari (2005) that concludes the exhaustive engagements of women in the reproductive roles restrict them from ascending to high positions in their productive roles, such as holding higher leadership posts.

According to the study's findings, most spouses do not consider domestic chores to be part of their obligations. As one of the participant points out, "Sometimes, a husband may help his wife in the house, but surprisingly, he believes it is because he is nice and cooperative, not because it is his obligation. Laughing, please don't touch me; I am now touched from the heart" (RP-19: Female judge). Despite some recent advances, as noted by participants, a lack of spouse encouragement continues to be a barrier to women's advancement into leadership positions. Hence, family solidarity and support is the key for women's success. The positive impact of spouse support has been exhibited in the real life of a female higher government official and she has stated that, "If my husband does not respect my professional journey, honestly, I could not ascend to this position. Rather, I had to compromise one of the two: work or family" (RP-08: From Ethiopian Human Rights Commission).

The work/family balancing issues are more critical when a woman maintains a high-ranking professional job. This notion pointed out by a participant as follow,

A woman who has accomplished a lot in her professional life is sometimes obliged to choose between two options: family or career. When her position is higher than her husband's, he may become jealous and begin to disturb their home. Ultimately, it is the woman's obligation to fix everything in the family (RP-13: Female HoF member).

This finding affirms the results of the study by Meseret and Befekadu, (2020) that revealed there are very few cases in which women's choices to assume leadership roles by compromising the welfare of the family or children. This is still due to the fact that married couples expect women to handle all household duties and disagree over how to divide up childcare and family responsibilities. All in all, double responsibility limits the freedom of the women not to outshine more in their professional life and limiting them from reaching what was they dreaming and wishing.

E. Low level of female schooling

The result of this study revealed that due to society's backward attitude towards girls education, women's educational enrolment is lower compared to men's, especially in rural areas of Ethiopia. Furthermore, most female students are usually forced to drop out or withdraw from schooling for various reasons. This idea is supported by an informant's personal experience: "Let me tell you my life experience: most of the female students (my friends) in my village were married to unknown guys or raped before they finished their primary education. Only I and my three friends are able to attend secondary school" (KI-05: Gender expert). This has its own implications in generating highly educated women. Other traditional practices, such as early marriage and rape, have hampered females' advancement in all areas, including higher decision-making positions.

Though, female students passed all the obstacles in their village, other challenges would be there by changing their forms when they joined higher educational institutions. This finding supports the work of Booth (2022) that declared despite advancements in girls' education over the past 25 years; many girls in East Africa continue to face significant educational hurdles. According to Gennet (2014), poor enrollment rates for women in education are common in many developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Educating girls is not prioritized, although educating boys is deemed critical for future economic security and the writer further argued that girls' decreased enrollment was primarily due to social factors. This has an impact on creating competent and professionally qualified women for higher-level decision-making roles.

Generally, regarding socio-cultural challenges, the findings of this study appear to be confirmatory to the result discovered by Meseret and Befekadu (2020), which underlined that women's victimization of dominant patriarchal thinking, gender role expectations, and culture as a "cage" are important obstructions to women's advancement to leadership and decision-making positions.

2. Workplace Challenges

a. Employees hesitation to collaborate with women leaders

According to the study's findings, coworkers and employees are sometimes hesitant to credit women's work and efforts, and some people have a culture of resistance to accepting and implementing orders issued by female executives due to their biased attitude towards women leaders. According to a participant, "Men who work with female leaders are frequently unhappy. They've always felt led by women, which is difficult to accept given traditional patriarchal beliefs" (RP-10: Female parliamentarian). The finding further revealed that, men are also uncertain about the decisions made by women leaders; therefore, they are hesitant to carry out their commands. To demonstrate that male coworkers attempted to take credit for accomplishments obtained through the labor of women simply because they are men. This study supports the conclusion that when women are portrayed in stereotypes as less capable or assertive, it might be difficult for them to stand out as leaders since their ideas may be neglected or overlooked (Thelma & Ngulube, 2024).

b. Absence of flexible and supportive working systems

This study result uncovers that the working environment, culture, and conditions at public institutions are rigid in comparison to Ethiopian women's daily routines. The institutional framework and working conditions are tight and apply to both genders equally, although they face different expectations at home and at work. A KI emphasized that "women in Ethiopia must deal with the same circumstances at work as men, with no regard for natural or social difficulties" (KI-01: Gender expert). Likewise, a participant stressed that "there are no special commitments such as calendar or program reshuffling based on the lifestyles of women workers" (RP-07: State minister). This same participant underlined that the government had taken no stronger measures to relieve women's burden's admiring the construction of daycare facilities in some institutions.

The rigidity and uncompromising nature of the working conditions have been emphasized by other studies as "the work schedule in Ethiopia is neither flexible nor has a regular pattern (unpredictable work and working hours)" (Meseret and Befekadu, 2020, p. 71). This finding also validates the results discovered by Thelma & Ngulube (2024) that asserted that women are disproportionately harmed by workplace culture that places a high value on working long hours, particularly those who

are responsible for providing care. According to these authors, women can have trouble trying to reconcile their duties to their families and work, limiting their advancement and making them feel guilty or underappreciated.

c. Harassments

Women in Ethiopian public institutions face various forms of abuse and harassment (physical, verbal or sexual) at all levels of administration, according to the findings of this study. Harassment may be committed by colleagues or clients. According to responses, regardless of her merit, educational qualification, or performance, a female employee may be requested to do extra things by her boss in order to advance in her career. Female political candidates also do not escape from this challenge. A KI illustrated this notion by forwarding a statement: “As we investigated as a CSO, female political candidates are usually exposed to various forms of harassment from their colleagues or other bodies during campaign time” (KI-06: From TIMIRAN CSO). This finding is harmonized with the report revealed by the Africa-Barometer on women’s political participation, which stated that 80% of the women parliamentarians surveyed from 50 African nations reported having encountered psychological violence, while 67% indicated that they had experienced sexist behavior or comments (International IDEA, 2024, p. 123). Alongside, often higher leadership positions require special commitments, such as overtime and field work. These working situations usually expose women to various forms of harassment from their co-workers or any other body.

The study's findings highlighted the fact that all harassment cases are not fully disclosed by the victims, and harassment actions are not given the required punishments in our country's justice system. Regarding Ethiopia’s legal system and measurements, an interviewee mentioned the following:

Our justice system is ineffective in dealing with many sorts of harassment. The punishment or measurement used to punish abusive conduct is unfair or unsatisfactory. Because of our weak judicial system, we may hear the same case at different times. As we all know, many females in Ethiopia have been the victims of acid attacks. To our shock, our media showed the victim's face while hiding the criminal's face in public, which raises a paradox. Who should be publicized—the victim or the criminal? Who should be exposed? I am sorry; we do not know. Our justice system by itself is pro-criminals. What

if the measures started with taking a mac shoot of a criminal like in other countries? Others would take a lesson from him, and the cases would be reduced. As far as I know, Ethiopian people died for their dignity, so that they would not do things against that dignity if all serious crimes were publicized (KI-01: Gender expert).

In general, the intimidation, violence, and harassment against women professionals could lead them to fear the work environment and limit their ability to ascend to leadership positions. This study result directly confirms the findings produced by Thelma & Ngulube (2024), as discrimination and harassment based on gender impose significant obstacles to women's advancement into leadership roles by sustaining unfavorable work environments and generating an atmosphere of exclusion. Indeed, as asserted by International IDEA (2024), violence against women in politics (VAWP) in Africa constitutes a significant and pervasive challenge that impedes the participation and representation of women within institutions.

d. Poor culture of mentorship and networking

Based on the findings of this research, mentorship is not the culture of most workplaces in Ethiopia. Senior political or professional leaders do not exhibit the commitment to share all their professional and family experiences with middle- and entry-level women professionals. This idea was further strengthened by KI's own experience: "For example, when I first started working with my team, I invited some experienced people to share their life skills experience, but unfortunately, only a few people agreed" (KI-06: from TIMIRAN CSO). On the other hand, as described by participants, female colleagues may have undermined female leaders and systematically pushed them to leave their positions. A KI emphasized this point: "Women are sometimes viewed as impediments to other women's work, rather than partners. Since all female leaders are not feminists, they are unwilling to empower their peers and to eliminate workplace hurdles for women workers" (KI-01: Gender expert). This study result also validates the findings by Kiamba (2009) that uncover women's lack of unity among themselves and rather women often get jealous of one another and regard one another as threats.

Meanwhile, women do not attend informal gatherings or network horizontally with their colleagues and vertically with their bosses. According to the responses, although in practice, networking is essential for advancing a career and obtaining political appointments, women's daily schedules

prevent them from engaging in their workplace's social network. This notion has been stressed by a male participant: "Men have extra time after work to discuss opportunities, promotions, and recommend each other. However, women don't have the same opportunities. Women often rush home to care for their families after accomplishing their assigned obligations at work" (RP-15: Male parliamentarian). The study finding by Meseret and Befekadu, 2020, also entails this, as women's exhaustive engagement in balancing their work and family roles restricts them from having time for networks.

3. Personal challenges

The study's findings indicate that women's socio-cultural, economic, and work challenges determine their personal barriers, so that it is difficult to separate personal problems, particularly from socio-cultural challenges.

