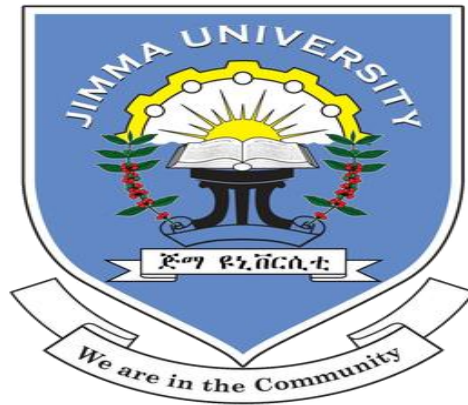


***EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FEMALES
LEADERS IN JIMMA TOWN***



***A Thesis Report Submitted to Research and Postgraduate Office of Jimma
University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of the
Degree of Master in Business Administration (MBA)***

***COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
MBA PROGRAM***

By: Chali Mustefa

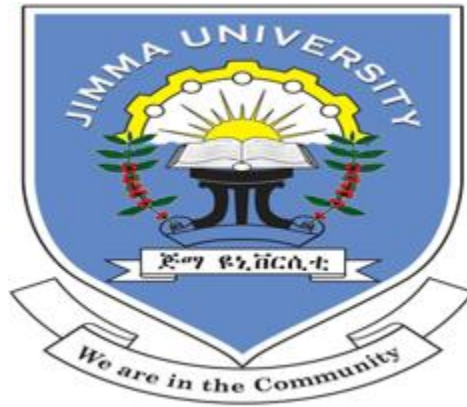
Main Advisor: Mr. Kedir A.

Co-Advisor: Mr. Hagos B.

July, 2023

JIMMA ETHIOPIA

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CHALI MUSTEFA

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This is a great chance to give thanks to all who were by my side in every step I took. First and foremost, I want to thank My Lord God for being my rock, my Faith, and my source of hope. For showing me that I could always rely on you by teaching me to walk when I was weak and tired.

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Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to the Jimma Town sectors female leaders for their assistance during data collection.

Certification

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “*Exploring the Lived Experience of Females Leaders in Jimma Town*”, submitted to Jimma University for the award of the Degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA) conducted by Chali Mustefa, under guidance and supervision of the Advisors mentioned below. We have evaluated the thesis as the original work whereby all sources used as reference for the preparation of the document were duly acknowledged in text and exhaustively indicated in the reference section.

Therefore, we hereby declare that no part of this thesis has submitted to any other university or institutions for the award of any degree or diploma.

Main-Adviser’s Name

Date

Signature

Mr. Kedir Abraham

7/12/2023



Co-Advisor’s Name

Mr. Hagos B

External examiner Name

Date

Signature

Internal examiner

Chair Person

Declaration

I hereby declare that this entitled “*Exploring the Lived Experience of Female Leaders in Jimma City*” Has Been Carried Out By Me Under The Guidance And Supervision **Mr. Kedir A. and Mr. Hagos B** The Thesis Is original and has not been submitted for the award of any Degree, Diploma or Specialty to any University or Institutions

Researcher’s name	Signature	Date
<u>KEDIR ABRAHM</u> Advisor’s name	Signature	Date
Coo-Advisor	Signature	Date

Abstract

This qualitative study explored lived experiences of Jimma Town female leaders'. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select ten female leaders from different public sectors to provide in-depth information to the study. A semi-structured interview guide was used in various audio-recorded interviews, which lasted between 30-40 minutes each to capture exact information. The audio-recorded data was systematically transcribed and coded to generate common themes for the presentation and discussion of findings. Findings revealed those three main themes and fourteen subthemes that describe the factors that affect women's leadership journeys and perceptions, as well as their challenges and opportunities. The themes and subthemes are: individual level factors (personal attributes, career goals, motivation, self-confidence, resilience), societal level factors (family support, peer support, mentorship/role models, social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment), and organizational level factors (affirmative action, recognition and reward, decision-making autonomy, organizational culture, succession planning). Moreover personal attributes such as commitment, competence, creativity and passion, career goals, motivation, confidence, and resilience of female leaders helped them to be successful and effective with their role as leaders. Whereas absence of family support and peer support, lack of confidence, lack of commitment, being evaluated with men leaders/absence of affirmative action/considerations/reservations/ for performance appraisal, training and promotions were among the challenges women leaders faced as challenges in their positions. It is recommended that necessary government structures should formulate and implement policies and programs that promote and support women's leadership, such as affirmative action, training and development, recognition and reward.

Key word: *experience, women leadership, explore, participants, thematic analysis, lived experience*

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW-- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

FDRE - Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

GTP --Growth and Transformation Plan

MDG - Millennium Development Goals

MOWCYA -Ministry of Women Children and Youth Affairs

WCYA -Women Children and Youth Affairs'

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the research, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, definitions of terms and describes the organization of the study. This study explored the lived experiences of female leadership. They have described their day to-day experiences and the challenges they faced as well as their attainments.

1.1 Background of the study

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northhouse, 2011). According to (Yulk, 2010), leadership is based on the assumption that it involves a social influence process. In order to shape the actions and relationships in a group or organization, one individual or group exercises intentional influence over other people or groups.

In time and space, women leadership remains a subject talked about but hardly appreciated (Wren, 2013). Women are still faced with obstacles as they access leadership positions. These barriers includes gender stereotyping, i.e. the “consensual beliefs about character traits that describe men and women” (Weyer, 2007, p. 486); hereafter create barriers for women in the development of their careers (Coleman, 2002). To comply with these stereotypes, women are expected to be “caring, tolerant, intuitive, and gentle” (Coleman, 2005, p. 12). Coleman (2002) also argues that stereotypes of women can be traced to the deep rooted, patriarchal prejudices of that society. Among the factors contributing to poor representation of women in leadership is stakeholder’s attitude (Coleman, 2005). The study required to investigate stakeholder’s attitudes impeding women leader rise to leadership positions. Leadership is a key component in guiding development for preparing today’s workers with relevant knowledge and skills in today’s society to become a productive citizen of the 21st century.

Globally, it is showed that exclusion of women in development has reduced their development efforts useless (Doepke and Tertilt 2010). If a country is successful in minimizing or closing the gender gap, it was have a better chance to develop through improving poverty. World Bank (2003a) reported that promoting gender equality is an essential component of an effective

economic and human development strategy; Women's shortage in managerial and decision making sphere is global phenomena.

Ethiopia has recognized the equality of men and women in all aspects of social, economical, legal, and political activities. The constitution has a clear provision that guarantees gender equality in all aspects of the country's development endeavors including employment. In accordance with the provision of Article 25 of the constitution all persons are equal before the law and discrimination on grounds of sex is prohibited. Similarly Article 35(8) stipulates men's and women's equality in employment, promotion, pay, transfer, and income entitlement. Furthermore, Article 35(3) of the constitution identified itself with women's historical legacy of the past and clearly states the retroactive positional truth by way of prescribing an affirmative action as a remedy to the women's discrimination. Article 42 (1) (d) of the constitution specifies women workers right to equal pay for equal work.

In Ethiopia, women are now seeking to aspire to positions of influence in organizations and institutions, despite Ethiopia being ranked last among African countries in terms leadership. Ethiopia's current president, the mayor of Addis Ababa, ministers of health, CEO of Ethiopia's state-owned telecoms operator, and other ministers are just a few examples of Ethiopian women. This clearly proves that, despite their small numbers in contrast to men, women can hold top positions in our country.

As researcher thinking the cause of low experience of women may be the part of exploring the lived experience. But they don't have any experiences; they are dominated by experienced men. Nonetheless women play an energetic role in the community by taking care of all social activities. So, why the number of females are insignificant? Because lived experiences of female leadership in different leadership position is one problem as researchers was be mentioned.

The low number of female leaders in our country is evidence. The overall number of leaders from January 2020 to July 2021 was 11.4 percent of them being females, a 1.3 percentage point increase from the previous year. According to the researcher's study area in Oromia regional state Jimma Town office report, Female leadership positions in 2021 Statistics Annual Abstract, with only 3% of these positions held by women and 97% held by men. However, their leadership

experiences are too low in organization in leadership position. To this end, the objective of this study is to explore female leaders' lived experiences in Jimma town.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Women hold half of the world population statistically. This logic should have let them possess high proportion in different administration echelon so that they could play significant role in economic, social, cultural and political development of a country. However, the reality is the opposite in most cases women account for no more than 10% managers and 4% of company director and this issue has received the attention of international organizations (Onsong, 2004). Several reports and research findings noted that there are women who have succeeded in their leadership roles and initiated other women to be outstanding role models.

Only 5% of published studies in the body of research covered gender, according to Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011). They also quoted Brown & Irby (2005), who discovered that just 9% of dissertations were about women in leadership. This is because, in comparison to their male counterparts, female leadership roles have gotten little attention (Oplatka, 2006). As a result, additional investigation into the actuality of the women leaders lived experiences is required, and this study analyzes this topic in depth. The number of women in administrative and leadership positions in Ethiopia remains extremely low in general and in different sector in particular.

Ethiopia's government is working hard to close the gender gap in the country and put women at the heart of policy making and development. Gender equality is one of the core pillars of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), Ethiopia's five-year national development plan, as well as the Development Plan for Women and Children (2011-2028) and Women (2011-2028) both make particular commitments to increase women's participation in political life and decision-making, as well as to promote women's rights. The Ethiopian government has authorized a number of legal documents aimed at reducing discrimination against women. One such document is the Gender Equality which was put into effect (United Nations, 2007). The national goal of the strategy is to improve females' quality of material and spiritual life, as well as establishing the conditions necessary for women to enjoy their fundamental rights, and fully and equally involve in and benefit from all aspects of politics, economy, culture and social areas (United Nations, 2007).

One of the specific objectives of the strategy is the Ethiopian government's commitment to increase the number of females in leadership positions at all levels and in all sectors. However, the plan has not been fully implemented to upgrade women top levels of management and leadership positions. Within the wider Ethiopian culture and Africa in general, people tend to perceive men as being competent, skillful, aggressive and able to get things done; and thus assign leadership to men, while women are observed as warm, expressive, quiet, gentle and lacking confidence (UNICEF, 1990; Tanye, 2008). Resultantly, most Ethiopian women are largely considered to be suitable for the role of housewives, meant to take charge of domestic duties and hence, given less opportunities to exercise leadership skills in the work place. In local aspect, different researchers identified the causes of women's under representation.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of female leaders' in leadership position in Jimma Town.

Researcher was be proposed the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of females towards leadership position in Jimma Town?
2. What are the major obstacles that hinder females towards leadership positions of Jimma Town?
3. How do female leaders cope with the challenges that come with the role of leaders?
4. What are the learning experiences that female leaders have experienced?

1.3 General objective

The overall objective of this study is to explore the lived experiences of female's leadership in Jimma Town.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

- To understand the perceptions of females leaders towards leadership position
- To examine the key challenges related to leadership position that females leaders face.
- To explore the coping mechanisms of female leaders towards leadership position
- To share the female leaders learning experiences.

1.4. Significance of the study

The significance of the study lies in its relevance to the professional field, its contribution to the knowledge base, and its implication for evidence-based practice (Polit & Beck, 2004, p. 70).

