

## **Trends of Women's Participation in Political Leadership of Ethiopia**

### **Introduction:**

Presently, women of the world acquired promising gains and opportunities in the world politics compare to that of the past context which had been dominated by the patriarchal men. Even though, the positions of Legislative and Executive are dominated by men, the current trend of this is promising and inspiring. Women in different part of the world starts to be active participant and get benefit from the political system of their respective countries (Jalalzai and Krook, 2010, p.19).

Ethiopian women experience this scenario. Like that of other country's women, Ethiopian women had been discriminated and exploited due to people's culture which allows men to be dominant and privileged in social, economic and political domains. Besides, Ethiopia is the country which has never been colonized and considered as icon of freedom for Africans and other black people of the world but the political atmosphere has been monopolized by men and women's participation has slow progress despite improvements recently.

Ethiopia, as the member of the former league of nation and the current UN, it has been actively involved in different national and international conferences and forums including the Fourth World Conference on Women, where the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) was realized among 189 governments. The Beijing platform for action specifically focused on mainstreaming gender issues and perspectives in policy framework. The mainstreaming practice extends from policy design up to policy monitoring and evaluation process. In addition, Ethiopia is the signatory of Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as its commitment to gender equality and equity, in recent times.

Further, Ethiopia has ratified major international conventions and agreements such as Convention of Civil and Political Rights, Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention of The Rights of Children". The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian constitution has also made the provisions of this convention an integral part of the law of the land. This constitution also assures that the principles of the constitution shall be implemented in line with the above conventions and declarations. In addition, Ethiopia is one of the world countries which is the signatory of Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. The government provide national action plan for realizing gender equality in reality (WAO, 2004).

Despite these, Ethiopian women have been discriminated and marginalized from political leadership process of the country. Political leadership in Ethiopia has historically been dominated by the men member of the community in its structure, culture and style including lawmaking and decision-making bodies of the government .On the contrary , in Ethiopian history , “ some women have played very crucial role in the overall state building, development and democratization manoeuvres; however, these roles remain invisible and unrecognized”(Habtamu et al, 2004: 21).

### **1.1.Women and Ethiopian political leadership in Pre 1991**

#### **1.1.1 Women political leadership in pre 1991 in historical perspective**

Women account more than half percent of the population of Ethiopia but long period of time, women were underrepresented in political decision making due to the prevalence of patriarchal political culture and political socialization. Accordingly, in Ethiopian political history, there were few figurative women who had positive role in Ethiopian politics even though their role and contributions were not properly considered and only few are visible in the existing literatures. In the history of Ethiopian politics, scholars explain that:

In Ethiopian politics, there were times when few women become prominent figures in the society. Those women who got the chance to participate in the political process demonstrated their ability to handle government affairs in the parliament equally to men (Fantaye, 2005, p.12).

There were Powerful queens and women who had significant role in Ethiopian politics by being wives of kings. The legendary Queen Sheba of the Axumite kingdom; “some believes that she was one of the greatest world leaders and the founder of a great dynasty of Ethiopian royalty” (p.14). She had been very prominent political leader in the political history of ancient Ethiopia. According to the holy book of Ethiopian Christians, the Kebra Nagast (The Glory of Kings), which had been written and compiled around the fourth century and the old testament portrays that Queen Seba was very decisive political leaders of Ethiopia and Ethiopians call her queen Makeda. She was Makeda, queen of

Ethiopia and Saba, mother of Solomon's son, Menelik, the founder of an Ethiopian empire that would last almost to the end of the twentieth century (p.18). She seems to have been an intelligent woman ruler who possibly lived in the tenth century B.C. (because this is when Solomon is said to have lived)".

As to Ethiopians, queen Makeda was the name of queen Sheba who was the founder of Ethiopian dynasty and the mother of a nation (Lucks,2009). In addition to these, the book of the Ethiopian orthodox church, the kebre negest (glory of the king), the queen Saba and her son king minelik I placed their solidity in Ethiopia. It magnifies their contribution in Ethiopian political leadership process (Monges,2002, p.237).

Corresponding to this, the founder of the Zagwe dynasty, Queen Yodit (Gudit) was the most influential political and military leader of Ethiopia who ruled between 940-980 AD. She had overthrown an aksumite king and been an impressive political leader despite her action against Christians; and Empress Eleni, who had prominent political influence and sound political judgment during 15<sup>th</sup> century. She had wisdom to make political reconciliation and made peace between Christians and Muslims in the country. These two women regarded as among the few crucial women personalities in the history of Ethiopian politics. During the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>C, King Zerayakobe had appointed nine princess as provincial rulers (Sergew,1972, P.113 cited in Adugna, ND, P.8).

As to Seltene (1994) and Fantaye (2005) cited in Meseret (2010, p.17) explained Eleni (Hellen) and Seblewongel were involved in the 16<sup>th</sup> century management of the political affair of government of Ethiopia. During this movement, they were skilled diplomats, strategists, and protagonists of their faith in the history of Ethiopia. Besides, Bati Dəl Wämbära, wife of Ahmäd Grañ, was with him in battle, and, together with Säblä Wängel, obtained the exchange of their captured sons. She had played her own role in Ethiopian politics. Pankhurst further explained that "after Əleni's death Emperor Ləbnä Dəngəl's wife, Säblä Wängel, began to assume a significant role in Ethiopian history" (Pankhurst,2009, P.51).

Likewise, Empress Mintwab and Weletegiorgis who had a significant role in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries politics of Ethiopia. In the era of princes ('Zemine Mesafinte'), Empress Mennen, the mother of Ras Ali II, had played decisive role in the political process of the country. They had influential political position behind the monarchy. They had played very decisive role in the

political leadership process of Ethiopia. Similarly, “the 18th Century great Empress Mentewab who was regent at the Gondar palace; Empress Taytu Betul, a strong and the tactician wife of Emperor Menelik II, were also among those women who hold a remarkable place in the socio-political history of Ethiopia” (Burgess, 2013 cited in Enanu ,2013:26).

Likewise , Empress Taytu was dynamic political figure while in the regime of emperor Menilik II (1889-1913); she had determinantal role in the political governance of the country even after the death of the king(Meseret,2010,p.17.). Emperess Taitu was the great leader and chief advisor to Menilik II (her husband) in the areas of foreign relations and other critical political leadership positions. She had very high intensity securing Ethiopian independence with strong love to the country and its people. In addition, writers explained that she played coordinating and leading role while Ethiopia defeated Italy in the battle of *Adwa* in 1896 which made Ethiopia to become the first African and black nation who defeated colonizers and considered the country as icon of freedom for all Africans and other black peoples of the world. It made the country which has never been colonized (Meaza, 2009, p.26).