As the *first* women's personal hindrance, the findings disclosed that women sometimes lack self-confidence to hold higher decision-making positions because of their lower preparedness for leadership roles. Sometimes, they need to be pushed up by somebody else to go up the ladder of leadership positions. In this regard, a key informant points out that the following idea.

Women are less ready to hold political leadership roles in Ethiopia than in other African countries, according to my extensive work experience in the region. Despite patriarchal beliefs in other African countries, women have struggled to reach higher positions. Do Ethiopian women aspire to be leaders? That is something I am skeptical about (KI-01: Gender expert).

This study supported Shvedova's (2005) findings that women are disproportionately underrepresented in formal political institutions such as parliaments, ministries, and political parties due to a lack of confidence. This study's findings also supported the notion that men have a greater actual aspiration than women for reaching leadership roles (Terefe, Ketema, & Girma, 2019).

Secondly, women's often internalized fear of leadership positions, according to this study. A woman participant stressed this: "Though the woman has the potential to have it, their multi-faced challenges pulled them not to accept it" (RP-18: State minister). A male informant also supported

this by stating, “I believe that women’s fear of leadership is not the result of their incapability, but due to the strong challenges in their surroundings that would make their lives miserable” (RP-15: Male parliamentarian). Often, women may hesitate to take greater roles because they are afraid of what others would say if their leadership path fails. “A woman may fail due to personal weaknesses, but people frequently try to associate her failure with the mass women's identity. This makes the woman more careful not to make mistakes” (RP-08: From Ethiopian Human Rights Commission). The result of this study confirms the conclusion that women themselves exhibit an actual fear to assume and practice, especially higher leadership positions (Meseret and Befekadu, 2020). Meanwhile, as these writers discovered because of all the obstacles in their way, they find it difficult to balance their obligations at home and at work, which leads to stress and a fear of failing at the duties they are given.

Meanwhile, women are hesitant to pursue leadership roles because most political leadership positions require additional responsibilities such as overtime work, evening work, and travel, which could harm women's marriages and lead to unnecessary depression. This notion was strengthened by a female KI’s view: “Women are discouraged and less interested in holding senior positions due to the fear of not losing their acceptance or respect from their family. The more engaged at work, the less time is given to the family. Intimacy would be reduced” (KI-04: From EWLA). This notion is also underlined by the study conclusions made by Meseret and Befekadu (2020): “Leaders spend more time in the office than the required working hours. Moreover, leaders frequently attend meetings outside the working days, especially on the weekends, which women do not have the time for due to their other responsibilities” (p. 71).

Thirdly, as a personal barrier, sometimes women do not fulfill the expected merits or criteria for higher leadership positions. They lack adequate educational and working experience. This has been supported by a practical example by a participant from the Ethiopian Ministry of Planning and Development: “We were looking for qualified women for executive positions in this institution; however, unfortunately, we can’t reach out to those types of qualified women” (RP-07: State minister). According to the result of this study, this is often due to women's weaker interest in self-development and empowerment through education and other capacity-building activities. This notion was well expressed by a participant as follows: “Typically, after completing a BA degree or taking the first step in their lives, girls begin to consider marriage rather than achieving what they

want from life” (KI-04: From EWLA). On the other side, as underlined by participants, women’s lower educational qualifications were highly connected with society’s stereotypes and lower attitudes towards girls’ education at the beginning. The lower educational qualification of a woman is rooted back to her childhood conditions, the responsibility that she had, and the violence that she has experienced. A male participant raised a question to reinforce this idea:

How could females have equal academic performance with males in conditions where parents prioritize boys' education from an early age while girls are required to do household chores?, Furthermore, girls are still subjected to many forms of gender-based violence, including rape, early marriage, sexual harassment, and others, which puts them behind boys (RP-15: Male parliamentarian).

4. Institutional Challenges

According to the findings of this study, institutional constraints impede the achievement of gender equality in top leadership roles. Among others, the absence of mandatory legal frameworks has impacted women’s representation in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia. According to a key informant from TIMIRAN (a CSO),

There is no legislative framework in Ethiopia that imposes a quota system for women's representation in leadership roles unless political parties or the government do so voluntarily. If this becomes mandatory for political parties and public entities seeking leadership roles, they will be dedicated to finding capable women for diverse posts (KI-06).

Another KI also strengthened the notion, “The quota system is controversial but effective in moving more women to leadership positions. But this approach is not legally binding in Ethiopia” (KI-01: Gender expert). The other thing is that measures taken to represent more women in leadership positions are not institutionalized in the country. Women's current representation in leadership roles is based on the dedication of existing government officials rather than being policy-based. An informant criticizes this type of action as follows:

For example, when the current Prime Minister Abiy came into office, he promised to promote gender equality, and he took some remarkable measures; women have been formed as half of the cabinet for some years, but today we can't get that amount. The number of women ministers is declining considerably (KI-02: From Setaweet CSO).

In addition to appointment conditions, women's inadequate tenure in a specific department or job poses another challenge. In the existing system, an appointed woman minister or director may quit or change their responsibilities over a short period of time, such as months or a year, at the discretion of the chief executive. These types of cases are described as the appointer can reverse the appointment at any time (International IDEA, 2024). This type of trend discourages other females from ascending to similar positions and poses difficulties for women leaders to attain the goals they set in a given institution. Therefore, women leaders required a stable working environment and time to operate well.

On the other hand, according to the result of this study, women's appointments are mostly in the social and soft sectors. In truth, these sectors are critical to a country's human capital development; however, governments often neglect these areas by assigning smaller budgets and human resources. As a result, it may not be an appropriate setting for observing women's leadership abilities.

The final institutional barrier underlined by the participants is the persistence of inconvenient political system in the country. According to the findings, Ethiopia's current severe conflict-based, ethnic-based, and politically driven governmental structure is unwelcoming to women. In this regard, the participants point out that, "Sometimes the game of politics goes against women's natural composition" (KI-01: Gender expert). This notion is also affirmed by the study done by Shvedova (2005), which emphasized that in some countries, corruption, expansion of crimes, and illegalities led women to fear losing their family members as a result of their political involvements. Likewise, structural hurdles, such as nepotism, hinder women's career advancement opportunities. According to the KI's responses, usually promotions are made based on personal relationships or favoritism. A participant stressed that "only interest-based connected people have access to everything, including leadership positions. Let alone women who face cultural barriers, capable males do not possess the appropriate jobs at this time" (RP-14: Male judge).

On the other side, Ethiopia's election system itself contributes to women's underrepresentation, as revealed by this study finding. Ethiopia's first-past-the-post voting system required political parties to seek a candidate with higher educational performance, public visibility, and/or oratory skills in order to obtain votes. Male candidates, on the other hand, are more likely to be elected by the public than female candidates in elections, according to long-standing patriarchal norms, so that political parties are forced to provide male candidates rather than female candidates to get more votes. Meanwhile, male-dominated political parties are less likely to elect women leaders in their internal power structures due to a lack of women in them or a biased view of leadership. This finding is consistent with the result reached by Bari (2005), which stated that "male domination of politics, political parties, and culture of formal political structures is another factor that hinders women's political participation" (p. 4).

6.5. Chapter Conclusions

Gender equality includes equal representation of women in leadership roles, both substantive and numerical. Promoting gender equality in this area entails protecting women's and girls' rights. Besides this, women's equal involvement in decision-making areas is vital to bringing inclusive and sustainable development that takes into account the interests of social groups such as youths, children, elders, and women. Despite these facts, women's aspirations to advance in the leadership positions face several hurdles arising from societal socio-cultural views, women's working environment (organizational culture), and women themselves. Among various hurdles, this study highlights long-standing patriarchal thinking, negative attitudes toward women, and numerous burdens of women's and girls' lower educational enrollment as challenges emanating from social beliefs and customs. Nevertheless, according to this study, women have personal issues that restrict their capacity to obtain leadership positions. Among these are women's lack of dedication, aspiration, and interest in being leaders; traditionally, women have a fear of higher positions; and they devote less effort to self-development in knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, according to this study, women in Ethiopia must overcome additional institutional and workplace barriers in order to advance in their careers. The most noticeable workplace issues included various forms of harassment, inflexible working circumstances, a lack of worker support and solidarity, insufficient networking and mentoring among female employees, and others. On the

other hand, institutional difficulties such as the lack of obligatory policy frameworks and existing conflict-driven political and electoral systems have their own impact on efforts to advance more women into leadership roles.

In general, women's limited access to higher leadership roles is driven by a complex and interconnected variety of socio-cultural, workplace, institutional, and personal challenges. Deep-seated patriarchal thoughts, limiting religious interpretations and unfavorable cultural attitudes toward female leadership limit women to conventional roles and confront them with disproportionate home tasks. These cultural norms influence workplaces, where female workers frequently experience harassment, a lack of collaboration from colleagues, insufficient mentorship, and restrictive structures that fail to foster work-life balance. Such conditions contribute to personal hurdles that undermine women's confidence, create fear of leadership positions, and limit their educational and professional progress. Institutional constraints exacerbate women's exclusion in Ethiopia, where the lack of appropriate mandatory legislative frameworks and a majoritarian electoral system make it difficult for women to advance in political positions. These barriers do not exist in independence; rather, they reinforce one another in an endless cycle that systematically hampers women's paths toward higher leadership, making advancement not just difficult but also structurally discouraged.