The study was provide a deep insight into the lived experiences of female leaders in Jimma Town. The study aims to explore and identify strategies that can be used to address the challenges faced by female leaders and how to overcome them. The study was benefit various stakeholders in different sectors and the office of women, children and youth affairs. The study was offer guidance for future strategic plans that can enhance the participation of female leaders in different leadership positions. The study was also empower female leaders to use their potential and rights to exercise leadership roles. The study was help Jimma Town sectors understand the lived experiences of female leaders so that they can take measures to mitigate the problems and maximize the benefits of female leadership. Additionally, this study might serve as a reference for those who are interested in conducting further research. The researcher argues that the findings of the study may help female leaders in the sample sectors to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in their leadership practice. The researcher's findings was also add to the existing body of knowledge and debates on the underrepresentation of female leaders and was inform policy that was ultimately lead to the improvement of female leadership in different positions.

1.5. Delimitation of the study

This study research design is a qualitative research design which is leaders experience is a broad term that involves lower level of leader's institution to higher leader's institution, so, in order to make the study more practicable. The study is delimited in the extent of female leaders lived experience of leadership, their views and experiences on their challenges and the coping mechanisms throughout their experiences. The phenomenological research was employed. This

was made thinkable. Because of to reduce the scope of the study, the researcher limited to the study of female leaders lived experience of leadership in five sectors in Jimma town.

1.6. Operational Definition of Key Terms

Phenomenology may be broadly defined as the study of lived experience with an aim toward “gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (Van Manen, 1990).

Female leaders- this term is used interchangeably for the context of this study; women leaders,

Stereotype: - An image or idea of a particular type of person or thing that has become fixed through being widely held.

Underrepresentation-is a term used to describe the disproportionate (that is too small or none) representation of women in educational leadership.

Perceptions- In this study perception refers to the way the participants understand and conceive lived experience.

Lived experiences-are the everyday experiences of a person in the discharge of his/her primary functions which the person reflects on, perceives, feels, endures or enjoys as the case may be. This term is used in phenomenological studies and it emphasizes the importance of individual experiences as conscious human beings (Moustakas, 1994).

1.7. Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters based on the study objectives. Chapter one introduced the study with a brief view into the background, which sum up the motivation for the study. It also indicated problem of the statement, the research question, general and specific objectives, significance of the study, delimitation, and organization of the study. Chapter two comprised of a literature review and involved an in-depth study of current literature on women and leadership. Chapter three was present detailed interpretation of the research design. It included the methods and procedures was be used in sampling, the data source, collection of data, and an analysis of the data that was be collected and ethical issues. Chapter four was presented the findings of the study as it emerged in the data. And Chapter five was be presented a discussion of findings in relation to the literature studied, conclusions and recommended.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Introduction

This chapter examines relevant theories regarding female leadership. Among the topics covered in this section are the concepts, theories, and women leadership. The goal of this study is to look into female leadership real-life experiences and perceptions .In a thematic evaluation of the literature, the important themes covered in the literature were reviewed.

2.1. Leadership

Leadership has been a topic of interest to historians and philosophers since ancient times but scientific studies began only in the twentieth century. Leadership is a complex phenomenon that has originated numerous theories. There are numerous theories about what it is and how it manifests itself. Leadership is the activity of persuading others to work together toward a goal that they later find desirable (Spillane, 2006). Furthermore, for centuries, people have sought direction, purpose, and meaning to guide their collective activities. In times of crisis or rapid change, leadership is required to foster purpose, direction, imagination, and passion. At such times, people look to leaders for hope, inspiration, and a path that was lead them to a better place (Hallinger, 2000). Although the term leadership is most commonly associated with industry and business, it is also very important in different sector.

A Google search of articles and books about leadership indicates, Leadership has probably been defined in many ways, and here is several other representative definition of leadership.

- Interpersonal influence, directed through communication to ward goal attainment.
- The influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with directions and orders.
- An act that causes others to act or respond in a shared direction.
- The art of influencing people by persuasion or example to follow a line of action.
- The principal dynamic force that motivates and coordinates the organization in the accomplishment of its objective (Andrew, 2008:17).

This shows that there is no single definition; a major point about leadership is that it is not found only among people in high level positions. Leadership is needed at all levels in an organization and can be practiced to some extent even by a person not assigned to formal leadership position.

2. 2.Women and leadership

Good administration is more attuned to feminine than masculine modes of leadership behavior. Female attributes of nurturing, being sensitive, empathetic, intuitive, compromising, caring, cooperative, and accommodative are increasingly associated with effective administration. While these characteristics are innate and valuable, women possessing the qualities of a good leader still face higher attrition and slower career mobility particularly in educational administration (Porat, 1991).

Eagly and Carli (2007) In researching the difficulties of female leadership, situational theorists say that "elements such as social values, the culture of the company, the nature of the work, and the attributes of the followers determine the environment of the scenario. In a study that examined women's prejudice, it was discovered that According to Eagly&Karau, reported in Eagly&Carli (2007), women emerge as leaders less frequently than men, owing to the fact that

women must fulfill a higher bar than men in order to be seen as highly competent. Greyvenstein (2000, p. 30) claims that "women teach and men manage in the schools," referring to a gender-related inconsistency in the field of education. Even when women are well qualified, the majority of males in positions of leadership have instilled in them a belief system that male behavior is the norm. As a result, women frequently have difficulties gaining the acceptance of their male counterparts (Mestry& Schmidt, 2012).

Unlike men women have communal qualities, democratic and participatory, typically focusing on relationships and creating positive working atmospheres (Eagly and Johnson, 1990).

Therefore, the researchers strongly support this idea from the fact that if this quality of females 'leadership is potentially released to school environment and provided that female access to leadership, they contribute their quality of leadership to schools. Moreover, writers of popular books on leadership have argued that effective leadership is congruent with the ways that women lead (Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1995).

2.2.1 Men and women lead differently

According to Eagly&Karau, reported in Eagly&Carli (2007), women emerge as leaders less frequently than men, owing to the fact that women must fulfill a higher bar than men in order to be seen as highly competent. Even when women are well qualified, the majority of males in positions of leadership have instilled in them a belief system that male behavior is the norm. As a result, women frequently have difficulties gaining the acceptance of their male counterparts (Mestry& Schmidt, 2012).

As a result, a growing body of evidence suggests that women and men have more in common than they do not, both in terms of cognitive functioning and personality qualities (Eagly, et al., 2003) Emotional intelligence, empathy, and compassion, on the other hand, are more prevalent among women (EaglyCarli, 2007). Applebum, Audet, and Miller (2003, p. 43) conducted research to answer the following three questions: "Do women's leadership styles differ much from men's?" Are these approaches less likely to be successful? Is the evaluation of women's

leader effectiveness based on facts or a perception that has become a reality?" Their research revealed the following:

.....Yes, women leadership style is, at this point, different from men's but men can learn from and adopt women style and use it effectively as well, Women styles are not at all likely to be less effective; in fact, they are more effective within the context of team-based, con-sensually driven organizational structures that are more prevalent in today's world. The assessment that a woman's leadership style is less effective than a men's is not fact- based but rather driven, by socialization, to perception that certainly persists (Applebum et al., 2003, p. 43).

However, women leaders were rated to exhibit significantly more transformational behaviors than men leaders and men leaders were rated to exhibit significantly more transactional behaviors than women leaders. The researcher also added that in all-female contexts, women leaders' exhibit feminine styles of leadership.

The most recent literature on women's leadership style is presented by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011). Some leadership attributes, according to the literature, are predominantly behaviors associated with women, and may include, but are not limited to, communication, relationships, shared decision-making, and developing others' potential. According to them, women leadership is characterized by five approaches: "relational leadership, leadership for social justice, leadership for learning, spiritual leadership, and balanced leadership" (Grogan &Shakeshaft, p. 6).Relational leadership refers to being in association with others in a horizontal rather than a hierarchical sense (Grogan &Shakeshaft, 2011).

Eagly, et al. (2003) cited in Smith, Matkin and Fritz, (2004) shows women to be more transformational than men, suggesting that stereotypes associated with transformational leadership may be less negatively biased against women leaders than stereotypes associated with other leadership styles. Additionally, women may favor a transformational leader style because it provides them with a means of overcoming the dilemma of role incongruity namely, that conforming to their gender role can impede their ability to meet the requirements of their leader role.

2.2.2 Leadership from a Feminist Perspective

According to the study, and centered attitude has prejudiced and disadvantaged women seeking leadership roles in institutions such as schools. Feminist reconstruction of leadership, according to Blackmore (1989:113), would integrate women in meaningful discourse of organizational life and values as autonomous individuals rather than as objects of patriarchal discourse, with a focus on individual-leadership interactions.

This study applies feminist theory broadly, while always keeping patriarchal power relations and how they are exercised in a way that damages women's lives in mind (Connell, 2010). Feminist philosophy also strives to empower women by giving them a voice. Grader et al. (2000).define feminist theory as follows:

...feminist theory validates multiple and diverse perspectives, in particular the values of examining these perspectives to clarify one's own beliefs and values, and for the pedagogical opportunities to help one to consider viewpoints of other individuals. Women learn from other women's voices and experiences.

Using those spaces, feminism can focus on women and their experiences, so that feminist theory can become part of contemporary dialogue and experiences, rather than just an —add-on to the dominant culture. In the researcher's opinion, many women leaders see discrepancies between the dominant culture and their own experiences as women leaders. They do not necessarily propose the eradication of current knowledge bases, but to challenge current theories, knowledge and assumptions about leadership, replacing them with dialogue and ideas that are more inclusive, open and democratic. Considering leadership from the foregoing perspectives provides a realistic picture of the various views held by individuals working within schools. What is imperative is that women in leadership provide a different view and interpretation of leadership.

2.3. Women Leadership Styles

Debates about the leadership styles of women and men gained momentum in the 1990s because of new research attempting to identify the styles that are especially attuned to contemporary conditions (Eagly and Carli, 2003).

Women's leadership literature frequently seeks to discover the distinguishing characteristics that may distinguish men's and women's leadership styles (Eagly&Carli, 2007; Eagly, Johansson-Schmidt, & Van Engel, 2003) Transformational leadership, for example, emphasizes employee empowerment and has increased the number of possibilities for women to be appointed as leaders (Avolio& Bass, in Gaus, 2011).

Men leaders are described as they are more likely to use power that comes from their organizational position and formal authority. Women leaders in his study described themselves in ways that characterizes transformational leadership-getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest in to the interest of the group though concern for a broader goal.

Applebum, Audet, and Miller (2003, p. 43) conducted research to address the questions three questions: "Do women's leadership styles differ much from men's?" Are these approaches less likely to be successful? Is it a perception or a fact that determines women's leadership effectiveness?

2.4. Barriers towards Women Leadership

In this section, several research studies confirm with the barriers for underrepresentation of Women in leadership. For instance, female administrators in leadership are underrepresented as gender given that they make up the whole teaching profession (Gregory 2000). For their underrepresentation, they list several factors that are related to Organizational, and individual factors.

Barriers in the workplace not only discriminate against women, but they may also favor men. "Structural hurdles to women's advancement in organizations have their roots in the fact that most

organizations have been "Changes in workplace culture, women's career development, and mentoring opportunities for women" are needed to overcome these barriers (Northouse; 2010 p. 319). Barriers in the workplace not only discriminate against women, but they may also favor men. "Structural hurdles to women's advancement in organizations have their roots in the fact that most organizations have been founded by and for males," writes Moorosi (2007, p. 507). Moorosi cites Grogan (2007) also argues that the absence of women in powerful positions suggests that women are seen through traditional theoretical lenses and are measured against ideals that have historically best served men. (Rashid, 2010, p. 221).