Additionally , Empress Taytu had played very impressive role at war fronts through leading Ethiopian foot and horse troops against Italy and resulted in Ethiopian victory over Italy in 1896. She had been regarded and mentioned as the most influential women leader of the world during that period. She had played another remarkable role in that battle by understanding and exposing the conspiracy of Italian government in article 17 of *Wuchale Treaty* signed on 2 May, 1889, which depicted that Ethiopia must made diplomatic relation with other European states through Italy. This treaty tried to made Ethiopia as the colony of Italy but the great Ethiopian Empress Taytu exposed and disclosed it with the help of *Grazmach* Yosseph and made war against Italy and finaly defeated Italy at the battel of *Adwa* in 1896(Roha ,2015, p.155).

In addition to these, Empress Taytu played great role in the leadership process of the country while emperor Menelik II left the capital city, Addis Abeba which was founded by her and *Shoa* for negotiating the local rulers and fighters. She played leading role in the country in collaboration with the nobilities and advisors of the king. A scholar Pankhurst (2009, p.51) exrees that: *Itege* T.aytu Bət.ul, distinguished wife of Emperor Mənilək II, was admired for the strong part she played in the diplomatic negotiations between her husband and Italian envoys, preceding

the Battle of 'Adwa in 1896. Equally she is admired for bringing her own troops to the battlefield and looking after the wounded.

Following Empress Taytu, from 1917-1929 for the first time in the history of Ethiopia, the daughter of Menilik, Zewditu officially become Empress with regent Haile Selasse through the support of the nobility. She was regarded as the first head of an African state in this century. She ruled her country between 1917 and 1930. Though as to Bahiru (2006 cited in Meaza, 2009, p.29) explains that "the overall political activities of Zeweditu remained seriously affected by Ras Teferi (Later Emperor Haile Selassie) who ruled the country for 40 years following the death of Zeweditu in 1930".

Nevertheless, women's important contribution in all aspects of people's life including the political aspect of the country did not properly addressed and it did not correlate with the past and current status of the majority women. On the contrary, Empress Taytu could genuinely be considered unique and the predecessor of women's rights in the country because she initiated the consideration of some serious women's issues.

Accordingly , for long period of time , in Ethiopia : a woman's identity including their political identity is linked to her family which is an institution where gender roles and behaviors are constructed and socialized , yet throughout Ethiopia's history there were/are examples of women who have roles that extend beyond the home and family into public, political life( Burgess,2013,p.97).

Generally, despite the patriarchal nature of Ethiopian society, the Ethiopian women of former times had played a significant role in the political administration and military affairs of Ethiopia. Meanwhile, soon after these successive regimes which characterized by the patriarchal political culture with very few figurative women of the country, Ras Teferi who become Emperor Haile Selassie (his majesty) came to power and declared as king of kings of Ethiopia.

### **1.2.Women, politics and political leadership in Ethiopia during Emperor Hailesilasie Regime (1930-1974)**

Emperor Haile Selassie (his majesty) ruled the country from 1930 up to 1974. Emperor Haile Selassie legally confirmed the gender stereotypes and inequalities. He restricted women's chance to came to power by limiting only men's right to succession of the imperial throne.

In this period, women had been marginalized from public decision making as a result of traditional culture and practice which restrict women from different productive public activities. It was accepted that women were best suited in domestic activities instead of participating in political activities. The top decision-making positions of government bodies such as high level Cabinets, Ministers and others were given to men exclusively. Women had no power to access and control these top political positions as a result of gender biased political structure which reserve politics as a male domain where as women as a house maker (Semagne, 1986, p.27). On the other hand, during his governance time, the emperor introduced the first written constitution in 1931 and he made Ethiopia the first African country which was the member of League of Nations and he was the first president of Organization of African Union (OAU) which was established in Addis Ababa.

In Ethiopian history, the first modern written constitution formulated in 1931 in the regime of emperor Haile Selassie. In this constitution, article 30 introduced the Deliberative Chambers of the Empire which consists of the chamber of deputies and the chamber of senate. Article 31 of the constitution depicts that: The members of the Senate shall be appointed by His Majesty the Emperor from among the dignitaries (Mekuanent) who have for a long time served his empire as princes or ministers, judges or army leaders. Art. 32. As a temporary measure until the people are capable of electing them themselves, the members of the Chamber of Deputies shall be chosen by the dignitaries (Mekuanent) and the local chiefs (Shumoch). (Ethiopian constitution, 1931).

Despite the introduction of this modern constitution, there were no provisions or articles which describe the rights and roles of women in politics of Ethiopia rather the articles of the constitution gave all powers to the emperor (his Majesty). Even, Art. 51. Of the constitution gave exclusive power for men to be the Judges of the country with clear discrimination of women from the judiciary part of the government.

In addition, this regime also revised the constitution in 1955. Under that revised constitution, there are articles which stipulate the privilege of men over women in different respects. For instance, Article five of the constitution states that “the order of succession shall be lineal, and only male, born in lawful wedlock, may succeed male; the nearest line shall pass before the more remote and the elder in the line before the younger”.

Likewise, in the emperor regime, Ethiopia introduced the 1960 civil code which propagates the patriarchal family structure by recognizing the unfavorable treatment of men and women. The articles of that civil code reflect the patriarchal social system which considered women as inferior and subject to the domination of men. For example, article 644(1) expressed that the husband shall provide protection to their wife who assumes as weak and the one who need protection. Accordingly, article 644(2) considers the husband as the one who can guide the conduct of his wife and control her mobility which can affect her participation in public life. “As such, women during imperial regime were relegated to the lower status and occupied inferior position” (Yeshe, 1994, p.12).

Despite, in Ethiopian political history, the emperor regime introduced the first nation-wide women’s organization called the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association, set up in 1935. There was also another women’s organization which termed as the Armed Forces’ Wives Association which was formed for supporting the wives of soldiers. All of these women’s organizations had no power or capacity to mobilize the mass for the advancement of women’s rights since they derived from the elites who manover the political decision making of that time (Mulugeta ,2010 cited in Burgess,2013:99).

Moreover, in first parliamentary election, women were not allowed to participate as voter or candidates. during that election, the candidates who are elected were property owners and the people including women had not allowed to elect the property owners. It was 1948 when the grass root population got chance to elect those property owners (Gennet ,2014, p.156).

As mentioned above, this regime introduced the parliamentary system of government which had two chambers such as Chamber of Deputies and the Champer of Senate. Accordingly, in Ethiopian history, Senedu Gebru was the first women who had elected to be Member of Parliament in (1954) and fighting for the promotion and protection of women’s rights in Ethiopia. No women had been elected to the parliament before her due to the existence of patriarchal society which reserved politics and parliamentary leadership for men. In her participation in the parliamentary leadership, she tried to get involved in foreign policy and security issues beyond her traditional roles associated to her by the community. She had struggled to remove gender biased terminologies and practices in the civil code. In addition, she fought against discrimination based on sex but many of her opinions and thoughts were rejected by men parliament members (Bolt, 2013).

However , in Ethiopian political culture , the establishment of parliament to influence political decision making was not familiar and the influence of the parliament on political decision making was put in the shade by the monarchy as a result of concentration of power in the hands of the monarchy(Almaz,1986,p.32).