Therefore, taking into account all of these challenges, all stakeholders should work harder to enjoy the fruits of women's inclusion in decision-making positions by reducing their multidimensional barriers. Therefore, the government, social institutions, CSOs, non-governmental organizations, and women themselves must all play active roles in this regard.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EXEMPLARY WOMEN LEADERS IN ETHIOPIA: PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

7.1. Introduction

The previous chapters of this monograph provided theoretical, empirical, and policy-based evidence on women's representation in higher positions of leadership in Ethiopia. However, this chapter focuses on the real lived experiences of past and present exemplary Ethiopian women leaders and their lifelong journeys via phenomenological investigation. Its primary goal is to provide valuable and practical lessons to current and future female leaders. This chapter examines five (5) model women leaders' educational backgrounds, professional lives, family and work management systems, and the numerous obstacles they encounter in each of these areas. Similarly, individuals revealed their success secrets, such as strategies and techniques for coping with challenges in leadership and related subjects. According to the responses, women's barriers are multidimensional and come from a variety of sources; thus, women's strength must be modified to match the rate of the challenges. Women, in particular, will face great obstacles as they advance in their careers, compounded by household and other social responsibilities. As a result, anticipating obstacles and being proactive about them makes work easier than imagined, as most of the participants stressed. Indeed, as emphasized by participants, self-strength, endurance, and dedication; self-empowerment; self-confidence; and respect are the most common traits that higher leadership-aspiring women should adopt and exercise. Meanwhile, the participant suggested creating better context-based educational and employment environments for women that are free of violence, discrimination, and unfavorable practices in order to break down barriers and attract more women to leadership positions. Similarly, the reality of women's underrepresentation in decision-making positions, as well as potential solutions, should be a policy priority, according to the study.

7.2. Demographic information of participants

The table below contains basic background information regarding the in-depth interview (5) participants in this study, who are Ethiopian model women leaders. According to the information in the table, the participant's background information exhibited maturity in terms of age, leadership experience, and educational level. Since the goal of this research chapter is to learn from and share the rich experiences of current and former exemplary Ethiopian female leaders, their maturity in

terms of age, educational status, and leadership experiences is critical in analyzing their lived experiences on a variety of themes. As a result, their ‘age maturity’ reflects their lengthier life and work experience, making them appropriate to explain the problems they have faced since childhood, as well as their current situations in attaining higher leadership roles as Ethiopian women. Indeed, it is critical to discuss various issues based on their accumulated skills, expertise, and long-term experiences. The other variable, participant's ‘marriage status,’ is also significant to discussing work/life balance concerns, obstacles, and coping techniques used by each of them to avoid endangering one of the most important life pillars. Meanwhile, their ‘working experience’ and long-term involvement in leadership endeavors demonstrate their extensive leadership experience, qualifying them to share their enriching experiences in family management, professional work administration, and personal development in terms of skills, capacity, and knowledge. Hence, important topics covered in the lived experience sharing include the variety of difficulties encountered when assuming leadership roles, the measures taken by exceptional female leaders to address those difficulties, the challenge of balancing work and family obligations, and insightful recommendations that women should understand when assuming leadership roles.

Table 7.1: Demographic information of in-depth interview participants

Variables	Participant 1	Participant-2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Age	76	61	42	62	70
Marital status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married
Educational status	PhD	MA	PhD	PhD	PhD
Existing institution	Retired	Women’s rights advocator	Ethiopian Standard Institute	House of Peoples Representatives (HoPR)	Ethiopian Academy of Science
Total stay in leadership	24 years	18+	7+	30 years	18+

Source: In-depth interview data

7.3. Lived-experiences of women leaders in Ethiopia

7.3.1. Childhood and school life of women leaders

Except for the one who was born and raised in Addis Ababa, most of the interviewees were born in Ethiopia's countryside, including the current Amhara, Benshangul-Gumuz and Oromia regional states, between the 1940s and the 1970s, or 40 to 70 years ago. According to the participants' notion, the aforementioned times were not convenient for girls and women to go outside, learn, and accomplish something due to the long-rooted conventional and patriarchal thinking. However, despite the hardships, these women remained dedicated to pursuing their education. Most participants regard their mothers as supporters throughout in starting their schooling and in their pursuing primary and secondary education. Their mothers were very eager and supportive of their education. The majority of them agreed that their mothers wished to compensate for their illiteracy through their daughters' education. The following statements made by participants demonstrated the explanations provided above. The participant stated that “My mother has always encouraged my sibling and me to learn and achieve something through education. She continuously advises us not to live the same life as she did due to illiteracy” (as reported in UN Women Africa and FBC, 2020). Mother's support further illustrated by another participant as follow:

It was my mother who had supported my educational endeavor as a means to realize and compensate for her interest to learn and change her life. She had the interest to learn in her childhood time, but she terminated it early because of difficulties, while her brother was able to finish it and achieve a lot (Women Higher Leader, P-01).

According to the remarks, socio-cultural practices have had and continue to have a significant impact on girls' education in traditional societies. As a result, the participants faced numerous challenges in their pursuit of an education. The obstacles are twofold, as they emphasized: on one hand, society didn't value women's education, and on the other hand, harmful traditional practices such as rape, abduction, and early marriage worsened girls' education. Regarding the society's traditional and negative thinking towards girls' education and their coping mechanisms, participants stated the following.

Even our neighbors used to say, 'Where would you go with your education?' You should marry and have children as long as your age allows. Otherwise, since you are not a male,

you will reach an age at which no one wants to marry you.' But when I hear such comments, I constantly tell myself that I will show them where I can be found soon. I have a strong soul, which has helped me a lot (Women Higher Leader, P-01).

Cultural barriers hampered girls' access to education; as a result, many of my friends married before completing their education. Despite these obstacles, I was able to complete my education because of the support of my family and my dedication to knowledge (Women Higher Leader, P-05).

The burden in the house was difficult. Unlike other children, I even didn't enjoy my childhood time by playing and so on. I had to manage my time both for my home duty and education. In spite of all these, I was among the top students (Women Higher Leader, P-03).

Regarding the socio-cultural barriers, this study finding is confirmatory to a study finding of Odaga & Heneveld (1995) that asserted emphasis on women's future roles as mothers and wives, as well as society's expectations of them, are significant barriers to their access to formal education. Gachukia (2004) also confirmed that negative attitudes, traditional socialization patterns, and traditional practices hampered girls education in African and sub-Saharan countries in particular. Similarly, the findings of Alem and Cherupelly (2018) and Jones et al. (2014) confirmed that adolescent females in Ethiopia continue to confront significant obstacles arising from diverse socio-cultural barriers.

Despite all of the socio-cultural challenges emanating from discrimination, stereotypes, and unjust role allocations, these women's educational experiences were incredible and inspiring. In addition to being acknowledged as top achievers in their primary and secondary education, they have been active participants in their academic and non-academic lives since the beginning of their schooling, including numerous extracurricular events. In addition to their studying, their involvement in other affairs enabled them to shine in every aspect of their lives. The following real-life actions demonstrate their extracurricular active participation.

The participant stated, I was detained twice during the military government when I was a high school student because of my strong beliefs and principle-based actions. The first was a protest against the regime's top-down youth organization, and the second was a protest

against real gender discrimination in my life. My stand for my rights had been considered incompatible with societal values (as produced by BBC World Service - Africa Daily with Kasujja, 2024).

When I was in high school, I was involved in the student movement to protest discriminatory regulations, policies, and processes. Female students were limited to attending specific programs, such as business (only secretary) and home economics. However, other fields were reserved for men. The issue was later resolved as a result of our determined effort (Women's Higher Leader, P-01).

Concerning the role of extracurricular involvements of students, this study finding is harmonized with the study result of Furda & Shuleski (2019) and Christison (2013), which underlined that extracurricular activities have a positive impact on students' academic and personal development, resulting in higher achievement, improved character development (particularly in time management and leadership skills), increased social development, and a stronger interest in community service.

Aside from academic knowledge and non-academic involvements, participant women leaders emphasized the importance of reading books to raise consciousness and think beyond the box. They stated that reading books makes it possible to notice circumstances and actions in the world outside of their resident area and the knowledge they have. Likewise, they also emphasized that it is helpful for their empowerment, emotional and academic development, and enhancing skills and perspectives. Therefore, besides family encouragement, active involvement in the school and reading different books enabled these women to ascend to the other steps in their education.

Because of their hard work, self-esteem, and consistency, all of the women joined higher-level educational institutions with outstanding grades and achievements at a young age. Yet, their academic experience was not easy, as they indicated during the interview. Their challenge began when they enrolled in universities as the only girl or one of a few females in a class full of boys. As they admired, this had its own psychological effects because there were no female friends to discuss issues, which harmed their confidence. Due to prevailing thinking, their male peers also posed an important challenge. As one of the participants described, “They believed that girls in the university could not perform well, and they said to us, ‘Are you ready for the Christmas wave?’” (Women higher leader, P-01). Another participant also strengthened this idea: “By then, the engineering

department had only been assumed for males. Female students were afraid of pursuing engineering. During that time, male students used to joke on females as ‘our female brothers’” (Women higher leader, P-03). However, their small size in the class causes them to put up all of their efforts by fearing the subject matter, which eventually results in them becoming greater achievers in the classes and equal competitors with male students. Furthermore, as young females, participants saw peer influence as an issue as they acted independently of family control and oversight. As the majority of them underlined, thinking about the long term and reaching dreams provides an incentive to skip the present minor gaps. This study result affirms the finding of Kim et al. (2021), who concludes female students in higher education faced significant hurdles that stemmed from three dimensions, including excessive role expectations, inadequate support structures, and discouraging socioeconomic backgrounds.