This, in general, indicates a lack of women in positions of power. Mentors and role models offer two objectives for women seeking success. A mentor is defined as "someone with whom you have a professional, interpersonal relationship and who provides you with constructive career and psychosocial aid" (Gupton & Slick, 1996). Because, unlike boys, girls are socialized to be passive and given no options. This, in general, indicates a lack of women in positions of power.

Mentors and role models offer two objectives for women seeking success. A mentor is defined as "someone with whom you have a professional, interpersonal relationship and who provides you with constructive career and psychosocial aid" (Gupton & Slick, 1996). In most civilizations, women lack experience with decision-making and leadership interests or ambitions in the public arena since girls, unlike boys, are brainwashed to be docile and given no or little opportunity to acquire leadership skills outside or within the family environment

2.4.1. Work and family conflict

Work-family conflict is a common justification for women's underrepresentation in leadership roles. A form of this concept was included in Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, which focused on the ways in which work and home cultures failed to provide women with a method to balance these two obligations. The choice was plain for women: one or the other.

Discrimination against women that is based on untested grounds and perceptions no doubt constitutes unfairness. The components of administrative work, as well as the perceived and real male defined

environments in which many women administrators must work, shape women's perceptions of the desirability of administration. The perceptions that women hold of what leaders Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) found that the job stress of women was higher than that of men when working in a predominantly or traditionally male environment.

Other scholars have pointed out how some women are simply rejecting leadership jobs in favor of a greater focus on family, a decision that inevitably affects their long-term career pathways in response to Friedan's emphasis on the role of work and home cultures in women's underrepresentation (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). From the researcher point of view this is the traditional assumption that made men to be privileged in holding the position of Educational leadership undermining female teachers in Educational leadership. If female are given the opportunity to lead school yes they can lead.

2.4.2 Access to resources

Women's access to resources focuses on the lack of professional advice, resources, mentoring, and socialization opportunities for women in leadership posts (Paludi, 2008). The ability to access these resources at work is also a measure of one's social capital. An individual's social capital refers to the number of networking ties within a community as well as the set of collective expectations that impact goal-seeking behavior among its members (Coleman, 1988). Davies (Davies, 2004).

2.4.3. Male dominated power structure

A look at the male-dominated power structure finds that women are underrepresented in important leadership positions. In male-dominated major leadership jobs, for example, new principals was most likely "resemble their sponsors in philosophy, deeds, appearances, and hobbies," according to Oplatka & Hertz-Lararowitz (2006). (p. 19). In other words, high-ranking guys was hire persons who are the most similar to them, reinforcing male supremacy in leadership (Oplatka & Hertz-Lararowitz, 2006, p. 19). Furthermore, when white heterosexual men control power structures, women, particularly on-heterosexual, non-white women, may be less well connected to systems.

Eagly and Carli (2003) has tried to show how leadership effectiveness varies between men and women leaders in different situations. According to these researchers, women are relatively less effective in leadership roles defined in especially masculine terms and more effective in roles defined in less masculine terms. The following findings were consistent with these expectations: (a) women were less effective than men to the extent that leadership positions were male dominated; (b) women were less effective relative to men as the proportion of male subordinates increased; (c) women were less effective relative to men the greater the proportion of men among the rates of leader effectiveness; (d) women were substantially less effective than men in military organizations, a traditionally masculine environment, but modestly more effective than men in educational, governmental, and social service organizations; (e) women fared particularly well in effectiveness, relative to men, in middle-level leadership positions, as opposed to line or supervisory positions.

2.4.4. Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are common cognitive constructs that influence how men and women receive information. Despite significant changes in attitudes toward women's rights and professional ambitions since the 1960s, gender stereotypes about men and women continue and are constant across countries. When gender stereotypes are internalized by oppressed groups, they aid in the facilitation or maintenance of horizontal violence (Freire, 2000).

Ashmore and Del Boca (1979), after reviewing various definitions of gender stereotyping, tried to incorporate the idea of all with a single and simple statement. They define *stereotype* as a „structured set of belief about the personal attributes of a group of people“. Whereas, *sex stereotype* or *gender stereotype* is, a structured set of belief about the personal attribute of males and females. Powell (1993) in his book of —Women in Management‡, explaining what this set of beliefs incorporate, defines gender stereotype as a belief that sees men to be high in —masculine‡ traits such as independence, aggressiveness, and dominance, and women to be high in —feminine‡ traits such as gentleness, sensitivity to the feelings of others, and tactfulness. Powell (1993), further explaining about this belief mentions that beliefs about sex differences appear to have remained essentially the same since the late 1960s, despite the increased attention given to gender stereotypes in the popular media and the considerable changes that have taken place in the work world since then.

As mentioned earlier, Gender stereotypes are common beliefs about character traits that describe men and women. Indicatively, characteristics such as self-reliance, independence and aggressiveness, which are thought of as male characteristics, are usually attributed to *successful leaders*. On the other hand, traits such as non-aggression, spiritual values, artistic inclinations and concern for others are mostly attributed to women. Therefore, the existence of gender stereotyping puts women with power in a disadvantaged position compared to their male counterparts, exactly because their gender stereotype conflicts with the leadership stereotypes. (Galanaki, et al, 2009).

2.5. Culture Impact on Women Leadership

Culture and tradition have a significant impact on women managers. Culture is described as a country's, societies, or group of people's practices, traditions, and beliefs, according to Gillard (quoted in Khumalo (2006). Throughout society, persistent societal preconceptions impair women's ability to lead and manage. This is consistent with the findings of Moorosi's (2010) study, which indicated that traditional cultural value systems and institutional structures inside schools that are less favorable to women frequently harm women's experiences. The idea that women's experiences are influenced by sociopolitical, organizational, and personal variables. The barriers to career advancement experienced by women in developing countries seem to be determined by specific cultural and religious beliefs and values that define femininity in terms of marriage, housekeeping and child-raising.

Women's perceptions in Ivorian society are shaped by societal norms and stereotypes. It was once thought that leading was a male activity. This thinking is particularly strict in rural areas, where people are constrained by tradition, which prohibits women from occupying leadership roles. In many cultures, women are (or have been) expected to remain silent in debates, denied thability to consent (to marital sex, to vote, to property), and considered as irrational or inconsequential, according to Presler-Marshhall and Valters (2015, p. 8).

In the sense that, as participants revealed, culture still has an impact on the collection of perspectives, values, rituals, and practices that exist inside their workplaces, populations, and school communities, the majority of cultural factors have an impact on females in school

they are exposed to their surrounding environment, accepting gender division of labor as the job that is naturally allotted to them. According to Pig Ford (1993).

Culturally, the Ethiopian society is patriarchal. It portrays women as inferior to men and the division of labour is stereotypical. Women who do not perform domestic roles are viewed as deviants making it difficult to assert themselves when it comes to seeking positions outside the home. In addition, women carry out almost all the reproductive roles of the households as well as many of the productive roles. The average Ethiopian woman puts in 15-18 hours of work per day, which has never been valued in economic terms (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 1998). Women also participate in community management roles, which is usually voluntary and unpaid. In many cases, this is used as one of the reasons to justify that women do not have the time to participate in leadership outside of the home. These and many more are obstacles that limit women from developing their leadership potentials and take full advantage of the positive enabling environment created by the national women policy.

2.6. Underrepresentation of Women

In many developing countries, female underrepresentation in decision-making roles is common and well documented, posing challenges to fairness, social justice, and long-term development. According to Burke (2015), the number is irrelevant because it was not, by itself, reducing gender inequality. She highlighted that having a large number of women in universities in the United Kingdom is insufficient for women to be empowered and the gender gap to be closed. Burke's perspective remains timely, as cultural bias, stereotypes, and moral and psychological oppression remain common views toward women, particularly among men.

Because work defines an individual's place in society social standing, life style, prestige, and respect it is not surprising that many of the battles for gender role liberation has been fought in the work place. And the reasons for the battles are many. Historically, women have been kept out of many areas of employment. Women earn less than men in nearly every occupation. Defector vertical and horizontal occupational segregation of the work force keeps most women in a few low-paid occupations, while men have access to a wider variety of jobs. Occupations with a high percentage of women and minority workers are likely to have a high percentage of low-wage workers. Even in the face of unemployment, women fare worse than men (Blau and Ferber, 1992; Tsehai, 1991).

As a result, irrespective of the gender representation, what is important is how they are treated and perceived in higher education and what place is given to them. Therefore, the problem is not the number but rather the culture and practices that women experience within the system. Actually, it is difficult to understand that at the level of higher education a certain category is neglected Poor recognized. Nonetheless, whether the leadership is exercised by men or women, it involves certain qualities and abilities, which need to be demonstrated with regard to the organization context generally full of challenges and obstacles that stand in the way of women leaders.

2.7 Gender and Women Leadership

In reviewing the literature on gender and Full Range Leadership, an important issue that emerged was leader effectiveness. Transformational leadership, along with the use of contingent reward, is a style significantly related to effectiveness as previously mentioned (Eagly and Carli, 2003; Appelbaum, Auedet and Miller, 2003; Center for Leadership Studies, 2003).

Gender studies and women's leadership argue that gender still affects women... According to West and Zimmerman (1987, p. 126), gender should be understood as a role rather than a set of traits (such as femininity and masculinity) (as in scripts for behavior).

They have the following beliefs:

...gender is not a trait or variable but is an accomplishment, an interactional activity that we universally use to organize social encounters:

Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine, feminine nature's (West & Zimmerman, p. 2).

Additionally, the Great Man Theory of Leadership espouses that great leaders are born, not made. These individuals come into the world possessing certain characteristics and traits not found in all people. These abilities enable them to lead while shaping the very pages of history.

Gender and leadership study was conducted in South Africa. In their literature review, Booysen & Nkomo (2006) found that there are contradicting results when it comes to evidence on gender disparities in leadership because male and female leadership styles are more similar than

different. According to the study, the differences between female and male leadership styles are still primarily due to "sex role spillover, gendered action, or the expansion of their intrinsic roles" (Booyesen&Nkomo, 2006, p. 26). Finally, research findings on leadership styles are often gender-stereotypical. Fourth, recent data favors women due to the democratization of the workplace and the promotion of transformative and interactional leadership, which benefits women over men. Fifth, despite this advantage and the workplace's Feminization, leadership is still seen as a male-dominated profession. Finally, if male leadership is considered traditional, female leadership is considered non-traditional. In the end, Booyesen&Nkomo (2006, p. 26) recommend that:

...even though the feminine leadership style is seen to be more effective than the masculine leadership style, and there is evidence for a gender advantage, Illogically it poses the following dilemma- the gender advantage became a gender disadvantage since female leadership is still perceived to be less effective.

Because of the "prevailing strong masculine culture, masculine stereotypes, and adopted masculine leadership mental models," according to Booyesen&Nkomo (2006, p. 23), men was continue to dominate in leadership even if women are empowered. Women are held to a double standard since they are expected to be competent while yet displaying feminine characteristics. This is in line with Eagly&Carli (2007) and Booyesen&Nkomo (2006), who argue that women confront a double bind: first, the female role is underestimated, and second, displaying stereotypical male conduct creates a barrier, resulting in such behavior being viewed as gender role different..