Thus, in the emperor regim and before that, the state policy, program and its declatratons which had been perpetuated through the patrarchial socialization and political culture marginalized women's role and participation in politics and leadership process of the country. Women's role in the parliament and other decision-making positions was remain invisible due to the action of the monarchy and its predecessors those who believed and peropagated the masculine culture of the society. In Ethiopian culture, men member of the community got special attention and considered as best suited for productive activites including politics and leadership for long period of time. This inturn women not to play active role in the political ledership process of the country despite some women's effort to be active participant in the political leadership process. There was patriarchal power transfer which reserves men's right to be the successor of the kings and other political ranks. But, Consequently, women's role was become invisible and overshadowed in political leadership process of the country.

On the other hand, Ethiopian women played great role in the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie (his majesty) and after that by participationg in armed struggles and student movemet in the country.

### **1.2.1. Ethiopian Women in Social Movements including Armed Struggles and Student Movement**

Even though , the political landscape was not open for women and restricting their aspiration and role in accessing and controlling the top political positions , women played significant role in the social and political system of the country . They were active participant in armed struggles and other social movements of the country. In Ethiopia social system where war had been part and parcel of their life and their day to day activities, women had played very decisive role in war fronts and armed struggles internally and against foreign invasion.



Likewise, as to interviews, there were few women who had active role in student movement and armed struggles for democratic leadership in Ethiopia. Women sacrificed their life for the independence of Ethiopian people during the Italian occupation in 1935- 1941 and to mention some of them Shewareged Gedle and Zenebech Woldeyes were the prominent one in the 1935 the second Italian invasion. Despite of the nature of war which fought merly by men for long period of time , women have played very decisive role during the Italo-Ethiopian war in the mobilization of Ethiopian soldiers , supply of facilities , building the moral of Ethiopian fighters against Italians through war songs, collecting intelligence information and informing Ethiopian intelligence , helping or giving first aid to Ethiopian war victims and etc.(Adugna ,ND,P.1). Beyond the contribution of other women flag-wavers of Ethiopia, Shewareged Gedle was the most prominent person in the effort of liberating Ethiopia from Italian occupation in 1935- 1941. She had been served as the political propagandist against the Italians and in favor of Ethiopian freedom fighters, she had also a diplomatic role, and she had been served as main intelligence for Ethiopian freedom fighters through collecting information about the context of Italian fascism or repression in Ethiopia (Shibeshi, 2015, p.110).

She had played major role in the formation of Red Cross Association in Ethiopia at the eve of the war between Italy and Ethiopia since July, 1935. She organized this association by supplying financial and human resources and became the president of the association in that year. This association helped many numbers of Ethiopian war victims (Ibid, p.114).

Similarly, the Italo- Ethiopian war enhanced the political participation of Ethiopian women. Woizero Senedu Gebru who played great role in the war became the first woman member of the parliament in Ethiopia in the 1957 parliamentary election of the country. Consequently, the other prominent women such as Woizero Ayelech Meshasha and Woizero Rabia Abdul Kadir followed her example and became prominent and been active participant in Ethiopian political leadership.

Following that, in Executive body, Yodit Imiru became Ethiopia's first woman minister (Pankhurst ,1957, p.100 cited in Adugna, ND, P.36). Though their number is very low, these women pioneered and initiated the political emancipation of women of Ethiopia.

In the same manner, women played active role in the liberation of the Ethiopian people in general and women in particular from undemocratic political regimes of the monarchy and the military junta those who had exercise undemocratic political leadership. Supplement to these, in

struggle for the democratic administration and demand for social, political and economic rights, Ethiopian students played a great role in 1960 to 70's . In this struggle, women had played an active role by being member and leader of the student movement which demanded land reform, economic, social and political rights and later women's rights. They fought the monarch system which dominate the social, economic and political system of the country without giving much more emphasis for the rights of citizens instead citizens were considered as subjects (Gennet ,2014, p.60).

Additionally, in Ethiopian history there were local women movements. Women have participated in the struggles against subjugation and liberation of the Ethiopian people from undemocratic system. They played major role in the student movement which shaped the present political system of the Ethiopia. As to the author "women's contribution in the politics of Ethiopia have been silenced and their history have not been articulated unlike men member of the community who write and take policy decision" (Genet, 2014, P.68).

Thus, in the late 1960 and early 1970 Ethiopian women had played active role in the student movement that lead to 1974 revolution and the over throw of the Monarchy who ruled the country for 40 consecutive years but historians are not properly document and clearly show women's scarification and contribution in the political process of the Ethiopian women.

In the 1974 revolution which demanded the liberation of political prisoners, free press, the right to demonstration, the emergence of political parties and election, improvement of the working condition of workers and employees, and others issues, women played a great role. According to Sewage, Ethiopian women who participated in the 1974 revolution should deserve credit since they helped men member of the community to possess victory and the revolution contributed a lot for the social and political transformation of the country (Semagne,1989, p35). Likewise, "During the 1970's revolution against the imperial regime, women fought bravely and had critically voiced their concerns for equality and emancipation" (Biseswar, 2011: 101-102 cited in Girmay, ND, p.85).

Although Ethiopian women had played very decisive role in the armed struggles and other movements of the country, their historical and political contribution remains largely invisible and under rated due to the prevalence of patriarchal political culture of the country.

Following the regime of the Emperor Haile Selassie (his majesty) which had governed the country for several years with various peoples struggles and movements, the military

government came to power as a result of the country's biggest and prominent revolution which took place in 1974.

### **1.3. Women, politics and political leadership during the Derg Regime (1974-1991)**

As the 1974 people's revolution spread and exacerbated throughout Ethiopia, the armed forces captured their responsibilities of leading the country due to absence of organized political party or organization which aimed for the interest of the broad mass.

After the 40 years monarchical rule, the military junta (which called itself the Dergue, which literally means Committee) took power after dethroning Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1974 as a result of the revolution.

This régime introduced the unicameral Parliament of Ethiopia, the National *Shengo* (Assembly), comprises 835 members elected for 5 years. The Deputies of the system is the representative of different section of the community including workers and peasants of the community. The former bicameral Parliament elected in June/July 1973 was dissolved in the wake of the September 1974 revolution. Since then, Ethiopia had been ruled by a Provisional Military Administrative Council, chaired by Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam since February 1977. This regime governed the country without constitution through decrees until 1987 constitution was formulated.

Accordingly, soon after the establishment of socialist ideology, Worker's Parties of different countries of the world gave special attention to the issues of women through focusing on the question of women and struggled to allow them to have positive impact in political decision making of the country, and the same was true for Ethiopia. At that time, in the rural and urban areas of Ethiopia, there was association which established for the advancement of women's rights in political, economic and social sphere of the country.