7.3.2. Professional journey of women leaders

In-depth interviews revealed that most participants began working at lower levels after completing their bachelor's degrees. Their professional development was a gradual process that required perseverance and consistency. Fortunately, the majority of participants were employed as university lecturers after improving their capacity, abilities, and knowledge. They were recruited as trailblazers or one of a few female professionals in their respective fields.

Given their small size, they asserted that everything in their workplace has been formed and shaped by men's natural and social contexts. According to their response, the working environment was uncomfortable for females at the time, and it was perceived as a male playground. As their response indicated, starting their profession as the sole female or one of the few female staff members made it challenging at first. As one of the participants underlined, “You know, when I first started teaching in 1973 GC, the number of female lecturers in Addis Ababa University was not more than five at the university level. I can name those individuals because there were very few” (Women higher leader, P-01). Likewise, another participant experienced the same situation, and she has explained it as “I was the only female lecturer in my department at that time” (Women higher leader, P-03).

The participant discussed the effects of this condition on their professional work. The initial issue was male colleagues' negative attitudes towards female employees. Men were often underestimating

women's ability to handle academic responsibilities. The majority of participants agreed that the academic world was assumed to be a men's world and that shattering the glass and participating in it always resulted in women being evaluated as violating the socially established values. As a result, women are subjected to numerous sorts of harassment and intimidation, which can have a negative impact on their emotional and psychological well-being. Aside from irritating comments, jokes, and remarks, they had no female colleagues at work. Due to their limited number, they were unable to share their experiences and emotions, as well as discuss women-centred social and private concerns.

The other frequent challenge that the participant faced in this regard was that women's perspectives, interests, and decisions were not given due concern as a result of men's dominance in the workplace. One of the participants articulated this as, "I remember our colleagues used to observe our gender identity more than the weight of our idea and value" (Women higher leader, P-01). Last but not least, according to the responses, all opportunities, including scholarships and incentives, have never been distributed fairly among workers. There were clear discriminations against women workers that resulted from men's grouping and strong bondage. A participant asserted on this issue, "When scholarship opportunities and capacity-building trainings were issued, we all had been applying, but it wasn't issued for females until I used to resist it literally" (Women higher leader, P-04).

Despite inconvenient working conditions, the interviewee demonstrated remarkable resilience and overcame problems. Their experiences can serve as a valuable lesson for women seeking to advance in their careers. Most of them reported that, given the obstacles, they struggled to accomplish much in both their educational (self-development) and professional lives. They highlighted that the combined effect of their psychological strength, hard work, endurance, self-empowerment, and assertiveness enabled them to advance to higher leadership positions. A participant strengthened the above notions by stating, "I believe my track records have been positive, influential, and practical since I was a young lawyer. That was most likely the reason behind my appointment in this higher decision-making position" (as produced by BBC World Service - Africa Daily with Kasujja, 2024). Likewise, another participant noted the following about her exceptional efforts to achieve higher without expecting pushing measures from the other body.

Despite the difficult circumstances, I competed equally with male coworkers for the position of department head, and I succeeded. I sought to take advantage of any chance that would allow me to succeed in my goals. I was also the first person in my department to obtain the biggest research grant by working hard. Furthermore, despite the fact that affirmative action is designated for women, my active participation in all aspects and remarkable accomplishment helped me to be selected as a PhD candidate when the opportunity came from Germany (Women higher leaders, P-03).

According to participants' responses, multifaceted challenges may threaten women's careers and related lives; yet women can achieve their goals by continual self-empowerment and self-development with ability and knowledge.

7.3.3. Family and work balance experience of women leaders

The participants of this study are married and have more than two children. According to them, a woman who has a professional life is more likely to have experienced profound and incomparable challenges after having children in marriage. In spite of the challenges, all of them agreed that marriage is a blessing from God, and they are all thrilled to bear children as a contribution to human resources plus gaining pleasure. Regardless of the burdens, all women recognize the value of balancing their lives as a method of improving their family's status, contributing to the country, and, most importantly, serving as role models for their children as a symbol of strength.

In actual cases, women need to sacrifice more than men in childbearing and rearing and balancing both household and work burdens, according to their response. As the interviewees emphasized, in the Ethiopian context, a woman needs to render three types of roles when she is married, such as social roles, household roles, and professional roles. The findings of this study demonstrated that women's diverse duties had an impact on their educational and professional development. The interviewees demonstrated the effects as follows. "Having children doubled the problems and hurdles I encountered. Specifically, what made my life more difficult was that I became pregnant while pursuing my MA. Due to pregnancy issues, I had to withdraw from my studies" (Women Higher Leader, P-03). Likewise another participant emphasized the impacts as follow:

Although his father was beside him, our grade 12 son called to me and explained his situation about his exam when I was studying abroad. Due to this, I had to terminate/withdraw my PhD study in order to encourage and help him study hard and to show my solidarity when he was preparing for the national exam (Women higher leader, P-04).

On the other side, sometimes these women's desire and affection towards their professional life and political involvement threatened their family life. This case has been exhibited in the life experience of some participants. In this regard a participant stated the following statement.

Due to my higher political engagement by being a member of an opposition party, the ruling party had thrown me in jail for more than three years. As a woman politician, I had passed the time with serious challenges, and my family sacrificed a lot due to my absence in the house (Women higher leader, P-01).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that these multifaceted problems have slowed their progress and made their paths more difficult, they have not given up, have not remained in the position they are in, and have not stopped their self-development in their careers and academic journeys. Sometimes these people try hard to balance all of their responsibilities, including household, workplace, and political engagements. Yet, in addition to their self-strength, the majority of them agreed that taking vital measurements and developing strategies are critical in dealing with the difficulties that arise from both domestic and professional duties. When they were faced with moral dilemmas in balancing both responsibilities, they always considered other solutions rather than worrying, overthinking, and complaining at home, according to their response. Among the variety of strategies, participants demonstrate the following solutions based on their lived experiences.

Firstly, According to the participants, pre-determining the upcoming challenges when aspiring to engage in something is the best solution in order to perform things successfully. This remedy is especially important before marriage and having children, as they have argued. Regarding this, participants shared their real-life experiences by stating, "I couldn't consider everything beyond my ability; instead, I confront obstacles with a mindset of preparing (Women Higher Leader, P-05). Another participant also outlined it as follows:

I try to prepare myself for the incoming challenges every time related to family responsibility, work/family conflict, and other issues. I used to read books before getting involved in something and that made everything easier than expected. To this extent, before having babies, I read a book and prepare myself about the skills that I should have in childbearing and rearing (Women higher leader, P-01).

Secondly, as a solution, most participants hired babysitters and maids to assist them with child-rearing and domestic responsibilities, allowing them to focus on their professional development and not to compromise either of them. Patience, according to them, is essential for managing all of such issues. In this regard a participant described her experience as;

Though managing both duties simultaneously were challenging; I am so lucky in treating babysitters and maids. Surprisingly, my first maid stayed with me for ten years, and she has helped me in fulfilling household responsibilities and taking care of my kids; of course, treating maid's required unreserved patience to live peacefully and to keep our children safe (Women higher leader, P-03).

The second participant also demonstrated the above explanations from her life experience as follow;

Among my strategies, I hired a babysitter (from family) and paid her properly. She stayed with us for many years, until all of my children grew up and completed their schooling. She had been quite helpful to me throughout my life. My entire family and child-related duties relied on her shoulders (Women Higher Leader, P-04).

Thirdly, these exemplary individuals were strongly resisting conventional practices and traditional thinking, which likely had an impact on their development. According to their beliefs, unless women disrupt the status quo, they will be unable to achieve anything more exceptional in their lives than traditional household roles. And they believe that this must begin at home. They emphasized that women should not hesitate to divide household roles by raising awareness. Alongside, women should not have engaged in each and every social event, such as birthday parties, weddings, coffee turns, and others. Of course, these social practices are important to increase social capital, but giving priority to responsibilities is crucial not to lag behind, according to their arguments. In this regard, a participant shared her experience as, "I devote some amount of time to

my social activities, but I believe that I can't risk my family and work time for the sake of such things, and I have handled those situations wisely” (Women Higher Leader, P-05).

On the other hand, in addition to their personal strength and strategies, their family and relatives provided invaluable assistance in their attempt to advance to higher positions. According to them, their husbands' encouraging attitude toward their professional endeavors was the key to their success. They stated that a spouse's unconditional love should be exhibited by supporting their partner's efforts to achieve their goals. Regarding the support and solidarity of husband's, participants mentioned the following proudly.