2.8 Gender Stereotyping and Role Congruity Impact

The challenge for female leaders, according to Damons (2008), is deciding whether to adapt oneself to fit into a preconceived role or to redefine leadership in terms of their own experiences and methods of thinking. According to Kanjere (2008), some individuals still believe women are incapable of leading. Due to cultural stereotypes and other prejudices, women are unable to reach their full potential (Kanjere, 2008).One of the greatest hurdles to women's representation in management positions is stereotypes and prejudices about women's abilities and attitudes

(Chabaya, Rembe&Wadesango 2009).On gender stereotypes and leadership. Johansson-Schmidt & Eagly (2001, p. 786).

...not only may gender roles spill over to organizational settings, but leaders' gender identities may also constrain their behaviors in a direction consistent with their own gender role. Also, the female gender role is more likely to be incongruent with leader roles than the male gender role is, producing a greater potential for prejudice against female leaders. Such prejudice could result in constraints that affect leaders' behavior.

Gender role stereotyping has long influenced people's perceptions of female leaders' behavior and is one of the key challenges that female leaders have encountered in the workplace (Northouse, 2010). Even when they behave in the same way, female managers are rated lower than male managers, according to research (Eagly et al., 1992; Heilman, 2001; Ryan and Haslam, 2007). Furthermore, according to Giscombe (2007), gender stereotyping literature implies that males value consistency in how they are perceived and senior leadership traits.. Women, on the other hand, continue to experience difficulties in progressing to positions of leadership because there is a mismatch between how they are regarded and leadership traits as a woman or as a leader (Lumby&Azaola, 2013). Aspiring female leaders are disadvantaged by leader and gender stereotypes because they must deal with this perceived incongruity.

Women who comply to the female gender role by displaying feminine qualities do not match the leader stereotype's requirements (Powel, 2011). Women's characteristics are a bad fit that almost certainly lead to failure, whereas men's characteristics are a strong fit that almost certainly lead to promotion. The role congruity theory proposed by Eagly and Karau (2002) "transforms [Heilman's] observations into a systematic theory by bringing together social-cognitive research on stereotyping and prejudice with organizational research on management and leadership" (Eagly&Karau, 2002, p. 579). One of the primary challenges that female leaders have faced in the workplace is gender role stereotyping. And has influenced people's perceptions of female leaders' behavior for a long time (Northouse, 2010). Even when they behave in the same way, female managers are rated lower than male managers, according to research (Eagly et al., 1992; Heilman, 2001; Ryan and Haslam, 2007).

Furthermore, according to Giscombe (2007), gender stereotyping literature implies that males value consistency in how they are regarded and senior leadership traits. Women, on the other hand, continue to experience difficulties in progressing to positions of leadership because there is a misalignment between how they are regarded and leadership traits as a woman or as a leader (Lumby&Azaola, 2013). Prospective female leaders are at a disadvantage because they must deal with this perceived incongruity due to leader and gender preconceptions. Women who comply with the female gender role by displaying feminine qualities do not match the leader stereotype's qualifications (Powel, 2011). Women's characteristics are a bad fit that was almost certainly lead to failure, whereas men's characteristics are a strong fit that was almost certainly lead to promotion. "By combining social-cognitive research on stereotyping and prejudice with organizational research on management and leadership, Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory converts [Heilman's] observations into a systemic theory," according to Eagly and Karau (Eagly&Karau, 2002, p. 579)2.9. Challenges faced by women primary school principals

The majority of the material evaluated indicates that female leaders encounter both internal and external problems. Internal obstacles noted include lack of confidence, balancing the roles of mother and leader, and emotional stress from a personal standpoint. External challenges, on the other hand, are divided into two categories: those that are administrative and hence tied to the organization, and those that are societal in nature (Lumby&Azaola, 2011; Kanjere et al. 2011; Boldur, 2009; Moorosi, 2007 & 2011; Van Vic, 2012; Parsaloi, 2012; Wrushen& Sherman, 2008; Uwizeyimana&Mathevula, 2014). Despite some progress, old fashioned sexist attitudes are still common and represent a real, not imagined, barrier to the progress of women. Discrimination that rests on any assumed differences between men and women is both ill grounded and immoral, since human beings by their nature are capable of learning. In other words, women as members of the human species are also endowed with the potential to learn, for through learning a man can adapt to new situations.

2.9. Personal challenges

2.9.1. Emotional pressure

According to Blackmore (2010), leadership during times of change is a highly emotional endeavor. People in positions of leadership are often confronted with emotional demands from

their peers, students, and community members. As a result, their experiences, particularly their emotional responses, are shaped by the constraints of the educational system's ethos in which they work. "For some women, entering into management means additional stress, because they are associated with inflexibility," writes Moorosi (2007:508). In contrast to what classroom teaching offers them in terms of meeting their time demands, they are restricted. Furthermore, as participants spoke about the challenges they face on a daily basis in their professions as middle-school principals, Parsaloi (2012: 31) adds that adjectives like "stressful" and "demanding" pervaded their accounts, and were used interchangeably with the word "tough."

2.9.2 The lack of confidence

There is some evidence to indicate that women lack confidence in applying for promotion and that, in contrast to their male colleagues, they only apply for jobs for which they are fully qualified (Shakeshaft, 1989). Research reported by Shakeshaft (1987, 1993) supports the perception that females tend to receive less constructive criticism than males in carrying out their work. As a result, it is suggested that they are less able to deal with negative comments, in effect taking them too personally and allowing their confidence to be unnecessarily damaged. Some would suggest that these psychological, internal or intrinsic barriers, however, are seldom more prevalent for women than for men, and it is not usually the woman's psyche at fault, but the social structure of society that is the root cause of the inequities (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Women's conception and awareness of their own power as administrators is one of the most important topics that came from Wrushen and Sherman's (2008) study of Hispanic and Caucasian women. These female leaders, they say, are uncomfortable with the concept of power and being identified as such. Rather, they prefer to be referred to as community servers.

Some women are drawn to the power that comes with being a student, while others are pulled to the authority that comes with teaching. They did not feel powerful in their leadership position." Furthermore, according to Parsaloi(2012), Kenyan female leaders in her study admitted to lacking confidence in their work, especially in the early stages of their leadership. When coping with tough issues, women said they lacked confidence since they didn't know how to handle

them. According to Parsaloi (2012), women leaders admitted to developing confidence as they progressed in their leadership responsibilities.

Perhaps it is this lack of leadership identity, rather than low self-esteem that also perpetuates the perception of women that they must get more information, more education, and more experience in the classroom prior to seeking an administrative position (Grogan & Brunner, 2005a, b; Young & McLeod, 2001). Or perhaps it is the reality that for a woman to be considered equal, she must be better prepared than the man with whom she is competing for a job.

2.9.3 Life style conflict

Expectations for women and men are still so different in some domains that observers are surprised, even shocked, when an individual woman or man "crosses the line" to behave in a way that is thought normative for the other group. Women and men are, in fact, often described as "opposite sexes." How different are we really? A look around Ethiopia quickly shows that, in terms of how we spend our time, women and men are very different indeed: Women do most of the housework, men play most of the football, women do most of the typing, men run most of the corporations, women do most of the child care, and men commit most of the violent crimes. Small wonder if the casual observer were to conclude that human males and females differ dramatically in abilities, motivation, and temperament.

"Women are better at managing households than men," writes Irechuckwu (2010:183), "and the more of them in leadership positions, the more stable and dependable the world was become." According to female leaders, working mothers "struggle to find a balance in the cultural structure of their life responsibilities, and construct meandering career routes during midlife" (Moorosi, 2007:512). She recognizes that balancing the roles of mother, wife, and career woman can be challenging for women leaders

.....Social practices still appear gender neutral because everyone appears to be subjected to them, while the reality is that these social practices sabotage women who cannot be available for the work all the time.

Because they are still expected to perform their conventional duties as mothers and spouses in addition to their devotion to their career as administrators, the gap makes balancing public and private commitments much more challenging for married women leaders of reproductive age. Women are disadvantaged by dual responsibility, which places them in situations when they are unable to execute both. She also believes that single female leaders have an advantage since they are not as severely affected as married female leaders and are able to dedicate more time to management-related activities. Women created techniques to reconcile their lifestyle conflicts, according to study by Moorosi (2007), Parsaloi (2012), Mthembu (2013), and Smith (2011). Getting help from relatives, working closely with members of the management team to make their workload manageable, working after work hours to avoid interruptions, and working long hours during the working year so that they can spend quality time with their families during the holidays are all common strategies.

2.9.4 Lack of role Models

Role models are strong sources of encouragement for females trying to pursue leaders despite the many hurdles they face, especially in underdeveloped countries, according to a number of studies (Muller, 2006).

2.10. Cultural challenges

2.10.1 Discrimination

Moorosi (2007: 508) writes, "the reality of female experiences suggest that female resist discrimination on two levels based on organizational and social levels." Women lack support from their families on a social level, and they must contend with the reality that leadership is linked with masculinity "Even the policy provides equal treatment of everyone,". Traditional and patriarchal values and practices, on the other hand, subjugate them and continue to devalue change activities aimed at achieving gender equity. In most societies, girls are assigned to domestic duties. Where they are confined and taught to accept the lack of experience to play a leadership role in a public context.

As a result, girls frequently lack the self-confidence and abilities necessary to embrace leadership roles and perform well in them. In addition to the effects of sociocultural impacts as a result of socialization, as mentioned in (Shakeshaft, 1999). Females are unwasing to take on the role of

leaders because the organizational structure and employment arrangement, as well as the scheduling and planning of activities, are dominated by men and custom-made to marginalize and discriminate women.

2.10.2 Reduction of women

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) examined the leadership experiences of women administrators and disclose that female leaders are under investigation which means being severely analyzed. Women leaders are watched in every move they make. As a result, this leaves these female leaders with a feeling of discomfort and fear. The most disturbing themes that emerged were the regular occurrence of hurtful comments and actions directed towards their gender, age and race. Pillay (2005: 71) concurs with Wrushen and Sherman (2008) that “the most significant explanation of resistance to women in positions of power in leadership position is their devaluation”. She further highlights that the assignment of less value to women takes the form of attitudes that favors males over females for management positions. This proves that women are not valued as much as men are. This then impacts negatively on their self-esteem.

2.10.3 Devaluation of women

Wrushen and Sherman (2008) examined the leadership experiences of women administrators and reveal that female leaders are under surveillance which means being severely analyzed. Women leaders are watched in every move they make. As a result, this asserts that “female leaders adopted this style of leadership which is authoritative more especially when they conduct staff meetings because some workers do not take them seriously because they are female”. This shows that women leaders have come to the realization that control and authority are sometimes necessary (Gatane, 2007; Swan, 2014).

2.11. Administrative challenge

2.11.1 The lack of respect and negative attitude

Negative sentiments regarding female leaders are manifested in numerous ways, according to research done by Makhaye (2012), Aja- Okori (2011), Parsaloi (2012), and Kitele (2013).Female leaders faced pushback from both female and male, according to these studies. Due to myths and prejudices held towards female leaders, experts have been known to mistrust their leadership

ability and principles. The lack of respect and recognition is often displayed in attitudes during staff meetings and also by not attending meetings.

2.11.2 Pressure to compete with previous managers

According to Wrushen and Sherman (2008: 463) “female leaders are pressurized to compete with the legacy and style of the previous leaders. They hold the view that these female

2.11.3. Overcoming the Factors for Low Women Participation in Leadership

To this point, this literature review has been focused quite extensively on both internal and external barriers that influence the representation of women in leadership. Some of these barriers, while not completely removed, are beginning to crumble. A number of ways to overcome those barriers have been noted and one of these ways is for female aspirants to have a mentor. Holt (1981) suggests that mentors, both male and female, may be the single most important factor in an administrator's career development. "Mentors can suggest strategies for career mobility, open doors, initiate contact, and make recommendations" (p: 23). Despite the benefits of mentoring, research indicated that there seems to be a lack of available male or female mentors for women. When males do act as mentors, they tend to sponsor male, or someone who is most like them (Erich, as cited by Coleman, 1996).

