

# Women's in Leadership Position “Issues and Challenges”

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## ABSTRACT

Women face multi-faceted challenges in participating in management position due to different factors. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that affect participation of women in leadership positions in Bahir dar city administration. To address this objective, the study adopted mixed research methods with descriptive survey design. A total of 190 women public civil servants were taken as a sample. Moreover, a key informant interview with women in leadership positions was conducted. In addition, FGD were also a very important data-gathering instrument for this study. The findings revealed that there are three major factors for women's low participation in leadership positions, i.e. institutional, socio-cultural and individual factors. Those factors have decisive contributions for low participation of women in leadership positions. With proper implementation of women's policies in the organization, equal treatment during assignment leadership positions, and creating awareness in society that woman are capable for leadership positions.

## KEYWORDS

Challenge, City, Leadership, Participation, Women

## INTRODUCTION

Women constitute half of the population of the world (ILO, 2006) despite this reality, they are not actively participating in the social, economic, political cultural and other forms of life as men do (Hoobler, 2011). Under representation of women in the leadership position at all levels was one symptom of their poor evolvement. According to the report of World Bank, women are underrepresented in parliaments and other high-level decision-making bodies (World Bank, 2007).

Unlike women in developed countries who are, in relative terms, economically empowered and have a powerful voice that demands an audience and positive action, women in developing countries are generally silent and their voice has been stifled by economic and cultural factors. Economic and cultural factors, coupled with institutional factors dictate the gender-based division of labor, rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and access to and control over resources (Gender inequality and women's empowerment, 2008).

These days, women have achieved higher levels of education than ever before and their representation in the global work force has been increased. However, their share of management

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positions remains unacceptably low. Among the developed countries, for example in France only 9% of the work force and in the Netherlands 20% of the work force are female administrators and managers. Gender inequality or disparities between men and women is more pronounced in the developing countries of the world. Women's participation in management and administrative posts is around 15% in Africa and 13% in Asia and the Pacific.

The low participation of women in any aspect of life has become an issue in all over the world (Thornton, 2012). Similarly, Women constitute half of the Ethiopia population (WCYA, 2013). Thus, any political, economic and social activity that doesn't involve and benefit women cannot be fruitful because such an activity is based on half the manpower, half the knowledge, half the effort, etc., of that which is available in the country.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership position of any kind affects women negatively in many aspects: economically, socially, and psychologically. This result in poor contribution for development, in equality of women and men, depression and de motivation of women for work, absence of role models for women, etc. Thus, this study tries to find out the factors that affect participation of women in leadership position in Bahir Dar city Administration.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Leadership is a process by which one person influences the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of others (Yalem, 2011). Leaders set a direction for the rest of us; they help us see what lies ahead; they help us visualize what we might achieve; they encourage us and inspire us. Leadership is the ability to get other people to do something significant that they might not otherwise do. It's energizing people toward a goal. Yukl (2006) defines leadership as:

*The process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, as well as the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.*

Davis and Newstrom (1989) defined; leadership as the process of encouraging and helping others to work enthusiastically toward objectives. It is the human factor that helps a group identify where it is going and then motivates it towards its goals. Without leadership, an organization would be only a gathering of people and machines, just as an orchestra without a conductor would be only musicians and instrument. The orchestra and all other organizations require leadership to develop their precious assets to their fullest capacity.

### **Women's in Leadership Position**

Leadership is a very broad concept, and various theories and styles of leadership exist. Female leadership is just one branch of this concept and can also be defined in different ways. Some understand female leadership as the fact that women can be and are leaders; others may define it from a feminist point of view and as a matter of equality and the right to have the same opportunities. Some say, it refers to certain feminine characteristics which are valuable in today's organizations (Piha, 2006).

### **Factors That Affect Women's Leadership Participation**

There are several factors that prevent women from advancing leadership position. In this regarding Guas (2011) identified that socio-cultural beliefs are the major barriers which emphasizes the superiority of men and inferiority of women. By the same taken the organization for socio cultural beliefs and myths about the role of women in the society are the major determinant of women's failure to advance to leadership position OSSREA (2004). According to the feminist theory, which beliefs in equality of men and women there are so many factors that hinder women from advancing to leadership position (Nzomo, 1995) and from those factors some of them are described as follows.

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