During that movement, the Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association (REWA) was established on July 17, 1980. This was the result of 1974 revolution which helped women for the first time to organize and defend their interest through their organization i.e. Revolutionary Ethiopian Women Association (REWA) (Semagne, 1989, p35). However, this women organization had not full power for attaining its objective as a result of the government monopoly which restricts its power.

In addition, Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association was considered by the people as apolitically affiliated organization which established for the purpose of adding women in politics instead of striving for women's rights and gender equality. As a result, Women had no significant effect in the government policy planning and implementation. They had no active role in political decision making or political leadership of Ethiopia during this regime (Burgess, 2013:100).

Moreover, there had no space or room for other independent organizations and political parties for performing tasks on women's rights due to the fact that everything was dominated by the government. Even, REWA had no power to carry out important actions on the promotion of women's participation since it was controlled by the government. People prefer not to be active participant in REWA as the option of manifesting their opposition towards that organization (Yeshi, 1994, p.61).

Besides, the 1960 patriarchal civil code of the emperor was implemented in this regime without modification. In actual sense, human rights issues were not raised let alone to consider the suffering of women as the public concern due to the dictatorial nature of the regime.

Moreover, this régime formulated the constitution in 1987 after ruling the country without constitution for several years. Article 35 of the 1987 constitution stipulated that Ethiopians are equal before the law regardless of sex, occupation and other social status. Equality of Ethiopians shall be ensured through equitable participation in politics and other spheres of the country.

Here, principally, the constitution recognized the equality between men and women before the law. Further, article 36 of the people democratic republic of Ethiopia stated that men and women have equal rights. The government shall give special support for women in education and employment which can enable women to be active participant in political, economic and social sector of the country (PDRE, 1987).

Furthermore, in the political spheres, the Worker Party of Ethiopia established Women's Affairs Division in the party central committee level of the regime with extending it to the lower administrative system of the country. This administrative structure was not bottom up approach which can bring change on the status of women rather this structure is the political instrument through which the worker party of Ethiopia interests and wishes articulated and manifested. Women's rights and its political empowerment were not the primary agenda for this institution

but as many people believes that relatively speaking, the status of women raised in this regime compare to that of the imperial era.

Moreover, the Derg's social and political structures had no room for women to examine their needs, potentials and expectations rather there was state led woman question emanated from the government party's needs. In this regime, there was no appropriate women political empowerments supported by feminist leadership (Biseswar, 2011, cited in Enanu ,2013, P.5). Like that of the Emperor regime, the Ethiopia's major policy decisions, ministerial posts and other top positions of government bodies were exclusively given to men member of the community those who are considered as effective and efficient in political decision making or leadership (Semagne ,1986, p.39).

Hence, during the Derg regime there was empowerment without power with giving power for those women in the government bodies. There was mass mobilizations and organizations towards women's empowerment but there was no honest civil society in the country. There had no conducive room for women to examine their needs and expectations rather there was state led woman question emanated from the government party's needs. These stemmed from the desire of the military government to monopolized all of the political affairs of the country through worker party of the country which was the only party in the country at that movement. Even, in this regime, the influence of patriarchy was extensive that men who were allowed to man over the political system and practices. The discriminatory laws (1960 civil code and others) of the monarchy were implemented without modification. The state itself perpetuated the patriarchal political culture in practice. These forced women not to play active role in the political leadership of Ethiopia and their role became invasive in this regime.

In the meantime, the Derg Regime which ruled the country in between 1974 to 1991 was removed by peoples struggle which sprang from human rights violation and other oppression including the Red Terror which resulted in the death of thousands. It was succeeded by the current ruling government which we call it transitional government of Ethiopia which was finally procced to the formation of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

#### **1.4.Women, politics and political leadership in Ethiopia in Post 1991(Under the EPRDF ruling regime)**

Right after the downfall of the military regime, new political system was introduced by the transitional government of Ethiopia. This transitional government established a national policy on women through the structure of women affair office which strives for the promotion and protection of women's rights. Similarly, Women's Affairs Bureaus were established at Federal, Regional and Woreda (district) levels to implement the Women's Policy and monitor various activities undertaken at regional level. The Federal Democratic Government of Ethiopia has declared its unequivocal commitment to the development of women with the announcement of the National Policy on Women in 1993 (referred to as the Women's Policy), and the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1994.

The Women's Policy primarily aims to institutionalize the political, economic, and social rights of women by creating an appropriate structure in government offices and institutions so that the public policies and interventions are gender-sensitive and can ensure equitable development for all Ethiopian men and women. The Ethiopian National Policy on Women (1993) was established for promoting and facilitating the equality between men and women. The national policy for women has been aiming for creating essential government structure to promote and protect the political, social and economic rights of women with making appropriate intervention to ensure equitable development for all Ethiopians.

Besides, the National Action Plan for gender equality (NAP-GE) is the only document and plan to mainstream gender issues in the federal and regional levels. The government of Ethiopia has declared "its commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women by stipulating the rights of women in its constitution, issuing the women's policy of the country, and revising the Family and Criminal Law. It has also established gender as across-cutting issue through joint-planning sessions between sectorial line ministries and MoWA at the national level" (Okumo and Melesse ,2014, p.120).

##### **1.4.1 Women and 1995 Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

Consistent with the aforementioned policy, the formulation of the constitution of 1995 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia principally signaled a new era for Ethiopia in terms of women's participation and representation in the parliament and other decision-making bodies. The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia promote the participation of women in different sectors through declaring Article 38 which depicts the right of every Ethiopian to participate in public affairs, to vote and to be elected to any office at any level of government and to be a member of any political organizations, labor union, trade organization and etc.; without discrimination on the ground of sex. Accordingly, article 25 of the new Constitution guarantees all person's equality before the law, and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of gender.

In addition, Article 35 reiterates principles of equality of access to economic opportunities, including the right to equality in employment and land ownership. This article recognizes women's discrimination and guaranteed affirmative action as compensation mechanism (Kassa, 2015:3). The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian constitution recognized the effect of past discrimination against women and adopts affirmative action as the means to address their discrimination in political, economic and social spheres of the country.

Further, this constitution recognizes the separation of state and religion in article 11. This indirectly helps for women's empowerment in the country since the past discrimination resulted from the existence of state-religion which allowed men to be dominant in productive activities such as political activities and others. This constitution officially condemned discrimination against women and dedicated for improving the overall status of women through introducing affirmative action policy which aimed at compensating historically disadvantaged or marginalized group of the community.

In particular, women and men have the right to have equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres. Discrimination on grounds of sex, pregnancy and marital status, among others, is regarded as unacceptable and subject to be penalized. It postulates the equality of men and women in social, economic and political aspects of the country.

Besides, women as the half member of the community need to have equal participation to realize what ever development objectives and be privileged from these development outcomes.

Cognizant of this state of affairs, this constitution guaranteed the rights and privileges of women in the country at every level. Besides, in the process of the making of the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, women member of the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (ruling party for the last 26 years) and other women from Addis abeba and other regional states of Ethiopia have challenged the constitution to be gender sensitive. In the first draft of the constitution , there was only one provision which stated the special privilege for women , children and disable but women have played active role by challenging it and making the constitution more of gender neutral by articulating the equality of men and women in article 35(Gennet , 2014,p.157).