Another way of overcoming barriers that is suggested in the literature is through networking. Networks provide a widening circle of personal and professional references that can assist in the promotion of women as candidates for positions. Networks can provide information through newsletters or word of mouth on systems that have job openings and contacts, offer advice on benefits of positions, salary, history and background of school boards (Rees, 1992). As Irby and Brown (1998) stated in their study of women's support organizations, "women need time to grow together professionally and to learn from other women". Schmuck as cited by Irby and Brown (1998) suggests that there is something special and celebratory for same sex members of all races and ethnic groups to come together. Perhaps one of the most compelling and powerful experiences that women have in the conferences and workshops for women is the camaraderie, the shared unspoken assumptions, and the revelation of one's experience which is understood(Brown ,1998:61).

Gaining academic credentials is another way for women to overcome barriers to moving up the administrative ladder. Evidence suggests that women are attending graduate school in record numbers. Preparing for the role of principal, especially in higher institution, has been identified as a key in breaking down the barriers facing women. Hopefully, the trend of increased enrolment in graduate programs by women was begins to have an effect on the serious under-representation of women in leadership. It is important to remember, however, that to date the results have not been that encouraging Holt (1981). A more formal way to decrease the barriers facing women seeking advancement in leadership is through employment equity programs or affirmative action initiatives. Employment equity programs involve the systematic monitoring of who holds what jobs so that areas of concern, such as fair and representative work force and equality of treatment and outcome, become public (Dotzler, 1993). It is important to note that although hiring can be mandated by institutions, acceptance cannot.

Empirical studies

As the researcher discussed the problem of gender gap in Ethiopia might exist as a result of different interrelated problems especially hindering women to be active participant in organization, employment, leadership and other sectors. So why the problem is still exists with the intervention of all this instruments need further investigation in this field.

It is a very much exposed secret that women have been much marginalized (left aside) from higher managerial and technical positions than men workers. Women in those managerial or administrative and technical and scientific positions are very low (Jayaweera, 1997; Abebayehu, 1995).

Yalew (1997: 65) also states that it is well-known global fact that women's proportion in leadership positions is very small in relative to their statistics in the world population. And the researcher believes that Ethiopia is not free of this defect.

Challenges to women's lack of opportunities to reach higher positions in sector have also been documented by (Cvancaraetal.2007). These factors included women's negative perception toward themselves and low participation leadership position.

For instance, Beruk (2004), in many parts of the world, women are either excluded or marginalize from higher level political, social, economic and cultural arrangements. Women are undoubtedly under represented within different organizations and institutions.

Challenges to women's lack of opportunities to reach higher positions in sector have also been documented by (Cvancaraetal.2007). These factors included women's negative perception toward themselves and low participation leadership position.

The reality is that social, organizational, cultural and education (Moges, 2013). On other hand, it's possible to infer that these factors are positively or negatively impacting the women's experience in leadership. Consequently, Moges, (2013) added that women's participation in leadership is lowered by lack of education and cultural influence. This practically applies to majority of women who are facing enormous challenges in leadership position.

Christine, (2014); Dereje,(2013)suggested that women participation in different leadership position is less than expected as a ratio compared to male. Females are totally underrepresented in positions of leadership and management as well as office expertise at all level of management. Furthermore, Asfaw and Okumo (2014) indicate that some few women had been seen in leading few sectors. In light of this, the authors however recommended that an empowerment is needed for women to equally compete with men in leadership in Ethiopia.

Thus, the series of internal and external problems which the female leaders is facing lies in the hand of the leadership to her day to day running of the system in the workplace.

The low number of female leaders in our country is proof of this. As a result, the number of women in leadership roles is extremely low. This means that the number of women in positions of leadership is quite low. So, why are women underrepresented and controlled by experienced men? Furthermore, no research has been done on the problem's specific area. In addition, the researcher has worked in various woredas throughout the study area for several years.

Those researches outcomes may give some insight about the lived experience of female in leadership in Ethiopia. However, the generality of the results is questionable. This is mainly because the research was carried out in Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Bahir Dar and Harar. In addition it evaluates the effectiveness of female versus male leaders in their administrative roles, only leadership styles.

The current study explored the lived experiences of women on the leadership positions in Jimma city. The study was interpretive phenomenological qualitative study that allowed for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of female leaders only. This finding will be bases for further study and policy recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3. 1. Research Site

This study was conducted in Oromiya regional state, in Jimma town. Jimma town is found on the distance of 354km in southwest direction from Addis Ababa the capital town of Ethiopia. Jimma town is special zone, regional level town and also served as a seat for Jimma zone Administration offices. It is bordered on the south by Dedo woreda, on north by Mana woreda, on east by Kersa woreda and by west by seka woreda. Its total population is 246,000 approximately.

3.2. Research Design

This study adopted an interpretive phenomenological design in line with the notions of Heidegger's interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of female leaders.

Citing Husserl, Van Manen (1997) designates that each life world shows certain pervasive structures or styles which need to be studied. Moustakas (1994) describes life world as "the way a person lives, creates, and relates to the world." Phenomenology is also a means to understand first-person lived experience of a phenomenon. Husserl, regarded as the intellectual founder of phenomenology, defined it as "a descriptive philosophy of the essences of pure experiences."

Based on Husserl's phenomenology, Moustakas (1994) expresses essence as "that which is universal, the quality without which a thing would not be what it is." Phenomenology is the universal effort to "uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning of structures, of the

lived experiences" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 10). It is the description of the experiential meanings we live as we experience them. This attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a degree of depth and fertility. It varies from other disciplines in that "it attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our life world" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 11). Husserl believed that phenomenology directs attention to our experiences and descriptions of external elements of life (Van Manen, 2014, p. 91).

This study is particularly interested in the interpretive phenomenological design because it focuses on how an amity between researcher and researched can help to eliminate bracketing, and asserting that impartiality is impossible because researchers become enmeshed with the experience (Ajaawi & Higgs, 2007; Lauterbach, 2018; Shahbazian, 2017). Interpretation is required to bring out the ways in which meanings occur in a context. Dealing with the description of lived experience by participants needs to be seen in the context of that individual's life situation (Ajaawi & Higgs, 2007; Lauterbach, 2018; Shahbazian, 2017).

3.3 Research Approach

Qualitative research approach is energy to understand the nature of a location and the experiences others have in this context (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research approach does not predict what is to happen in the future; rather, it is an analysis that provides a depth of understanding for those who are interested in the proceedings of a particular location and time. A qualitative approach to this study presented rich descriptions of the leaders' lived experiences to precisely describe the phenomenon. This study illuminated, directly and explicitly, the experiences of female leaders as told by their narratives. Through research on the lived experiences of female leadership, this qualitative approach illuminated the contributions, expenses, disappointments, successes, understandings, and final realities of Jimma town female's leaders.

3.4. Participants of the Study

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 10 participants for the study. It is outlined that a qualitative research is to purposefully select participants for a specific purpose that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2009;

Louis Cohen, 2007). So to make the study manageable 10 female leaders were selected purposively as sample from different sectors of Jimma City. Particular participants who were served for two years and above in different sectors in different level of leadership were included in the study. Because assuming that they will provide more information about female leaders' lived experience in their position than others.

3.5 Data collection method and instrument

The data collection method for this study was through interviews conducted in Afan Oromo. Participants were comfortable speaking and understanding Afan Oromo. For this study, the structured interview instruments consisted of 9 open-ended questions asked participants after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

An in-depth interviews technique was employed to explore the lived experiences of the leaders. An in-depth interview was used because it helps the researcher to explore the female leaders lived experiences in detail, and it can also allow the researcher to probe additional questions for participants to elaborate their ideas more.

The notes also assisted the transcription process in which there was a series of listening what the participants were actually said from the tape player. In general about ten cassettes were used to record the interview sessions.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data analysis method for this study was thematic analysis, which is a common approach for interpreting phenomenological data. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data that capture the essence of the phenomenon under study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data analysis in this study was interpretive in nature. Seidman's (2006) approach for interpreting phenomenological interview data and Miles and Huberman's (1994) case analysis

approach were used. Using this approach, the interview data was transcribed before creating narrative profiles for each of the women who were interviewed. In qualitative research, data analysis involves preparing and organizing data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a coding and condensing process (Creswell, 2007).

In phenomenological research, thematic interpretation is a common approach aimed at capturing participants' authentic lived experiences without bias or interference. After the data collection was completed, the data was transcribed. All the transcribed documents were read by the researcher. Initially, an attempt was made to identify relevant material from each of the transcripts in accordance with the researcher's predetermined study interests from each of the interviews separately. These repeated ideas were categorized into themes and subthemes.

The thematic analysis process was conducted using Atlas.ti, version 7. The analysis was broken down into seven phases based on the recommendations of Maguire and Delahunt (2017), which are:

1. Familiarization with the data: This involved reading and re-reading the transcripts, listening to the audio recordings, and reading field notes and memos.
2. Initial coding: This involved line-by-line coding of the data.
3. Revising the initial codes: This involved collapsing, renaming, modifying, and merging the codes.
4. Recoding: This involved organizing the codes into categories.
5. Revising the categories and subcategories: This involved ensuring that the categories and subcategories were relevant to the research questions.
6. Developing themes and subthemes: This involved identifying families and superfamilies of themes.
7. Validating the themes: This involved member checking with the participants.

The thematic analysis process was a rigorous and systematic approach to data analysis that allowed for the identification of themes and subthemes that captured the lived experiences of the

women leaders in this study. The findings of this study was contribute to the understanding of the challenges and opportunities that women leaders face in Jimma town, Ethiopia.

3.7. Trustworthiness reliability and Validity of the Study

Validity checks were performed on the interview Guide by a variety of professionals. The validity of the instrument was checked in this investigation by the thesis advisors, my colleague, and other experts. The experts commented extensively on the clarity of the instructions, the wording of the items, and the simplicity and clarity of wording in the language.

Prior to the main data collection and after the expert review, a pilot study of the interview was carried out in sector which was not included in the sample of the study.

3.8. Ethical Consideration

The researcher was taken the following ethical measures during the course of this study: The researcher was informed the participants about the purpose and process of the study before the interview process begin. The researcher was ensured that the participants' participation in the study is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. The researcher was ensured strict maintenance of confidentiality and security of the interview data

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Background of the participants

The study participants were 10 female leaders in public sectors in Jimma town of Ethiopia. They were selected using purposive sampling technique based on their leadership positions and experiences. Additionally, the researcher wrote a composite description that presented the essence of the phenomenon called essential invariant structure or essence (Creswell, 2007). After the discussion of the participants' descriptions and career backgrounds, the findings were presented.

Basic Questions

1. What is the perception of females towards leadership position in Jimma Town?
2. What are the major obstacles that hinder females towards leadership positions of Jimma Town?
3. How do female leaders cope with the challenges that come with the role of leaders?
4. What are the learning experiences that female leaders have experienced?