Although he did not gain much academically while working as a driver at institutions, he appreciates my dedication to learning and has made significant sacrifices to help me accomplish my dream. To this end, I left him with a six-month-old newborn girl, as well as my older two children, while I flew to Germany for my PhD. Imagine caring for a six-month-old baby without a mother. He didn't even tell me if they got health complications. He is the one who allowed me to get higher by limiting himself (Women Higher Leader, P-03).

The participant stated, I am always proud to mention that my husband has always been supportive of my career goals. I can say that I am so lucky, because my husband supports me in everything. Though he is a lecturer at a university, his duty is relatively less than mine, and he closely follows my daughter's educational endeavors. He has taken care of them since their childhood. Due to this, my daughter's intimacy with their father is much higher than mine (As reported in UN women Africa and FBC, 2020).

My husband was strong in resisting all negative attitudes while neighbors were gossiping about me. Frankly speaking, the people around us used to see my husband as a foolish person because of my higher status than him. So his strong spirit helped me a lot (Women higher leader, P-04).

In a nutshell, personal dedication, hardworking, endurance of women's by being strategic with strong family support and encouragement facilitated their balancing work/family duties.

7.3.4. Leadership experiences of women leaders

Participants reported that higher leadership positions require significant attention, effort, and strength to serve the public and government. Fortunately, the majority of the participants in this study advanced to higher-level political positions after successfully obtaining their PhDs, and besides, their appointment was based on their competencies in their respective aspects/departments. According to their response, merit-based appointments allowed them to work with great energy and dedication.

Surprisingly, some of them had resisted their appointment to higher leadership positions, owing to their fear of leadership and the lack of role models for women in assumed positions. Some of the participants recall the situation when they heard about their nomination. For example, a participant described the condition as "I had adopted a fear of leadership positions, and I accepted my political appointment after many resistances because I didn't see women leaders in higher decision-making positions at that time" (Women Higher Leader, P-01). Moreover, even after accepting leadership roles, these women faced psychological and emotional challenges in running positions due to a lack of mentoring from those who had previously held those positions. This same participant reported her first leadership experience, illustrated below.

After taking the position, I wasn't feeling comfortable; I couldn't eat, drink, or sleep for over two weeks, and I was always thinking, 'How can I run the office?' I also experienced desperation. To get away from this, I saw a psychotherapist and eventually started working; however, nothing was difficult. This happened to me given that I didn't have a single female colleague at my level to consult with and share my experiences.

The other participant also looks back on the situation by describing in the following way.

When I first heard of my appointment as the first woman president at Bahir Dar University (actually the first in Ethiopia's history), I was shocked because being a woman leader in a university was unthinkable and unexpected from the conventional practices, and it was a glass-breaking for me (Women higher leader, P-04).

Furthermore, these women's leadership endeavors have been threatened with many challenges. Among the different challenges, the first was people's resistance to women's leadership practice. Due to the stereotypes, people do not want to believe in women's leadership capacity, and they attempt to resist implementing women's decisions. Likewise, some colleagues tried to use unfavorable comments and remarks that can undermine women's leadership. The following participant shared their experience regarding people's views on women's leadership.

The participant stated that "when my friends and I discussed establishing a women's bank, some people viewed our idea and commitment as a joke at the time, saying, 'Are you kidding?' 'What type of bank are you looking for'? And so on. Despite the hurdles, we accomplished it because we had the vision (As produced by BBC World Service -Africa Daily with Kasujja, 2024).

As a second challenge, the women raised the issue of autonomy. Since most of them came from an academic community and leadership positions, it was hard for them to adapt to the political leadership environment. As they stated, in the latter case, a leader has to consider the interests of various stakeholders during decision-making. A participant demonstrated this view by mentioning, "I have to consider the interest, need, and perspective of my chief leaders when passing public decisions, and this is difficult, especially for those who came from the academic world" (Women Higher Leader, P-03). Another interviewee also underlined this as, "Lack of judicial independence and authority confusion were the obstacles when I began working as a chief justice" (as produced in Al Jazeera English, 2019).

Furthermore, the participant believes that women's leadership is undervalued and that in order for women to be recognized and noticed at work, they must put in more effort than males. Another issue raised by these individuals was the inappropriate networking of men against women in positions of leadership. According to the participant, men usually have informal networks formed through their informal contacts that can influence women's leadership. Because of their huge size, men's informal networks may sometimes function in the formal system, particularly if they dislike a woman's decision, as the participants underlined.

7.4. Important insights from female leaders

The participants of this research have enriched working and life experiences that are important to the upcoming women who aspire to be future leaders. All of them were asked to share the secrets of their success in balancing social, family, and career life and in leading higher political positions. According to their illustrations, the first crucial secret was their ability to persevere when faced with a problem. They emphasized that they did not have a tendency to think about terminating one of their life responsibilities; rather, their strategic planning and prioritization made them happy and successful in every aspect of their lives. Second, they stated that the challenges made them stronger. As they went up, their challenges became more difficult. As they indicated, recognizing issues ahead of time is the greatest approach for putting up a plan to face them. One among the participants stated that, “A woman’s story with a great challenge ends with success if she is consistent and able to see the future vision” (Women Higher Leader, P-04).

Continuous personal improvement in academic and non-academic knowledge is another key lesson that these wonderful women may teach others. As they said, self-development in terms of knowledge, skills, and capacity-building activities is essential for being competitive in the struggle to advance in all aspects of life. Hence, women should take advantage of any beneficial initiatives and opportunities that will allow them to excel in their careers.

Furthermore, women need to have life-leading principles derived from their personalities, social values, and God's commands that can guide them throughout their lives, and all of their efforts should be directed toward keeping those principles. One of the participants articulated the following important message: “Future success is the cumulative efforts of what we have done in life; thus, in order to lead a successful life, we have to be careful in the process” (Women Higher Leader, P-03). They admired how vital patience was during the process.

Additionally, although dedication, consistency, hard work, and continuous self-development are among the basic ways to be successful in life, women also need to manipulate their innate values, according to the interviewee’s response. As scientific works confirmed, women have unique innate values such as cooperation, empathy, truthfulness, multitasking characters, and so on. Hence, women should utilize those additive values in the working environment to be successful. In this regard, self-awareness, confidence, self-value, and respect are crucial, as they have underlined.

7.5. Chapter conclusion

The chapter included the lived experiences of five exemplary Ethiopian women leaders who have enriched working and life experiences. All the participants have been selected based on their educational status, marital status, and leadership experience in higher decision-making positions at the national level. Their lived experiences have been addressed through the phenomenological study method, and this chapter is mainly aimed at giving important lessons to women who have desired to ascend to higher leadership positions. Throughout the chapter, the education, work, family/work balance, and leadership endeavors of those prominent women have been the center of analysis.

In terms of their educational lives, as the first theme, these women have been the best achievers across their educational lives while facing socio-cultural and economic problems. In addition to their family support (particularly their mother's encouragement), their personal strength and active participation in extracurricular activities helped them to complete their elementary, secondary and higher education with good grades and enabled them to have optimism for their future. In terms of their professional lives, all of the participants began their careers at a lower level; nonetheless, their strong dedication and efforts to their studies allowed them to eventually advance to higher positions. Similarly, they have overcome numerous challenges throughout their careers prior to assuming positions of decision-making authority. Harassment, intimidation (due to their small size), underestimation, bias, and stereotypes were among the challenges that participant women are experienced throughout their professional endeavor.

Moreover, according to their responses, these women leaders have experienced serious challenges after getting married and having children. Given the blessing of it, responsibilities in marriage pose many challenges, especially for those women who have engaged in professional work. Duties of professional work doubled with the reproductive role of women, and household chores have made these women's lives a little bit difficult, as they have illustrated. However, these women set and implemented important strategies to escape the difficulties and to balance all of their parallel duties. In general, despite the fact that their responsibilities are multidimensional and originate from various dimensions, their strong enthusiasm for their work, endurance, continual self-empowerment, self-esteem, and determination have allowed them to rise to the position they hold currently.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

8.1. Conclusions

This chapter of the study includes a summary of results and recommendations based on the study's specific objectives. This section of the dissertation is intended to fill methodological, empirical, and policy-level research gaps that have previously been identified in the endeavor to explore women's representation trends in Ethiopian higher-level leadership positions as a general objective of the research. This dissertation addressed four important specific research objectives: Ethiopian women-based policy analysis, women's higher leadership representation trend analysis, identification of women's impediments, and sharing of exemplary women leaders' experiences. To achieve the research objectives and contribute to the existing knowledge output on women and leadership, the study was informed by a pragmatic worldview as well as feminist and transformative theoretical perspectives. The study addressed all four objectives by using a mixed-method research approach. The study employed both primary and secondary data sources to answer the research questions. In-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and document analysis were the predominant data collection tools of the study. The research participants of the study were selected using non-probability sampling techniques (purposive technique) considering various inclusion criteria.