Moreover, following the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution, a new family law, a draft pension right policy for women, and other attempts made for the advancement of women such as on affirmative action provision for higher education, employment and promotion is worth mentioning. The current government of Ethiopia has declared its commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women by stipulating the rights of women in its constitution, issuing the women's policy of the country and National Action Plan for gender equality to put gender mainstreaming into action in Ethiopia and in its regions across the various policies. As a result of this, in this regime, there is improvement of women's representation in legislative, Executive and judiciary bodes.

Consequently, as to Women and Child Affar Minister of Ethiopia, in 2017, women's participation in House of People Representative reached to 38.8%, in national Executive more than 13.3%, in judiciary 20.6%. In average, in the regional states of Ethiopia reached to 40.3% in regional state council, in state administration of regions 14.5, in regional judiciary However, Ethiopian women are still at the subordinate position and women in the country occupy low status in the society. Their involvement in policy formulation and decision-making processes has been minimal. Still, women's representation in Executive, Legislative and other decision-making positions is less than men. In relation to these, the current ruling party of Ethiopia maneuvering the political landscape of Ethiopia and conducted five consecutive elections for the last 26 years. This regime has tremendous achievement in relation to women's numerical involvement in the parliament compared to that of the previous governments of Ethiopia such as predecessors, namely, the Imperial regime and the Derg (People Democratic Republic of Ethiopia). The electoral landscape of Ethiopia has been dominated by a single ruling



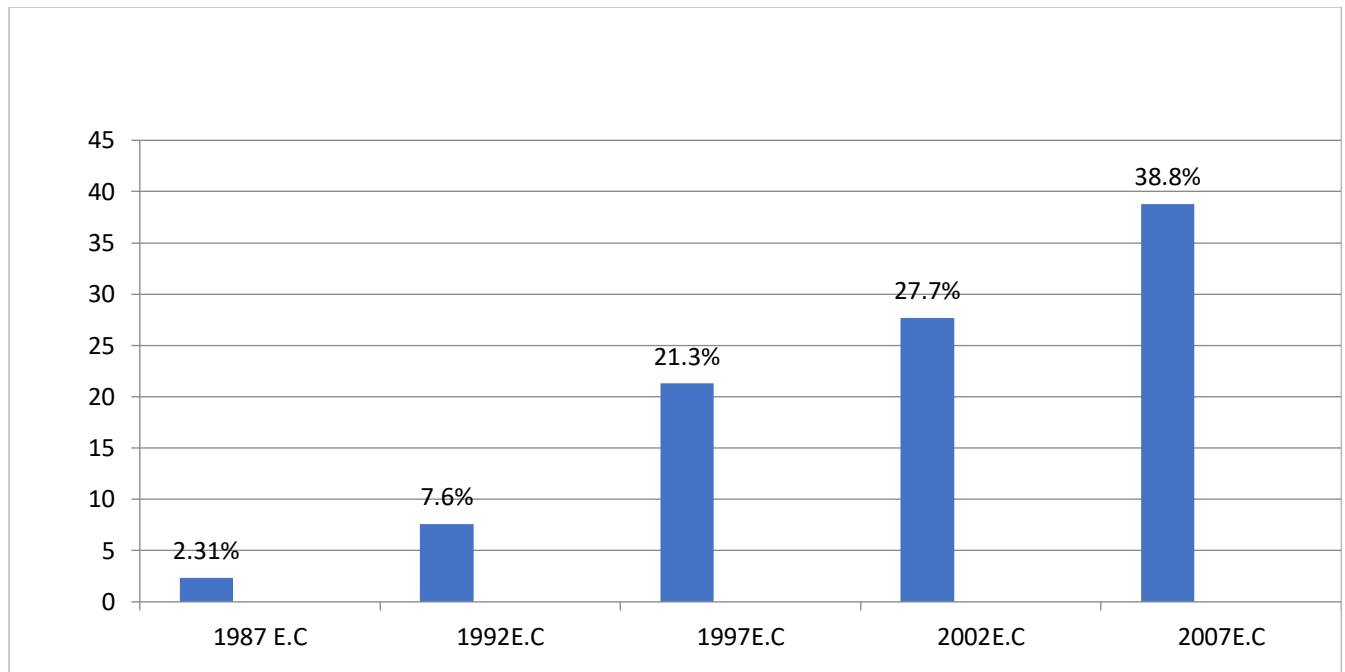
party. Practitioners argue that the presence of different party in the given political system allows much more possibility for women to be included in the given political system (PSA, 2017). Above and beyond, scholars illustrate that Women can become effective and voice full as a legislature if and only if when they are reached to acritical mass in the parliament including the lower and upper houses. Not only this but also, they need to be proportionally represented in the parliament for bringing democratic policy making and implementation process of the given state (Al Maaitah etal ,2012, p.103). On the contrary, Alemu (2007 cited in meseret ,2010, p.20) explained that even though there is numerical improvement of women’s participation in the parliament, almost the majority of women are not benefited from the system and neglected from key Executive positions of the country. Even, development planners and policy makers are not properly addressing women’s issues and circumstances. Having these, let us see the participation and composition of Male and Female Members of the Ethiopian Parliament 1995-2015 onwards

Table One: Women’s Representation in House of People Representatives

Number	Election year	Total number of candidates for HPR	Distribution of parliamentary seats		Percentage of women members
			Male	Female	
1	1995	2,871	526	11	2.01%
2	2000	-	505	42	7.688%
3	2005	1,594	410	116	21.21%
4	2010	2,188	395	152	27.79%
5	2015	1,828	335	212	38.76%

Source: House of People Representatives of Ethiopia, 2016.

Figure one: Women’s Representation in House of People Representatives



Ethiopia is a country which follows parliamentary system of government in which president is head of state and prime minister is head of government. In this parliamentary system, the Executive is responsible for the parliament. According to Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian constitution article 50(2), art, 96 and 97, the federal and the state government shall have their own legislative, Executive and judiciary. Likewise, according to FDRE constitution article 53, the Ethiopian parliament consist of two houses (bicameral parliament) such as the House of People Representative and the House of Federation. The members of House of People Representatives are directly elected by the people in 5 years term whereas the members of the House of Federation are elected by regional councils. Each nation, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia has the right to be represented by at least one representative and additional representative can be elected when there is million population of respective nation and nationalities.

According to the above table, women's representation in the parliament has an increasing trend. There is significant improvement of women's participation and Representation in House of People Representatives of Ethiopia year by year.

For the last five national elections of Ethiopia for members of the parliament, there was promising numerical improvement from the first election which was held in in 1995 up to 2015. Women's representation in the Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopian House of People

Representative improved from 2.3% in 1995 to 7.6% in 2000 to 21.3% in 2005 to 27.7% in 2010 to 38.8 in 2015. This is promising numerical enactment of women's Representation in the house of people's representative of the FDRE.