The participants' background characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Background characteristics of the study participants

Number of participants	Marital status	Educational level	Experiences/years of services
Participant 1	Married	BSc	8 years

Participant 2	Married	BA	18 years
Participant 3	Married	BA	24 years
Participant 4	Married	BA	15 years
Participant 5	Married	BA	18 years
Participant 6	Married	BA	17 years
Participant 7	Married	Diploma	26 years
Participant 8	Married	BA	23 years
Participant 9	Married	BSc	14 years
Participant 10	Married	BA	15 years

All participants were married. 9(90%) have first degree and above educational level, and only one participant have below first degree educational level. 30% of the participants have >20 years of experiences, 50% of them have 14-18 years of experiences and only one participant have <10 years of experiences.

The data analysis revealed three main themes and fourteen subthemes that describe the lived experiences of female leaders in Jimma town.

Table 2 : The themes, subthemes and descriptions.

Theme	Subtheme	Descriptions
Individual level factors	Personal attributes	The characteristics and qualities that female leaders possess or demonstrate in their leadership roles.

	Career goals	The aspirations and objectives that female leaders have for their professional development and advancement.
	Motivation	The factors and reasons that drive and inspire female leaders to pursue and achieve their career goals.
	Self-confidence	The level of belief and trust that female leaders have in their own abilities and skills.
	Resilience	The ability of female leaders to cope with and overcome the challenges and difficulties they face in their leadership roles.
Societal level factors	Family support	The extent and nature of support that female leaders receive from their family members.
	Peer support	The extent and nature of support that female leaders receive from their peers.
	Mentorship/role models	The extent and nature of mentorship and role modeling that female leaders receive from or provide to other women in their field or sector.
	Social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment	The extent and nature of social norms, gender stereotypes, and sexual harassment that female leaders face or challenge in their society or culture.
Organizational level factors	Affirmative action	The extent and nature of affirmative action that female leaders benefit from or advocate for in their organization or institution.
	Training and development	The extent and nature of training and development that female leaders receive or provide in their organization or institution.

	Recognition and reward	The extent and nature of recognition and reward that female leaders receive or provide in their organization or institution.
	Decision-making autonomy	The extent and nature of decision-making autonomy that female leaders have or exercise in their organization or institution.
	Organizational culture	The extent and nature of organizational culture that female leaders experience or shape in their organization or institution.
	Succession planning	The extent and nature of succession planning those female leaders engage in or benefit from in their organization or institution.

The following sections present the findings of each theme and subtheme with illustrative quotes from the participants.

Theme 1: Individual factors for women’s leadership journeys and perceptions

This theme describes the personal attributes, goals, motivation, confidence, and resilience of female leaders in Jimma town. The participants shared how these factors influenced their leadership journeys and perceptions, as well as their challenges and opportunities.

Women are perceived as lacking ambition for a variety of reasons, according to Eddy (2008). For example, women are pleased with their current employment and hence did not contemplate career changes. Second, no one has encouraged them to follow a higher degree of leadership in their sector.

Subtheme 1.1: Personal attributes:

This Subtheme describes the characteristics and qualities that female leaders possess or demonstrate in their leadership roles, such as competence, creativity, excellence, and resource

management. The participants highlighted their competence and commitment as essential qualities for becoming and being women leaders. They also mentioned their creativity and resource management as skills that helped them to overcome the challenges and perform well in their positions. For example, participant 3, 4 and 6 said that women should have to be creative to be a leader and successful. They expressed creativity as follows;

“So it needs the ability to manage a team and team work. So if you managed all these challenges team work and co-operation is important.” Participant 3.

“At the same time managing your own family is another challenge. But I used these challenges as an opportunity to accomplish both my jobs effectively.” Participant 4.

“Women do not want to be a source of problem, but want to be a solution for the problem. Women always manage/lead with a sense of managing/leading her home. Additionally women are mothers; therefore they play their leadership role in a motherly manner as a family. The respect women have for a community is special, and it is better if sectors led by women got attention.”

Participant 6.

Almost all the participants also valued competence of the women as a driver to a leadership positions for female leaders. For instance, the following participants expressed and perceive competence to be a leader as;

“We women are competent at all positions appointed.” Participant 1

“I was a role model school director. I have been competent and committed to my work. I have also been creative and resourceful in managing the school.” participant 8

“For example if we take women who are on the leadership position at regional and Ministerial level they are selected by their performance and efficiency, not by cotta. I have mentioned many of them, but the major one is that there is no possibility to be a leader/manager by cotta. For example I am not assigned by cotta; I am assigned by efficiency and effectiveness.” Participant 6.

Participant 6 also said:

“Therefore women should be assigned by their capacity and effectiveness and we have to develop ourselves. Moreover, I personally believe that this country can be developed if women leadership is developed. Not only by their cotta: but also by their effectiveness and efficiency.”

Subtheme 1.2: Career goals:

This Subtheme describes the aspirations and objectives that female leaders have for their professional development and advancement. The participants shared their career goals and how they pursued them. They also mentioned the factors that facilitated or hindered their career growth, such as training, promotion and recognition. For example, participants 2, 5, 3 and 8 said:

“As of my experiences, for example if you upgrade your educational level, your salary will be increased you will be promoted to the higher level. Therefore I am studying at University” Participant 2.

“Women should start practicing leadership earlier; for example, in school and family. The women should also learn and develop themselves. The women should also develop their political commitments.”

Participant 3

“I have been a role model on my position for the last two years and recognized. Women should organize themselves in a team to develop their leadership capacity and we should upgrade our education to be effective leader.” Participant 5.

“I was employed with lower grade school teacher certificate; I completed up to first degree at private and Jimma University. Currently I am doing my MBA thesis for graduation from Rift Valley University and other Master program from Jimma University. My career goal is to be a regional bureau head. I have been working hard to achieve this goal. I have attended various trainings and workshops to enhance my skills and knowledge. I have also been recognized and rewarded for my performance. However, I have also faced some challenges such as gender bias and lack of opportunities.” Participant 8

Subtheme 1.3: Motivation:

This Subtheme describes the factors and reasons that drive and inspire female leaders to pursue and achieve their career goals. The participants highlighted their motivation and interest as key drivers for their leadership journeys. The participants described motivation as having interest, passion, commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication. For instance majority of the participants said a

woman should have interest, passion, commitment. Moreover they should be dedicated and enthusiastic to be an effective leader. They described as follows;

” I am interested, a position brings about you many responsibilities and accountabilities. Therefore I feel responsible and accountable.” Participant 1.

Participant 8 described that the women should have a passion as;

“When I compare a leadership science and my activities in leadership roles, leadership is a way of life. I was the first child for my parents, so I was challenged and learned by managing and leading my youngsters. So this context develops my passion to be a leader.”

Participant 9 also responded as follows, when asked the questions- *“how was the journey to the leadership position?*

“Basically a commitment I had when serving the community at facility level helped me through the promotions I passed.”

Participant 6 also answered the same question as:

“Again to be promoted to the woreda level I started to compete with other competent men and women of different sectors in the worwda. I mean, I performed best at the school director position and selected as best performer to be appointed as member of woreda cabinet member.”

The same participant also described that women should be enthusiastic to be a leader and effective. The participant more emphasized this by saying;

“For example I learned my university education being with my two children directly away from my home at Batu town. This is a sacrifice to develop my self and effective in my position.”

Additionally participant 4 said:

“I am motivated and interested in being a leader because I love my profession and I want to make a difference in my sector. I am also inspired by other women leaders who have achieved great things in their fields.”

Subtheme 1.4: Self-confidence:

This Subtheme describes the level of belief and trust that female leaders have in their own abilities and skills. The participants emphasized that self-confidence is a crucial trait for leadership. They also mentioned how they developed or improved their self-confidence, such as through experience, feedback and support. In addition to low self-esteem and lack of confidence, women may lack a sense of leadership identity, which is the feeling of belonging to a group of leaders or a specific level of leadership and feeling relevant within that circle (Brown & Irby, cited in Shakeshaft et al. 2007). In addition to this they also mentioned how their self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-reliance affect their journey to the leadership position and effectiveness.

For example, participant 7, 8 and 9 said:

“During my assignment to field work in lower level during the national election passed, my duty was to facilitate seven public election sites. And I completed my assignment independently before men counterparts assigned to other sites.” Participant 3

“Naturally I do not differentiate jobs like this is women’s job that is men’s job, this helps me to be successful.” Participant 7

“I have built my self-confidence through my experience and performance. I have also received positive feedback and support from my supervisors and colleagues. I have learned to be confident and influential in leading and managing predominantly male staff and stakeholders. Second women should not fear any challenge. We women lead in a committed way.” Participant 8.

Subtheme 1.5: Resilience:

This Subtheme describes the ability of female leaders to cope with and overcome the challenges and difficulties they face in their leadership roles. The participants shared the challenges they

faced or are facing, such as workload, role conflict and gender discrimination. They also mentioned how they coped or overcame these challenges, such as through support, adaptation, perseverance, coping, resilience and work balancing. All participants valued and mentioned resilience on different ways. For example, Participant 2 said;

“I have been serving with highest commitment. I used to balance family management issues and office works. Moreover learning is a must whatever the challenge is. They should not disappoint. Under any pressure women should learn to come out.”

Participant 3 said:

“I have faced many challenges such as workload, role conflict, gender discrimination, etc. I have coped with these challenges by seeking support from my family, friends, and colleagues. I have also adapted to the changing situations and persevered in my work.”

Participant 4 also said;

“It was my experiences that throughout my leadership time I have been challenged with double responsibilities and often managed. In contrast to these many women assigned on the leader position asks resignation due to family problem. I was also forced to resign from my first appointment due to the same case.”

Participant 6 also mentioned perseverance as;

” In contrast to these many women assigned on the leader position asks resignation due to family problem. From these I learnt a lesson, that women have difficult load of challenges. Again to pass through these challenges they should balance all and be creative.”

Theme 2: Societal factors that hinder women’s leadership and how women leaders cope with them

This theme describes the family support, peer support, mentorship/role models, social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment that female leaders experience or encounter in their social environment. These factors can be enablers or obstacles that affect women’s leadership journeys and perceptions. According to Kanjere et al. (2011), there is a general impression that

women are not good leaders which is strengthened meaning that if a leader is a woman, tragedy is bound to happen. This proverb encourages female discrimination in the community and work environment.

Subtheme 2.1: Family support:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of support that female leaders receive from their family members such as spouse/partner/children/parents/siblings/extended family/domestic help/etc. The participants emphasized their partner support as a factor that affects their leadership journeys and effectiveness. Their partners' and families' encouragement and domestic help motivate them to be effective and competent in their positions. Both work and home responsibilities can be demanding, this was also confirmed by some women in this study who indicated that sometimes role conflict could be assumed to be the factor discouraging most women educators from participating in leadership. It is revealed from data that female with fewer responsibilities cope better with their management work. According to Kagoda (2012:10), "Women's lives are too complex where they are often juggling to be good mothers and competing for leadership with men who are likely to be free from parenting roles".

The participants also shared how they balanced their roles and responsibilities as leaders and family members. For example,

Participant 3 shared her view and experiences of family support as;

"I have challenged many times. For example house workers are not stable they usually leave frequently. Due to lack of my worker I remember I was an able to come to my office for a week last year since I have a 4 months child."

Participant 6 said:

"My partner supports me in caring for the children and family. He also encourages me to be effective in my leadership position. I balance my roles by prioritizing my tasks and delegating some of them to others."

Participant 8 expressed the role of her family as;

“In addition to this for my successfulness and effectiveness the roles of my family was vital. There is no any rumor and backbiting between my husband and me. Still today the role of my husband is huge for my success.”