On the basis of this, the study concluded that, despite recent encouraging improvements in women's representation in senior leadership roles, Ethiopia's lack of women-focused policies to effectively address indicators of women's political empowerment, as well as its disregard for globally recognized measurements, have contributed to women's persistent underrepresentation in public higher leadership positions over the last thirty years. In addition to the policy gap, women in Ethiopia encounter a variety of challenges that are restricting and impeding. This dissertation also finds out the impacts of the key four interrelated barriers, which are socio-cultural, workplace, institutional, and women's personal hurdles, on their aspirations to leadership positions. As a result, in Ethiopia, these multidimensional issues contributed to the underrepresentation of women in higher leadership positions, resulting in women having little influence in the country's decision- and policy-making processes, which could jeopardize the inclusiveness of national policies and the fairness of governance in various affairs. This study therefore underlined the need for the coordinated efforts of every stakeholder concerned to promote women's decision-making roles in

the country's agenda and to bridge gender inequality in this regard, which would be crucial to bring sustainable and inclusive development. Meanwhile, the following paragraphs presented the study conclusions and recommendations in line with each of the specific objectives.

8.1.1. Conclusions on women-based policy analysis from 1991 to 2022

Among the four specific objectives of the study, firstly the study analyzed the existing women-based policy frameworks to identify their gaps on the bases of valid measurements. As a result, important policy documents such as the 1995 FDRE Constitution, the 1993 National Policy on Ethiopian Women (NPEW), National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAP-GE) 2006-2010, and the 2017 Ethiopian Women's Development and Change Strategy (EWDCS) have been examined using the V-Dem women's political empowerment measurement indices from the perspective of women's political (decision-making) empowerment. The V-Dem index-based review of those policies reveals that Ethiopia lacks a women-based strategy or policy that comprehensively acknowledges and effectively addresses the basic indicators of women's political empowerment. The assessment using the V-Dem sub-indices specifically indicates the gaps. The indicators that are related to women's civil liberty and women's civil society participation are often the focus of the majority of women-based initiatives, policies, and strategies in Ethiopia. Except few provisions, most of the policies failed to give appropriate concern towards indicators of women's political participation. Furthermore, none of those policy frameworks included specific measures such as quotas and other affirmative action measures recognized by continental initiatives (e.g., Agenda 2063), along with their indicators, which could have been critical in increasing women's decision-making power if implemented. Thus, in Ethiopia, these shortcomings of policies were found to be a bottleneck in the struggle to bridge the gender gap in decision-making positions. Also, despite the relevant stakeholders' commitments and practical attempts to achieve gender equality, policy gaps were discovered to be an issue for Ethiopia's current women's underrepresentation in high-ranking positions, according to the study findings.

8.1.2. Conclusions on women's higher leadership representation trends from 1991 to 2022

Regarding the trends, the finding of this study uncovers the underrepresentation of women in Ethiopian federal level higher leadership positions across the last 30 years from 1991-2022. The federal higher-level positions that this study concludes about are head of state and government,

ministerial positions, legislative membership (both HoF and HoPR), chairs of legislative standing committees, speakers of the legislature and the leadership positions in the judiciary body. This study's findings show that, despite women's representation growing over time, men have consistently constituted an excessive number of legislators in Ethiopia. Women's presence in the House of Federation is negligible when compared to in the House of Peoples representatives, considering their underrepresentation in both houses. Likewise, high executive positions in Ethiopia are typically held by men's, including those of presidents, deputy prime ministers, and prime ministers. Amazingly, throughout Ethiopian history since 1991, there has never been a female prime minister or president (before to President Sahle-work Zewde's election as the country's first female president in 2018). Women continue to be underrepresented in the country's judiciary leadership, including the roles of president and vice president of federal courts. These findings implied that women were underrepresented in the national decision-making process, which harmed the fairness and inclusiveness of national policies, and that this unjust representation of women has a detrimental influence on policymaking, enforcement, policy monitoring, and evaluation.

8.1.3. Conclusions on challenges of women limiting from higher leadership positions

According to this study's finding, Ethiopian women's aspirations to advance to the higher leadership positions face several hurdles arising from societal socio-cultural factors, women's working environment (organizational culture), and women's personal traits themselves. Indeed, institutional difficulties such as the lack of obligatory policy frameworks and existing conflict-driven political and electoral systems have their own impacts on efforts to advance more women into leadership roles in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the study indicated that, while socio-cultural obstacles are profound and substantial, all of the challenges contributed negatively to the current women's leadership underrepresentation due to their interrelated nature. As a result, comprehensive policy-level and tangible practical measures are critical to minimizing obstacles and empowering women to participate in the country's socioeconomic and political decision-making processes, as well as achieving all-inclusive sustainable development.

8.1.4. Conclusions on experiences of Ethiopian women's working in higher positions

According to this study, in spite of the aforementioned women's hurdles, there are exemplary female leaders working in higher and decision-making positions in Ethiopia. In this study, the lived

experiences of five women leaders serve as a valuable lesson for girls and young people aspiring to leadership roles. According to the participants' responses, women's self-strength and dedication to their dreams, together with continual self-improvement in skills, capacity, and knowledge, contributed to their immersion in the process of progressing to higher leadership positions. Furthermore, women's aspirations for leadership roles are best realized with the unwavering and ongoing encouragement and support of their family, which may include their husband, family-in-law, parents, and other relatives. However, flexible policies and management structures that support women's personal efforts are critical to getting more women into higher leadership roles, according to the study findings.

8.2. Recommendations

This dissertation forwarded various recommendations to different stakeholders supposed to be relevant in boosting women's role in higher leadership positions. The presented recommendations are harmonized with the research objectives and are emanated from the important findings.

8.2.1. Recommendations on policy reforms, policy contents and practical actions

Although various women-based policies and strategies have been developed in Ethiopia since 1991 with the goal of closing the gender gap in all aspects, the current policy has been criticized for its lack of content-wise comprehensiveness and inclusivity in bringing gender equality to higher leadership positions. As a result, such policy gaps have had a practical influence on women's levels of leadership representation during the previous three decades. Therefore, in order to reverse the existing women's underrepresentation and bring gender equality in higher leadership positions, the government should encourage every gender equality initiative to be supported by robust and enforceable legislative frameworks.

In this regard, the following points are identified by this study to fill the policy gaps and facilitate practical solutions, and they are recommended to the government and policymakers.

- a. A comprehensive gender-responsive policy framework that included the basic indices of women's political empowerment needs to be considered to support women and enhance their agency to influence the nation's political life.

- b. All sorts of women's interests should be taken into account in the process of women-based policy formulation and implementation.
- c. The formulation, implementation, and evaluation of development policies, programs, and strategies needs to be gender sensitive and should consider the current underrepresentation of women.
- d. Despite its controversial nature, the quota system should be legalized and institutionalized. This system is useful in bridging gender inequalities in leadership positions, as it has been observed in different countries around the world.
- e. Flexible working environments that consider the life routine of Ethiopian women's should be established and encouraged. In this regard, political party or governmental meetings and working hours need to be revisited and arranged by considering the daily routine of Ethiopian mothers' and women's.
- f. Efforts should be made at the bottom to get adequate understanding of gender equality.
- g. The bottom-up method need to be encouraged and supported. The government should pay attention to local elections. It is critical to empower more women at the grassroots level.
- h. Strong and appropriate measurements mechanisms need to be taken towards harassment and violence cases.
- i. In addition to honoring women leaders' appointment occasions, proper follow-up and encouragement measures are required to mitigate their obstacles and make them more effective in their roles.
- j. All institutional machineries should be empowered and strengthened to address the existing issues of women's underrepresentation.

8.2.2. Recommendations on reducing challenges of women to ascending to higher Positions

According to the findings of this study, women in Ethiopia face a number of challenges that require the collaboration of many players. Socio-cultural issues, women's self-problems, and workplace and institutional constraints are identified as important obstacles to Ethiopian women's advancement up the leadership ladder. In addition to policy limitations, these challenges have led to women's underrepresentation in higher leadership positions. As a result, this study identifies the importance of the efforts and actions of stakeholders such as society (social institutions), women themselves, and civil society groups in reducing the barriers that prevent women from achieving greater levels

of leadership. The aforementioned stakeholders are recommended to take action on gender inequalities in this area.

A. Recommendations for women's

- a) Women need to promote the practice of prioritizing responsibilities. Childhood dreams should be achieved, not distorted by other issues.
- b) Women need to cultivate a champion mindset. They should not give up on things that are keeping them from succeeding; rather, they should be willing to try new techniques.
- c) Women need to focus much on their self-development in terms of capacity building and self-esteem. They should be psychologically prepared to be leaders and they must shine brighter during their time in office.
- d) Women in higher government positions should be eager and committed to protecting and promoting women's rights, and of course gender equality. Women must first adjust their environment by initiating policy solutions.
- e) Women leaders should build networks to empower themselves in several aspects. They should form a sisterhood that is a wave of inclusion.
- f) Role models and exemplary women's in every aspect should come to the front line to inspire other women's and girls.
- g) The woman must not miss any opportunities and have to come out and be empowered at all levels of public involvement. As a result, they will have the confidence to speak in public, paving the way for the largest picture.
- h) Women should be informed of the working laws and policies in place to speak up for their rights, as they may fail to do so due to a lack of information.
- i) Harassment should not be hidden or kept secret. When this happens to women leaders, they should foster a culture of reporting and take the case to court. This motivates other women to stand up for their rights.

B. Recommendations for the society (family and institutions) and women-based CSO's

- a) Women-based CSO's should advocate for gender-inclusive policies, quotas, and legal frameworks that encourage women's leadership.