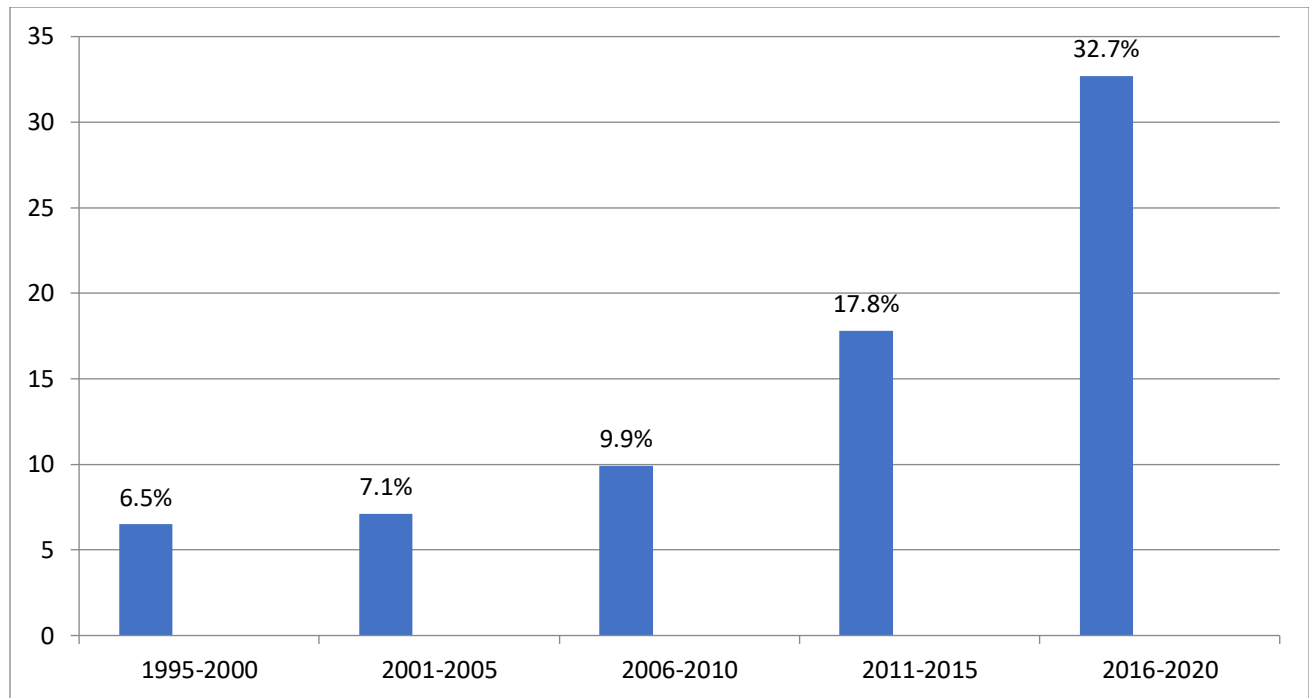
As to the members of the parliament, there are the number of factors which are contributing for the numerical enhancement of women's Representation in Ethiopian parliament. The constitution which stipulates the equality of men and women in article 35 and its affirmative action policy. Further, policies on political participation such as affirmative action targeting 30% for women candidates by the ruling party, special campaign funds by the national electoral commission for women candidates encourage women to stand for office, policy play significant role for the improvement of women's involvement in the parliament. Beside to this, women's Representation in Ethiopian regional states, zonal, woreda and kebele administration is improving significantly as a result of government policy of empowering women in political, social and economic spheres of the country.

Table two: Women Representation in House of Federation in Ethiopia (1995-2015)

Number	Tenure	Composition of the house	Number of women members of House of Federation	Percentage of women members of House of Federation
1	1995 – 2000	108	7	6.5%
2	2001-2005	112	8	7.1%
3	2006-2010	121	12	9.9%
4	2011-2015	135	24	17.8%
5	2016-2020	153	50	32.7%

Source: House of Federation (2017)

Figure two: Women's Representation in House of Federation



According to the above demonstrated table, like that of House of People Representatives, in House of Federation, there is an increasing and promising trend of women's representation numerically. In the current ruling party history for the last 25 years, there are five elections conducted for the member of house of people representatives and house of federation. Women's Representation in House of Federation increased from 6.5% in 1995 election to 7.1% in 2000 election to 9.9% in 2005 election to 17.8 % in 2010 election to 32.7% in 2015 national election of Ethiopia. As to the interviews, the numerical enhancement of women's representation in the House of Federation is the result of the commitment of the ruling party to implement the constitutional rights of women.

Not only enhancement in number but also women members of the House of Federation are involving as a secretary of the three standing committees of the federation such as constitutional rights and interpretation affairs standing committee; people's democratic unity , constitutional awareness and peace building affair standing committee ; and budget subsidiary and joint revenue affairs standing committee. However, in the three standing committees, it is men member of the hose of federation those who are the head of the committee. Hence, their roles given to the members of the committee are not gender neutral .

### **1.5.The quest of substantive representation of women in Ethiopian parliament**

Despite the descriptive or numerical enhancement of women's representation in the Legislative leadership of Ethiopia, the question of substantive representation of women is yet to be answered. Representation of

women parliamentarians are not on the way to influence and raise or articulate various issues by the lens of gender. Women's of the Ethiopian parliament are not fully awarded about gender issues rather they are spending much of their time and effort on discussion of other political issues of the ruling party despite the numerical enhancement in the parliament. Women parliamentarians are not capable of sharing their experiences and perspectives this resulted from the reason that parliamentarians have tried their best to be loyal to their affiliated political party by not to criticize the political system and make debate on gender and other issues which required attention.

In addition to this , as a result of strong party discipline in the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (the only ruling party which monopolized the legislative leadership positions), the members of House of People Representative and House of Federation were unable to raise or articulate their views and perspectives in the parliament other than the issues given to them while the closed intra-party discussions and debates. These hampers women parliamentarian's potential to reelect and represent women's interests, desires and experiences in the political leadership process of the country.

In relation to these, as to scholars and practitioners, setting agendas (feminist agenda and other democratic issues) is the major determinant factor on which women political leaders make a difference or not. Women political leaders need to play major role in making decisive agenda and influencing government agendas towards the incorporation of issues and perspectives of women member of the community. For this influential agenda setting process women are expected to work with civil societies and other concerned bodies for realization of substantive Representation of women in the legislative leadership process (Kenney, 2003, p.179). In this regard, Ethiopian political leaders including members of the parliament lags behind that they could not have their own influential agenda as a result of strong party discipline which forced them not to raise agenda outside the party issues.