Participant 10 shared experiences of family support as;

“The first option I tried was seeking support from my extended family and they were co-operative”

Subtheme 2.2: Peer support:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of support that female leaders receive from their peers such as colleagues/friends/professional network and support group. The participants mentioned their peer support as a factor that affects their leadership journeys and effectiveness. Their peers’ emotional, practical, and financial support helps them to cope with the challenges and perform well in their positions. According to Grogan & Shakeshaft, (2011) emphasized that the leadership conducts that relate with female may include, but are not limited to, communication, relationships, shared decision making and building capacity in others.

The participants also shared how they networked and collaborated with their peers for mutual learning and growth. For example,

Participant 6 said:

“On the other hand when you are assigned at the leadership position you are away from your social life, i.e you will focus on your organizational mission and vision to be competent with men. So our forum helps us to be competent and successful I mean we support and couth each other. In general our forum facilitates the discussion with men on leadership positions and in the special way with women to discuss and solve our social and leadership issues.”

Participant 9 said:

“My colleagues and friends support me emotionally, practically, and financially. They also share their experiences and knowledge with me. I network and collaborate with them for professional development and problem-solving.”

Subtheme 2.3: Mentorship/role models:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of mentorship and role modelled that female leaders receive from or provide to other women in their field or sector. The participants mentioned their mentorship and role models as factors that affect their leadership journeys and effectiveness. Their mentors and role models provided them with guidance, advice, support, feedback, inspiration, motivation, influence, empowerment, and advocacy, “someone with whom you have a professional, interpersonal relationship and who provides you with constructive career and psychosocial aid” (Gupton& Slick, 1996). In most civilizations, women lack experience with decision-making and leadership interests or ambitions in the public arena since girls, unlike boys, are brainwashed to be docile and given no or little opportunity to acquire leadership skills outside or within the family environment

The participants also shared how they mentored or role modelled for other women who aspire to be leaders. For example, participant 6 said:

“My mentor was a woman who was a school director. She guided me and advised me on how to be a leader. She also supported me and gave me feedback on my performance. She inspired me and motivated me to pursue my career goals. She also influenced me and empowered me to be confident and assertive. She also advocated for me and helped me to get promoted.”

Participant 8 also said:

“I also mentor and role model for other women who want to be leaders. I share my experiences and knowledge with them. I also encourage them and help them to overcome their challenges. I also recognize their achievements and celebrate their successes.”

Subtheme 2.4: Social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of social norms, gender stereotypes, and sexual harassment that female leaders face or challenge in their society or culture. The participants shared the challenges they faced or are facing, such as domestic responsibilities, women’s roles in the community, femininity, gender discrimination, etc. They also mentioned how they

challenged or resisted these social norms and stereotypes, such as through awareness raising, advocacy, empowerment, etc. For example,

Participant 1 said:

“The major challenge is directing a person. The men have an attitude that she is a woman she can’t direct and manage.”

Participant 2 said:

“In this case you may pass your night at field. On the same time as a woman you may have a child at home. In all these pressures you should complete your work and submit feedback. All these are challenges we may face for being a woman.”

Participant 4 also said;

“I have served for many years with many challenges let me rest give time to my family, and upgrade my career. After that I may rejoin other better position.”

Participant 6 said:

“One of the challenges that hinder women from being leaders is the superiority attitude of men towards women. For example, men say that women can’t lead this or that sector, or if we assign women as heads of some vital sectors, the performance of that sector was decrease or fail.”

“I challenge these social norms and stereotypes by raising awareness among the community about the potential and capability of women leaders. I also advocate for the rights and opportunities of women in leadership positions. I also empower other women to be confident and competent in their roles.”

Theme 3: Organizational factors that hinder women’s leadership and effectiveness

This theme describes the affirmative action, recognition and reward, decision-making autonomy, organizational culture that female leaders experience or encounter in their organization or institution. These factors can be enablers or obstacles that affect women’s leadership journeys and perceptions.

Subtheme 3.1: Affirmative action

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of affirmative action that female leaders benefit from or advocate for in their organization or institution. The participants shared their views and experiences on affirmative action, such as quota, reservation, priority, preference and opportunity. Addressing, promoting gender equality, including affirmative action, remains a complex and multi-dimensional issue. (Morley, 2014). The participants had mixed opinions on affirmative action; some appreciated it as a means of empowering women and increasing their representation in leadership positions. One participant revealed that affirmative actions, special considerations and special reservations should be available for women to make them competent and inspire more women to become leaders. Participant 6 described as:

“In my opinion, there should be special attention and support for women in leadership positions, since women are not equal to men. The government should provide different supports and facilitate education opportunities to produce more successful women for leadership positions. Therefore, to make them stronger and more successful, the government should give them special support.”

However others criticized it as a source of stigma and discrimination against women leaders. For example, participant 10 said:

“I don’t like affirmative action because it creates a negative perception of women leaders. Some people think that women are given leadership positions because of their gender, not because of their merit. They also think that women are not capable of leading and managing effectively. They also discriminate and undermine women leaders.”

Subtheme 3.2: Recognition and reward:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of recognition and reward that female leaders receive or provide in their organization or institution. The participants shared their views and experiences on recognition and reward, such as recognition (reward, incentive, bonus, promotion), performance (achievement and contribution), criteria (standard, measure, and indicator), feedback (appraisal and evaluation), and appreciation (gratitude and praise). The participants appreciated recognition and reward as a means of motivating and encouraging them

and other women leaders to be effective and competent in their positions. They also mentioned the factors that facilitated or hindered their recognition and reward, such as performance, gender bias, etc. For example, participant 6 said;

“Based on our best performances we got additional reward of 3000ETB from USAID that we used to build four residential houses for the teachers. Finally I did my best to improve the quality of education provided to my students. This helps me to be promoted to the woreda level leadership position.”

Participant 7 said:

“Recognition and reward are very important for me and other women leaders. They motivate and encourage us to work hard and achieve our goals. They also make us feel valued and respected for our work. They also inspire other women to aspire to be leaders.”

Participant 8 said:

“All sectors I led have been ranked 1-3 throughout my leadership positions. I have been recognized and rewarded for my performance. I have attended various trainings and workshops to enhance my skills and knowledge. Moreover Due to this I was awarded a training visit to China.

I have also been promoted to higher positions. However, I have also faced some challenges such as gender bias and lack of opportunities.”

Subtheme 3.3: Decision-making autonomy:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of decision-making autonomy that female leaders have or exercise in their organization or institution. The participants shared their views and experiences on decision-making autonomy, such as decision-making autonomy (or participation or involvement or influence or power or control), scope (or range or level or degree or etc.), opportunity (or challenge or barrier or facilitator or etc.), and responsibility (or accountability or outcome or consequence). The participants emphasized that decision-making autonomy is a

crucial aspect of leadership. They also mentioned the factors that facilitated or hindered their decision-making autonomy, such as directives, pressure and influence from others. For example,

Participant 4 said;

“I have mentioned many of them, but the major one is that there is no possibility to be a leader/manager by chance it is about the ability of decision making and accepting its consequences.”

Participant 6 said;

“Basically when you are on the leadership position your focus is not on your personal life it is on the accountability and responsibility the community owed you and the decision you make in favour of the community.”

Participant 8 said:

“Decision-making autonomy is very important for me as a leader. It gives me the opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation of the office activities. It also gives me the power and control to manage the office resources and staff effectively. It also makes me responsible and accountable for the outcomes and consequences of my decisions.”

“One of the challenges I face in decision-making is the pressure from some parties who do not want to decide based on directives. Rather these parties might prefer to decide based on their personal needs inequitably. So during such cases I have to decide in favour of the needy not on my personal needs.”

Subtheme 3.4: Organizational culture:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of organizational culture that female leaders experience or shape in their organization or institution. The participants shared their views and experiences on organizational culture, such as (climate, values, norms, practices, beliefs), support, (collaboration, cooperation, teamwork), communication (information sharing and learning), innovation (change, adaptation and improvement), and diversity (inclusion, respect, tolerance).

The participants mentioned that organizational culture affects their leadership journeys and perceptions, as well as their effectiveness and development. They also mentioned the factors that facilitated or hindered their organizational culture, such as leadership style, stakeholder involvement and resource availability. For example,

Participant 1 expressed co-operation and team work as;

“Team work is good for effectiveness, but its bad part is some workers might not be co-operative. Some may not complete assignment on time. So if you managed all these challenges team work and co-operation is important. It helps for experience sharing and communication that has important role for your organization’s successfulness.”

Participant 5 said:

“Organizational culture is very important for me and other women leaders. It affects how we work and interact with others. It also affects how we learn and improve ourselves. It also affects how we are perceived and respected by others.”

“I have experienced different organizational cultures in different sectors. Some were supportive and collaborative, while others were competitive and hostile. Some were communicative and informative, while others were secretive and isolated. Some were innovative and adaptive, while others were rigid and resistant. Some were diverse and inclusive, while others were homogeneous and exclusive.”

“Working in a team has a great role for effectiveness of our jobs. Therefore stakeholder engagement is important. Inter sectoral collaboration should be strengthened.”

Participant 6 said;

“In general in the future in any sector or office that I may be assigned the productivity, effectiveness and successfulness should be maintained and increased.”

The same participant further emphasized the importance of organizational culture and specifically team work for effectiveness of roles, as follows;

“I want to have smooth communication with different workers who have different characteristics to be successful. I will work with all my staff in smooth and comfortable manner. I will try to identify and solve their social problems. Having a good communication with other leader and staff is mandatory.”

Subtheme 3.5: Succession planning:

This Subtheme describes the extent and nature of succession planning that female leaders engage in or benefit from in their organization or institution. The participants shared their views and experiences on succession planning, such as succession planning (career path/career ladder/career development) transition, capability turnover/replacement. The participants mentioned that succession planning affects their career growth and development, as well as their effectiveness and continuity in their positions. They also mentioned the factors that facilitated or hindered their succession planning, such as policy, opportunity and gender bias. For example, participant 2 said:

“Succession planning is very important for me and other women leaders. It affects our career growth and development. It also affects our effectiveness and continuity in our positions.”

“I have benefited from succession planning in my career. I have been identified and selected for higher positions based on my potential and talent. I have also been prepared and transitioned for these positions through mentoring and coaching. I have also been supported and retained in these positions through sponsoring and recognition.”

“However, I have also faced some challenges in succession planning such as lack of policy, opportunity, and gender bias. Some women are not identified or selected for higher positions because of their gender. Some women are not prepared or transitioned for these positions because of lack of mentoring or coaching. Some

women are not supported or retained in these positions because of lack of sponsoring or recognition.”

Participant 10 also said;

“Women should learn , develop, competent and come to the leadership positions whatever the challenges are available.”

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 SUMMARY

The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of female leaders in public sectors in Jimma town of Ethiopia. The study used a phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews to collect and analyze data from 10 female leaders. The study revealed three main themes and fourteen subthemes that describe the factors that affect women’s leadership journeys and perceptions, as well as their challenges and opportunities. The themes and subthemes are: individual level factors (personal attributes, career goals, motivation, self-confidence, resilience), societal level factors (family support, peer support, mentorship/role models, social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment), and organizational level factors (affirmative action, recognition and reward, decision-making autonomy, organizational culture, succession planning).