- b) Except for natural duties, all social roles should be life skills shared by both genders. In this regard, social institutions ought to play an important role in promoting role division and challenging society's accepted beliefs.
- c) Women-based CSO's should work to challenge gender stereotypes through campaigns, workshops and public awareness to alter the expected and predetermined roles of both genders to sustain the family and work lives of women.
- d) Women-based CSO's should provide women with leadership training, mentoring services, and opportunities for networking to increase their confidence and capacity.
- e) Gender equality issues should be on men's agendas via changing their perspectives. To eliminate gender violence against women, more work needs to be done on the part of men, who are the leaders of conventional structures and social institutions.
- f) Family encouragement is the key to women's success in every aspect of life.
- g) The families should protect and safeguard girls from unwanted traditional practices that would make them fail earlier.
- h) All stakeholders, such as religious institutions, educational institutions, families, NGO's, and CSO's, need to work together in the endeavors of achieving gender equality.

8.3. Recommendations for Future Research

As recognized, this study is limited conceptually, methodologically, and geographically due to different limitations. As a result, using this work as a springboard, future researchers could offer additional relevant knowledge in this field by widening the identified concerns. *First*, considering this study is confined to federal higher-level leadership roles, other scholars can do gender equality analysis at other levels of government leadership positions, such as regional, zonal, or middle and lower-level leadership posts. *Secondly*, this study focuses on gender equality issues in public organizations, suggesting further research in private, CSO, NGO, academic, and other institutions. *Third*, the study utilized a mixed method research approach (inclined to the qualitative one), suggesting that other researchers could employ alternative methods and designs, such as quantitative data analysis tools, to explore, for instance, the relationship between women's hurdles. Finally, this study subject will be more beneficial if it is undertaken at the regional or sub-regional levels (Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa) in order to construct a larger picture in the study area and contribute to the success of regional development initiatives.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

In-depth Interview (For research objective three)

In-depth Interviews Consent Form

Introductory statements

My name is Zeynie Chekol Degu, a PhD candidate in the program of urban, regional, and local development studies under the college of development studies at Addis Ababa University. I am now undertaking a study entitled " *Women's Representation in Leadership Positions in Ethiopia: Analysis of Gender Equality in Higher Leadership Positions from 1991 to 2022*". To achieve the objectives of this research dissertation, conducting in-depth interviews were found to be relevant. Specifically, these interviews were proposed to investigate the major barriers hindering women from promoting to higher leadership positions in Ethiopia. Additionally, it was also framed to identify the possible solutions to reduce the challenges of women in their efforts of elevating to higher positions. Therefore, recognizing your invaluable participation as higher governmental officials, you are kindly asked to be a participant of this study objective.

Consent

- I have discussed and understood the purpose of the research. I have asked all the questions that I have about the purpose of the research and feel happy that I have enough information about it.
- I understand the reasons for this interview and I am willing and happy to participate in it.
- I understand that my interview may be recorded.
- I know that I have the right to leave the interview at any time or to refuse to answer any questions.
- I will take 40-50 minutes for the interview.

I voluntarily agree to take part in this interview. **Time:** Start ----- Finish -----

Name of participant -----Date-----/-----/-----Signature-----

Name of interviewer-----Date-----/-----/-----Signature-----

Interview Guide for female and male in-depth interview participants

Part I: Demographic background of key informants

1. Socio-demographic Profile:

- a. Your full name _____
- b. Sex _____
- c. Your education level _____
- d. The name of your institution _____
- e. What is your position in the existing organization _____
- f. How long have you served in this institution? _____

Part II: Preliminary Questions

- a. How do you perceive gender equality in leadership positions? Explain?
- b. How do you explain the importance of gender equality in leadership positions?
- c. Your overall observation on women participation in decision-making positions in those institutions you are worked, Explain it.
- d. Do you believe that gender equality is ensured in Ethiopian federal public institutions?
- e. In your opinion, what challenge women face in assuming higher leadership positions?

Part III: Questions related to Challenges of women not to come to higher leadership positions

1. What is your opinion on the impacts **of traditional socio-cultural factors** in limiting women's efforts in assuming leadership positions in organizations you worked before and in the current institution you are working now?

- a. Do the people believe in the leadership ability of women? Explain?
- b. Prescribe your views on the impact of patriarchal social mindset on women's leadership ability at organizational levels?
- c. Do societies easily accept women leaders as men leaders? (Gender Stereotyping)? Explain?

d. How do you see the cooperation of the society with women leaders? Explain?

2. What women's personal factors affect women from assuming higher leadership positions?

a. Do the women have aspiration/commitments for higher leadership positions? Explain?

b. Do the women have the confidence in their ability to lead? Describe?

c. Do they have educational qualifications and adequate work experiences for higher leadership positions? Explain?

d. How do you see the women's challenges of balancing family and workloads?

e. How do you see the encouragement/support of family in helping women to hold and strengthen their leadership efforts?

3. What workplace and institution-related challenges limit women's ability to assume higher leadership positions?

a. Do organizations have supportive working systems for women's equal representation? Explain?

b. Do institutions have flexible working hours for balancing family and workplace role of women? Explain?

c. Are there role model women leaders that can inspire female staff around institutions?

d. Is there organization's culture of recognizing high-performing women leaders/staff?

e. Are institutions aspiring to build the capacity of women and widen their networks? Explain?

f. Are the staff recruitment and selection procedures participatory and transparent? Describe?

g. Are employees cooperative to working with women leaders, or are they discriminatory? Explain?

h. What gender-based violence's are prevalent in the public institutions? Explain its impacts?

Part IV: Questions related to the possible solutions for women's decision-making empowerment

a. In your opinion, what should be done to bring more women into leadership positions in Ethiopia? Describe?

- b. In your opinion, who are the main stakeholders in encouraging and empowering female's to make them the future female leaders of Ethiopia? Describe?
- c. In your opinion, what types of policies are required to make women more competitive in leadership/decision-making positions in Ethiopia?
- d. What efforts should be done by the women themselves to be competent leaders? Explain?
- e. In your opinion, what measures should be taken by employers and organizations to support the leadership efforts of women in Ethiopia?

Appendix B

Key Informant Interview (KII) (For research objective three)

Key Informants Consent Form

Introductory statements

My name is Zeynie Chekol Degu, a PhD candidate in the program of urban, regional, and local development studies under the college of development studies at Addis Ababa University. I am now undertaking a study entitled " *Women's Representation in Leadership Positions in Ethiopia: Analysis of Gender Equality in Higher Leadership Positions from 1991 to 2022*". To achieve the objectives of this research dissertation, conducting key informant interviews were found to be relevant. Specifically, these interviews were proposed to investigate the major barriers hindering women from promoting to higher leadership positions in Ethiopia. Additionally, it was also framed to identify the possible solutions to reduce the challenges of women in their efforts of elevating to higher positions. Therefore, recognizing your invaluable contribution from your working experience and expertise, you are kindly asked to be a key informant in this study objective.

Consent

- I have discussed and understood the purpose of the research. I have asked all the questions that I have about the purpose of the research and feel happy that I have enough information about it.
- I understand the reasons for this interview and I am willing and happy to participate in it.
- I understand that my interview may be recorded.
- I know that I have the right to leave the interview at any time or to refuse to answer any questions.
- I will take 35-40 minutes for the interview.

I voluntarily agree to take part in this interview. **Time:** Start ----- Finish -----

Name of participant -----Date-----/-----/-----Signature-----

Name of interviewer-----Date-----/-----/-----Signature-----

Interview guide for key informants from women-based CSO's and gender experts

Part I: Demographic background of key informants

Socio-demographic Profile:

- a. Your full name
- b. Sex _____
- c. Your education level _____
- d. The name of your institution _____
- e. What is your position in the existing organization _____

Part II: Preliminary Questions

- a. What is gender equality for you in higher leadership positions?
- b. What is the importance of gender equality in higher leadership positions?
- c. Do you believe that gender equality is ensured in Ethiopian federal higher leadership positions?
- d. From your experiences as an expert, what major challenge do women face in assuming higher leadership positions?

Part III: Questions related to Challenges of women not to come to higher leadership positions

1. From your working experience in the subject, what types of traditional socio-cultural factors contributed in limiting women's efforts in assuming leadership positions?
2. How do you see the impacts of patriarchal social mindset and gender prejudice on women's leadership ability?
3. What women's personal factors affect them from assuming higher leadership positions?
4. How do you see women's aspiration/commitments for higher leadership positions?
5. From your working experience, do you believe that women have the confidence in their ability to lead?
6. How do you explain women's educational qualifications and working experiences in accordance with the requirements of higher leadership positions?
7. How do you explain women's challenges of balancing family and workplace duties?

8. How do you see the encouragement/support of family in helping women to hold and strengthen their leadership efforts?
9. From your expertise, what are the major workplace and institution-related challenges that limit women's ability to assume higher leadership positions?
10. How do you describe organizations working systems with regard to promoting women's equal leadership representation?
11. What gender-based violence's are prevalent in the public institutions from your experiences?
12. Do you believe the measures adopted against GBV are adequate and effective in eliminating gender-based violence in Ethiopia?