Ethiopia parliamentarians expected to entertain and articulate feminist agenda which helps to realize gender equality in Ethiopia instead of merely inculcating the ideology and standpoints of the ruling party of the country which termed as Ethiopian People Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) which ruled the country for the last 26 years .Women members of the parliament in Ethiopia are not able to set agenda and influence agendas which is very decisive for the equality of men and women in Ethiopia . this is resulted from the persistence of strong party discipline which close the intention and the capacity of them to raise their agendas other than the agenda of the ruling Party.

In line with this, Meseret (2010, p.67) concluded that “Ethiopian women descriptive representation is improving even though their substantial participation is not as such evident in the parliament”.

Thus, women parliamentarians of Ethiopia need to get space and freedom to manifest and discuss their needs, experiences and desires in collaboration with the experiences, needs and perspectives of the majority women instead of articulating the issues of their affiliated party at every parliamentarians’ debates and discussions. In this way, it is easy to achieve substantive Representation of women which is very crucial for the achievement of gender equality at local and national leadership levels of government bodies of the country.

#### **1.6.Men and women Representation in standing committees of Ethiopian parliament.**

Parliamentary committees are important organs for the formulation and examination of public policy and activities. Parliamentary committees provide various documents and reports that can be the public document. The parliament make oversight of the Executive through its committees. Parliament can establish committees and make standing orders to regulate its procedures and operations. “Parliament can form four kinds of committees: committees of the whole House; standing committees; ad-hoc committees; and departmental committees” (Kanyinga,2014, p.198). The committee headship and membership need to be gender neutral and sensitive for the realization of good governance in the country. Consideration of this fact, it is good to see women’s participation in the Ethiopian parliament here under.

Table Three: Men and women Representation (Sex disaggregated data) in the Standing Committees of the Ethiopian parliament (2015 Onwards)

Organ of the standing committee of the Ethiopian parliament	Total	Female	Male	Head	Vice Head
1. Higher education affairs standing committee	23	18	5	Male	Male
2. Trade affairs standing committee	14	8	6	Male	Female
3. Agricultural affairs standing committee	25	14	11	Female	Male
4. Natural resource and environmental protection affairs standing committee	25	13	12	Female	Male
5. Government Infrastructural development affairs standing committee	15	9	6	Male	Female
6. Budget and finance affairs standing committee	19	10	9	Female	Male
7. Legal, justice and administrative affairs standing committee	20	13	7	Male	Male
8. Foreign, Defense and Security affairs standing committee	14	9	5	Male	Male
9. Women affairs standing committee	23	8	15	Female	Female
10. Pastoralist affairs standing committee	20	11	9	Male	Female
11. Social affairs standing committee	25	11	14	Female	Male
12. Science and Information communication affairs standing committee	18	6	12	Male	Female
13. Industry affair standing committee	13	8	5	Male	Male
14. Government expense and administration affairs standing committee	-	-	-		
15. Transport affairs standing committee	25	11	14	Male	Female
16. Culture, tourism and communication affair standing committee	13	8	5	Male	Male
17. Human resource development and good governance affairs standing committee	25	18	7	Female	Female

18. Urban development and construction affair standing committee	19	11	8	Male	Female
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Source: The FDRE Parliament, 2017

As to the above demonstrated table, there is a need of equitable women's Representation in the Ethiopian parliament despite improvements from 2.01 to 38.8 percent of women's parliamentary Representation. In the Ethiopian House of People Representative, there are 18 standing committee but women's Representation in the parliament committee is not proportional. As to the data obtained, all elected women representatives expected to be the member of at least one committee, even though there are very few women member of the parliament those who serve as the head of the committee. In addition to this, the headship and vice headship of the standing committees are not gender neutral. Most of the standing committees have male head and vice head. Even, the headship given for women parliamentarians are related to the social roles give to women by the society based on socially constructed and ideologically reinforced differences between men and women.

Accordingly, women parliamentarians are the head of Social affairs standing committee, women affair

standing committee, Human resource development and good governance affairs standing committee, Budget and finance affairs standing committee, Agricultural affairs standing committee and Natural resource and environmental protection affairs standing committee. Women parliamentarians are the head of these six standing committees and the rest 12 standing committees are headed by male parliamentarians. Not only this but also the headship given for women such as women affair, social affair natural resource and environmental protection affairs are not gender neutral. These have been given based on the social rolls of women perceived by the society that women are care givers and giving special emphasis for social welfare activities. Likewise, participants of the study explain that the sanding committees of the parliament are not gender neutral rather the roles and headships are given to men and women based on the social roles of women given by the society. Women members of the parliament are given social affair standing committee and women affairs head ship which depicts their societal role. Here, the patriarchal political culture which can manifested through gender role and division of labor prevails in Ethiopian parliament. There has been gender bias which favor men political leaders



and limited the effort of women parliamentarians from playing significant role in Ethiopian political leadership. Even, those who get headship positions which related with their social role are not powerful enough to make debate and discussion due to the presence of strong party discipline which restricts the issues and contents to speak and discussed in the parliament. Hence, the standing committees of Ethiopian parliament are not gender neutral and it is not conducive atmosphere for women to play decisive role in the political leadership process of the country for the final end of the equality between men and women in Ethiopia. It requires more improvement in this regard for bringing democratic administration in the country that reveals gender equality.

### **1.7.Motives (Reasons) of Women's Participation in Political Leadership of Ethiopia**

Women's participation in the political leadership process of the given country could be exacerbated by different pulling factors which may allow a number of women to join the political leadership positions. In this state of affairs, the governments' program, policy, law and other interrelated personal and societal factors might contribute a lot for its enhancement. In Ethiopia, there is numerical enhancement of women's involvement in the political leadership process especially in the parliament. In this respect, there are several reasons which motive and enable women to hold national political leadership positions.

Parliamentarians reason of joining the parliament of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

**sex \* reasofentery Crosstabulation**

Count

		Reasons for entry					Total
		government policy	To challenge patriarchy	To get economic advantage	To use my knowledge	other reason	
sex	female	98	14	3	0	1	116
	male	101	5	0	6	2	114
Total		199	19	3	6	3	230

The above data displays that 85.0% of respondents motivated by government policy ,8.1% for challenging patriarchy (male supremacy in Ethiopian politics ,1.3% to get economic advantage ,2.6% for using their political knowledge,1.3% motivated by other reasons. This implies that the majority of parliamentarians have no their own agenda of influencing and changing the political landscape of the country as they were merely motivated by the government policy and its affirmative action. Despite this, a parametric and change desired leader have its own agenda for the betterment of the mass but Ethiopian political leaders' lack this in theory and practice. Consistent to this, interviewees and focus group discussants of the study defects that the member of the Ethiopian parliament (House of People Representative and House of Federation are motivated and pulled by government policy of promoting women's political participation in the legislative and executive leadership process. The government policy of affirmative action pulling them to join the Ethiopian political leadership. In Ethiopia , the current ruling party what we call it the Ethiopian People Revolution Democratic Front(EPRDF), which ruled the country for the last 27 successive years provided various laws, policies and strategic documents for the promotion and protection women's rights in political and other arenas despite it requires more improvement in the substantive improvement of women's political representation. This contributed a lot for the improvement of numerical Representation of women in the parliament through attracting, initiating and giving chance for women politicians and other members of the community to join Ethiopian parliament. In addition to these, interviewees especially young members of the parliament describe that the influence of role models was their reasons of entry in Ethiopian political leadership. Women politicians, especially young women leaders, are motivated and influenced to enter politics by various others, including women and progressive male politicians. The research findings revealed that most of the women politicians

interviewed strongly agreed that role models have made a positive contribution to their political path.