The findings of the current study revealed that individual factors (personal attributes, career goals, motivation, self-confidence, resilience), societal level factors (family support, peer support, mentorship/role models, social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment), and organizational level factors (affirmative action, recognition and reward, decision-making autonomy, organizational culture, succession planning) affect the women’s leadership journeys, perceptions and effectiveness. This finding is consistent with the existing literature on women’s leadership in different sectors. For example, Coleman (2012) identified four dimensions of

women's leadership in education: personal qualities (such as competence, confidence, resilience), values and beliefs (such as motivation, interest, passion), structural factors (such as affirmative action, recognition, reward), and cultural factors (such as family support, peer support, social norms).

Similarly, the finding was consistent with proposed a model of women's leadership Oplatka (2017) that consists of four components: individual characteristics (such as personal attributes, career goals), contextual influences (such as family support, peer support), organizational conditions (such as decision-making autonomy, organizational culture), and career outcomes (such as recognition, reward).

The findings of the study also support the social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), which suggests that gender roles and behaviors are influenced by personal factors (such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations), environmental factors (such as social norms, role models), and behavioral factors (such as actions, outcomes).

The study revealed that the journeys/inspiration to the leadership position is affected by personal level factors such as personal attributes, motivation, self-confidence and resilience of the women. Further it is revealed that their personal attributes like competence, commitment, performance and creativity determine their perceptions and journey to the leadership positions. This finding is consistent with Eagly&Carli (2007) that said women emerge as leaders less frequently than men, owing to the fact that women must fulfill a higher bar than men in order to be seen as highly competent. Even when women are well qualified, the majority of males in positions of leadership have instilled in them a belief system that male behavior is the norm.

Motivations such as having interest, passions, dedications and enthusiasms are also revealed as the personal level factors that influence their inspirations to the leadership position and perceptions in the study. Having interest to be a leader, developing a passion early in the family/school, dedicated to be developed and enthusiasm to cope with many responsibilities

were seen among factors that influence the women to be a leader and effective. This finding is similar with the writing of Irechuckwu (2010:183), that stated women are better at managing households than men," "and the more of them in leadership positions, the more stable and dependable the world was become." According to female leaders, working mothers "struggle to find a balance in the cultural structure of their life responsibilities, and construct meandering career routes during midlife."

This study showed that level of belief and trust that female leaders have in their abilities and skills /self-confidence and resilience to cope with different challenges are mentioned as a crucial traits for leadership effectiveness. Whereas lack of self-confidence is a challenge to be competent and effective in their positions. This finding is consistent with the study finding of Parsaloi(2012). Parsaloi(2012) stated that some women are drawn to the power that comes with being a student, while others are pulled to the authority that comes with teaching. They did not feel powerful in their leadership position.” Furthermore, according to Parsaloi(2012), Kenyan female leaders in her study admitted to lacking confidence in their work, especially in the early stages of their leadership. When coping with tough issues, women said they lacked confidence since they didn't know how to handle them.

Moreover the finding of the study revealed that societal level factors (family support, peer support, mentorship/role models, social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment) that female leaders experience or encounter in their social environment can be enablers or obstacles that affect women’s leadership journeys and perceptions. These was further described as if the women have family support and peer support they will be successful in their positions and perceive they will be competent. In contrast to this the absence of family support and peer support hinders them to be a leader and effective/ competent in their roles. The study revealed that the mentorship or having a role model also helps them to be inspired and successful. This finding is consistent with the findings of study done by (Muller, 2006) different Role models are strong sources of encouragement for females trying to pursue leaders despite the many hurdles they face, especially in underdeveloped countries.

This study showed Social norms such as domestic roles assigned to women and gender stereotypes were among challenges that obstacle them to be a leader and successful. This finding is similar with the findings of the study, Moorosi (2007: 508) written on, "the reality of female experiences suggest that female resist discrimination on two levels based on organizational and social levels." Women lack support from their families on a social level, and they must contend with the reality that leadership is linked with masculinity "Even the policy provides equal treatment of everyone,". Traditional and patriarchal values and practices, on the other hand, subjugate them and continue to devalue change activities aimed at achieving gender equity. In most societies, girls are assigned to domestic duties. Where they are confined and taught to accept the lack of experience to play a leadership role in a public context.

Organizational factors such as affirmative action, recognition and reward, decision-making autonomy, organizational culture and succession planning that female leaders experience or encounter in their organization or institution are described to be enablers or obstacles by the current study. Some of the participants favored affirmative actions for women leaders to make the competent, successful, and effective and to produce more female leaders. The availability of recognition and reward system in their organization inspires them and they also perceive that it is important for promotion and development. This finding is consistent with the finding of the study by; (Young & McLeod, 2001) which stated that it is the reality that for a woman to be considered equal, she must be better prepared than the man with whom she is competing for a job.

The study also revealed some unique insights and implications for women's leadership in public sectors in the Ethiopian context. For example, the study showed that women leaders in Jimma town face multiple challenges such as domestic responsibilities, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, lack of opportunities, and their negative attitude towards themselves. This finding is consistent with the result of the study by (Cvancaraetal.2007) which stated women's negative perception toward themselves as a factor for low participation of the women in leadership positions.

The study also showed that women leaders in Jimma town cope with these challenges by seeking support from their family and peers, challenging and resisting the social norms and stereotypes, developing their competence and confidence, and being resilient and adaptive. These coping strategies are indicative of the agency and empowerment of women leaders in Jimma town.

The study also showed that women leaders in Jimma town benefit from or advocate for affirmative action, recognition and reward, decision-making autonomy, organizational culture, and succession planning in their organization or institution. These organizational factors are indicative of the opportunities and enablers for women's leadership in Jimma town.

The study contributes to the existing knowledge and literature on women's leadership providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of female leaders in Jimma town of Ethiopia. The study also offers practical implications and recommendations for policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and women leaders themselves.

5.2 Conclusion

The study explored the lived experiences of female leaders in public sectors in Jimma town of Ethiopia. The study used a phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews questionnaire to collect and analyze data from 10 female leaders.

The study revealed three main themes and fourteen subthemes that describe the factors that affect women's leadership journeys and perceptions, as well as their challenges and opportunities. The themes and subthemes are: individual level factors (personal attributes, career goals, motivation, self-confidence, resilience), societal level factors (family support, peer support, mentorship/role models, social norms/gender stereotypes/sexual harassment), and organizational level factors (affirmative action, recognition and reward, decision-making autonomy, organizational culture, succession planning). The study also discussed the findings in relation to the existing literature and theory on women's leadership. The study also provided practical implications and recommendations for policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and women leaders themselves.

The study concluded that women's perception of leadership is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by various factors at the individual, societal, and organizational levels. The study also concluded that women's leadership is a challenging and rewarding experience that requires competence, confidence, resilience, support, empowerment, and recognition. The study also concluded that women's leadership in a public sector is a valuable and significant contribution to the public sector and the society at large.

5.3 Recommendations

For Policy makers: - they should formulate and implement policies and programs that promote and support women on a leadership positions, such as affirmative action, training and development, recognition and reward. They should also create and maintain conducive organizational culture that values and respects women leaders, such as by fostering collaboration, communication, innovation, diversity, inclusion, etc.

For researchers: - they should conduct further studies on women's leadership in different contexts and settings, such as rural areas and different levels of institutions.

For women leaders themselves: - they should develop and enhance their personal attributes, career goals, motivation, self-confidence, and resilience, as well as seek and provide support, mentorship, and role modeling to other women in their field or sector.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

JIMMA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

Participants interview guide

Dear-participants:

My name is **Chali Mustefa**

I am a post graduate student at Jimma University college of Business and Economics Department of Management. Currently, I am conducting a research under the supervision Mr. Kedir I. and Mr. Hagos B. on exploring the lived experience of female leaders in Jimma town.

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of female leaders who will give descriptions of their work lives, the obstacles they faced, in order to determine how female leaders are successful in obtaining their positions. This will be accomplished through in-depth interviews. The reasons women continue to be underrepresented in the role of leadership. As you are a female leader in sector in Jimma town, I will interview you at your convenience and it should take approximately 30-40 minutes. The interview will be recorded using an audiotape with your permission and it is also possible that articles and presentations may be the outcome of the study. All the information about you and your responses will be kept confidential and only I and my supervisors can access. You will be able to withdraw from the research at any time during the study. And then sign the consent form on the next page. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at chalimustefa@gmail.com contact no. +251967225512 or contact my supervisors using contact details below:

Mr.Kedir A.: kedirabrahim@yahoo.com

Mr.Hagos B. : hagos1602@gmail.com

Thank you very much for your help me

ChaliMustefa

Basic Questions

1. What is the perception of females towards leadership position in Jimma town?
2. What are the major obstacles that hinder females towards leadership positions of Jimma town?
3. How do female leaders cope with the demands that come with the role of leaders?
4. What are the lessons that you have experienced?

Interview items

1. Consequently this study is about lived experiences, I would like to start with some general questions.
 - a. Would you tell me about your past experience related to leadership, please?
 - b. How did you come to leadership position?
2. The way the female leaders perceive and describe their leadership experiences
 - a. What do you say about your work now? How do you relate to your life?
 - b. What sense does it make to you?
3. What is the major challenge you have ever faced in order to be successful in your job?
 - a. What are the major challenges that female leaders face in managing the sector?
 - b. Tell me, how do you balance your family and professional obligations?
 - c. Is cooperation with other leaders important for your success?
4. How the factors in their live interacted to bring them to their present situation?
 - a. Where do you see yourself going in the future?
5. What type of support do you have for your professional career?
 - a. What strategy and recommendations would you offer female aspiring to be leader?
 - b. What do you have reconstructed in this interview?
 - c. Is there something that you can tell me as a lesson from your experience

Thank you very much for spending your time!

APPENDIX B
JIMMA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

Participants interview guide

Dear-participants:

My name is **Chali Mustefa**

I am a post graduate student at Jimma University college of Business and Economics Department of Management. Currently, I am conducting a research under the supervision Mr. Kedir I. and Mr. Hagos B. on exploring the lived experience of female leaders in Jimma town.

Demographics survey for female leaders

1. What is your age ? _____ Years
2. What is your marital status?
 - o married
 - o Widowed
 - o Divorced
 - o Single
3. Do you have children? If yes how many? -----
4. What is your Educational level (for example: DIPLOMA, BA, BSc, MA
6. Service as expert -----years.
7. Service in leadership position-----years.

Yours sincerely

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the Participant Information page for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study before analysis has commenced on the data or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Participant Information Sheet. I agree to participate in the research conducted by ChaliMustefa I also agree for the information to be used for the writing of the thesis, the publication of the articles and meeting presentations.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Additional Consent as Required

I agree / do not agree to my responses to be tape recorded.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's name and contact information:

ChaliMustefa

Email: chalimustefa@gmail.com

APPENDIX .C

**JIMMA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT**

Member checking

Research title: Exploring the lived experience of female leaders in Jimma town

Subject: sending the interview data for member checking

Dear participant:

I would like to thank you for your willingness to dedicate your time to partake in my Study through providing thoughtful and relevant information regarding Exploring the lived experience of female leaders in Jimma town have transcribed the interview that we had in the last time. Attached is the transcription of the interview to you seeking for your validation directing at ensuring the accuracy of the information you have delivered. I have tried my level best to put everything of the interview as it seems in the tape to keep the originality of the interview. I have made only a slight edition of the language in the interview data without affecting the contents of your idea. Please, read the transcription and do not vacillate to comment. Further more. I would like to thank you for your golden contribution to the study

Yours sincerely

Chali mustefa