Part IV: Questions related to the possible way outs for increasing women's decision-making role

1. What are the important remedies to bring more women into leadership positions in Ethiopia?
2. Who should be the main stakeholders in empowering female's to ascend them to higher leadership areas of Ethiopia?
3. What policy recommendations do you have to make women more competitive in leadership/decision-making positions in Ethiopia?
4. How do you describe the role of women in empowering themselves to be competent leaders?
5. What measures do you think are appropriate to be taken by employers and organizations to support the leadership efforts of women in Ethiopia?
6. What ought to be the role of CSOs and other concerned organizations to boost women's leadership roles?

Appendix C

In-Depth Interview for Phenomenology Inquiry (For research objective four)

In-depth interview consent form

Introductory statements

My name is Zeynie Chekol Degu, a PhD candidate in the program of urban, regional, and local development studies under the college of development studies at Addis Ababa University. I am now undertaking a study entitled " *Women's Representation in Leadership Positions in Ethiopia: Analysis of Gender Equality in Higher Leadership Positions from 1991 to 2022*". To achieve the objectives of this research paper, conducting in-depth interviews were found to be relevant. Specifically, this interview is intended to share important experiences and lessons from the lived experiences of exemplary women leaders working at higher level positions. Indeed, it is intended to inspire fellow girls and women to be future leaders of Ethiopia. Therefore, admiring your invaluable participation, you are kindly asked to be a participant of this study objective.

Consent

- I have discussed and understood the purpose of the research. I have asked all the questions that I have about the purpose of the research and feel happy that I have enough information about it.
- I understand the reasons for this interview and I am willing and happy to participate in it.
- I understand that my interview may be recorded.
- I know that I have the right to leave the interview at any time or to refuse to answer any questions.
- I will take 50-60 Minutes for the interview.

I voluntarily agree to take part in this interview. **Time:** Start ----- Finish -----

Name of participant -----Date-----/-----/-----Signature-----

Name of interviewer-----Date-----/-----/-----Signature-----

In-depth interview guide for exemplary female leaders

I. Demographic background of key informants

Your full name _____ Age _____

Educational status _____

In which fields you made your BA, MA or others? _____

Your current position in your institution? _____

How long you been served as a leader in different institutions _____

II. Basic questions on the research objective

A. Questions related with childhood and educational time.

Where did you born? How did you raised? Recalling childhood time

How was your schooling life?

Who was supportive to you to go to school?

How did you pass through the traditional attitude about females
in your society?

B. Questions related with professional journey

When did you start your professional journey? Where?

Was the working environment convenient at that time?

How many female workers are there with you?

Have you ever got equal educational opportunities with male workers?

Have you ever promoted to other positions equally with men's?

Were leaders treating both genders equally in everything? Manifestations
what were your challenges during your professional time?

C. Questions related with family life.

Are you married? If yes, do you have children?

When did you have your first children? What was your experience?

How did you balance your family and work load?

What types of measurements have you taken to balance both?

Was your family supportive to your work? Husband or family in law

D. Experiences in the higher leadership positions

How and when did you get this position?

How you feel being the leader of higher leadership position?

What makes it different from your previous positions?

What difficulties are there? Did you ever about to give up on things?

Have you got rewards or encouragements in your leadership journey?

What do you think are the secret of your today's success? or experiences to fellow females.

Appendix D

Guiding Questions for Secondary Data Collection (for research objective two)

Guiding questions for document analysis

1. What was the trend of women's representation in membership in the federal parliament of Ethiopia?
2. What looks like the representation trend of women in the higher leadership positions of the national legislators of Ethiopia, such as the speaker and vice- speaker positions?
3. What has been the trend of women's involvement in legislative standing committee leadership positions over the past thirty years?
4. What was the past three-decade participation trend of women in the Ethiopian House of Federation (HoF) or in the upper house?
5. What looks like the past thirty year's women's representation status in the political executive positions of the federal government of Ethiopia?
6. How has the past three decades women's representation trended in ministerial positions?
7. In which ministerial portfolios are women in Ethiopia more likely to be appointed?
8. At what level were women represented in the Ethiopian justice system at the federal level across the past thirty years?
9. What is the implication of women's underrepresentation in the lawmaking, interpreting, and enforcing bodies of Ethiopia?
10. What possible recommendations are there to increase women's participation in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia?

Appendix E
Certificate of Ethical Clearance



COLLEGE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (CDS)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Ph.D. Proposal Ethical Clearance Certificate

No: 067/03/2024

Approved

Name: Zeynie Chekol Degu Gender: Female Birth Date: May 3rd, 1993

Id No: GSR/1520/14

E-mail: zeyniechekol@gmail.com

2. Home Center: Centre for Regional and Local Development Studies Stream: Urban Development and Governance
3. PhD Dissertation Supervisors:

Filmon Hadaro (PhD)

Email: filimon.hadaro@aau.edu.et

Hanna Tegegn (PhD)

Email: hana.tegegn@aau.edu.et

4. Title of the Proposal: WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN ETHIOPIA: ANALYSIS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN HIGHER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS FROM 1991 – 2022.

a. Proposal No: N.A. Date accepted: January, 2024 Completed: April 3, 2024

b. Amendment No (if any): N.A. Date: N.A.

5. A clear statement of the decision: The Academic Commission of the Centre for Regional and Local Development Studies has reviewed this proposal and found it to be in compliance with the University's standards and academic rules. The proposal indicated the requirements of an Ethical Clearance Certificate for data collection and subsequent publication. As a result, the IRB CDS examined the proposal's content, its associated research tools, and the informed consent of the respondents. The proposal has been deemed eligible for ethical clearance based on these evaluations.
6. Decision: This proposal fulfills the standard requirements described in IRB-CDS Standard operating Procedure (SoP) and ethical clearance is hereby awarded.
7. This certificate is issued upon the consent of: IRB-CoDS.



Name: Teshome T...
Designation: Chairman IRB
Email: cods.irb@...
Signature: 
Date: April 3, 2024

This certificate is valid only sealed and signed

Appendix F

Article Publications One and Two

Ethiopian Journal of Social Sciences Volume 10, NO. 2. December 2024

Research article

Women-based policies and legal frameworks in Ethiopia since 1991: Women's political empowerment analysis

Zeynie Chekol Degu^{1,2} and Flimon Hadaro Hando² and Hanna Tegegn Gebre³*

Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Debre Berhan University¹, Center for Regional and Local Development Studies, College of Development Studies, Addis Ababa University² and Hanna Tegegn Gebre: Center for Gender Studies, College of Development Studies, Addis Ababa University³.

**Corresponding author's email: zeynie.chekol@aau.edu.et*

Abstract: *A comprehensive policy framework and proper implementation are necessary to ensure women's empowerment, including gender equality in decision-making positions. This research examined selected Ethiopian women-based legal frameworks from the perspective of women's political empowerment. It aimed at assessing the extent to which the policies in place improve women's political empowerment. This research primarily utilizes a qualitative approach that draws on relevant primary and secondary data sources. The study used Variety of Democracy Women's Political Empowerment Indicators (V-Dem Index) to review the content of the selected legal frameworks of Ethiopia since 1991. Using the indicators, the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the 1993 National Policy on Ethiopian Women, and other two strategy documents were specifically examined. The results revealed that existing women-based*

policies and strategies in Ethiopia do not fully recognize and comprehensively address the key indicators of women's political empowerment. This has also an adverse impact on the political representation of women in Ethiopia. Thus, reform efforts to comprehensively include women's political empowerment indices during the development and implementation of policy and legal frameworks are still policy concerns in Ethiopia. Indeed, policy reform measures that consider women's perspectives and interests should be developed in order to enhance women's genuine decision-making roles.

Keywords: *Women-based policies, women's political empowerment, variety of democracy indices, gender equality*

History of article: *Received: 25 August, 2024; Accepted: 28 October, 2024*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20372/ejss.v10i2.1934>

Women's representation in higher leadership positions in Ethiopia in the last three decades since 1991

Zeynie Chekol Degu ¹, Flimon Hadaro Hando ¹

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 39070854 PMCID: PMC11273078 DOI: 10.12688/f1000research.150421.1

Abstract

Gender equality in decision-making positions is crucial to achieving the goals of good governance, peace, democracy, and inclusive/sustainable development. The major aim of this research article is to investigate the representation trend of women in higher decision-making positions over the last thirty years, since 1991. The federal three organs of government (law formulating, law enforcing, and law interpreting bodies) were the focus of this research. This research is a mixed type of research that inculcates both qualitative and quantitative data types. Secondary data sources from relevant government institutions were mostly used. The data was analyzed through content analysis of documents and presented via descriptive data presenting techniques. The research findings reveal that although women's representation in positions of decision-making has advanced considerably in recent years, the empirical data throughout the previous thirty years demonstrated the underrepresentation of women in higher leadership positions within the Ethiopian federal government. Furthermore, Women never held certain higher-level government leadership positions, such as the Prime Minister position, which seems to be forbidden for women. Women made up 23%, 19%, 19%, and 24% of the House of Peoples Representatives (HPR), the House of Federation (HoF), ministerial posts, and judicial bodies, respectively over the last three decades. Women are visibly underrepresented in the executive positions as compared to others. Thus, substantial policy and practical initiatives are needed to remove institutional, social, and economic barriers to boost women's advanced visibility in senior leadership roles.

Keywords: Gender equality; Women's representation; higher leadership positions.

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