On the contrary of these, only few numbers of women portray that they join to Ethiopian politics to challenge patriarchal political culture and solve women's problems through advocating women's rights. They depict that, still, women political leaders try their best to promote women's rights and gender equality in several areas. The participants believed that advocating women's participation in political leadership can play very significant role for enhancement of the political leadership process of the country. The overall and massive involvement of women in political leadership is so essential for the realization of social, political and economic objectives of the country.

Thus, women members of the parliament and other political members have been motivated and supported by Ethiopian government policy of promoting and advocating women's participation and gender equality in political governance of the country. Despite these, women's involvement in the legislative and Executive leadership process necessitates much more improvement. To this end, women's interest, and needs should be advocated and propagated so as to bring democratic political leadership in Ethiopia.

Having these, it is good to see women's representation in the executive body of government.

Despite the gains in Legislative positions for women, the number of women in Executive bodies of the Government is very small

Table Four: Women representation in Ethiopian Ministerial Positions (Executive branch of government) in 2017 onwards

Organ	Total	Men	Female
Ministerial positions	21	18(85.7%)	3(14.2%)
Other positions in the rank of minsters	9	8(88.8%)	1(11.1%)
Grand total	30	26(86.7%)	4(13.3)

Source: Field work compiled by the author for further see the appendix.

In the Executive branch of government, in the history of Ethiopia, three women were appointed to cabinate ministerial posts of education, health, social and labor affair during the transitional

government of Ethiopia in 1993. After 2005 election, there were only two women who were minister of women affair and minister of sports and youth. Consequent to the 2010 election, there were three women ministers (Gennet ,2014, p.213).

Accordingly ,as to the data obtained from the Ethiopian government , currently (2017), out of the 30 ministerial positions and other positions which is in the rank of ministers , women occupy only Minister of Women and Child, Minister of Culture and Tourism ,Coordinator for Urban Sector at Democratic System Coordination Center, Minister of Construction positions of the Executive body or they occupy only 13.3 percent of ministerial positions but the rest 86.7 percent of those position are dominated by men counter parts. Even, the positions given to women are not gendered neutral. These positions are directly related to the social roles of women given by the society based on unfair gender division of labor and socialization. women are not given very decisive ministerial positions such as Defense Minister, Foreign Affairs Minister, Minister of Education, Minister of Finance and Economic Corporation, Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Minister of Industry and etc.

Besides, most of African countries give Ministerial positions to women with consideration of their traditional role. Frequently, women are appointed as the minister and deputy minister of issues related with family, children, women, disability and other social affairs of the society. This is no gender neutral rather perpetuating gender inequality in the society at large (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa ,2007, p.6).

In the same fashion, the study conducted in Nigeria explains that the public ponder to consider women as best suited for issues related to women affair, education and health issues whereas men as best performer in business, defense, foreign affairs and the economy which is very crucial for advancing and promoting women's issues and rights. They consider women as incapable of managing and administering masculine issues such as defense or war, economy and foreign affair (Aluko, 2011, p.38).

The study conducted in the common wealth countries implied that "the ministerial portfolios held by women ministers were more likely to be in areas such as social affairs, the environment, family and children and women's affairs, while their least likely responsibilities were human rights, defense, finance, transport and parliamentary affairs"(Hinds,2015,p.7).

Besides, there is contradictory experience that the Executive positions of various governments are still dominated by men and roles assigned to women are related with their social roles assigned by the society despite some improvement in the parliaments Representation of women (Schwanke,2013, p.1).

Different studies supported that, women political leaders are preponderant to policy priorities which are closely related with women's issues and perspectives. Relatively, female legislators and other political leaders are more interested in working issues related with the traditional role of women such as education, health and other social welfare. Other member of the community including male legislatures believes that women are best suited for roles which are related with their traditional role instead of allowing women to lead and participate in foreign affair, defense and high political issues (Swers ,2001 cited in Kamau, 2010, p.48).

For the most cases, women ministers have been appointed issues related with health, education, environment which are directly related with their traditional social roles (Golan and Hermann, ND, p.13).

In addition to these, due to the socially constructed differences of men and women (gender), women confront many problems while they aspire to hold political offices. In the political office, the higher profile areas are such as security, foreign affair, finance and others are reserved for men. when women desired to get it, they face social disapproval. Therefore, the leadership positions given to men and women are not gendered neutral rather depicting the traditional roles assigned to women by the society (Jensen,2008, p.8).

As to the interviewees, the Ethiopian people and government still are not fully believing in the capacity of women to discharge their responsibility equal to that of men counter parts. Women member of the community are not allowed to be active participant in the Executive body of government. The Executive branch of government are dominated by the men due to the patriarchal tradition which considered men as decision maker and women as incapable of making decisions. In addition, the ruling party Executive s have no space for women to hold decisive ministerial positions like foreign affair, defense and other which requires skilled personnel as a result of gender that considered women as unskilled and incompetent to hold party Executive s. Likewise, in third world countries including Africa, women are not properly represented in Legislative and Executive s of governments leadership whether they are appointed or elected.

Even, those women who are participating in the Executive bodies are assigned to posts which reflect the traditional role of women which are reserved by the society. Often, women have given the positions such as women affair minister, social affair and other issues instead of allowing women to be the head or minister of defense, economy and foreign affair. Women are largely excluded from these prominent positions which can determine the social, economy and political destiny of the country (Afshar,2005, p.12). As to economic commission for Africa(2005,p.12), “even where women are appointed into positions of power, they are often appointed to head ministries that are considered traditionally ‘female’ such as health, education, social services, gender and human resources, and away from traditionally ‘male’ areas such as science and technology, justice, defense, finance and foreign trade”.

Hence, in Ethiopian context, women’s involvement in the Executive branch of government needs more improvement. There are few numbers of women who are participating as the member of the Executive government bodies. Even, roles and responsibilities assigned to women those who are participating as minister and deputy ministers assigned are not gender neutral. Minister of women and child, Minister of culture and tourism, Coordinator for urban sector at democratic system coordination center, Minister of construction are given for women where as minister of defense, foreign affair and other prominent sectors are given to men those who are considered as effective and decision making by the community. In addition, the prime minister and the president of Ethiopia are men. Women are not allowed to be active participant in the Executive branch of government due to gender which consider women as incapable of making political decision unlike that of their counter parts.

### **Ethiopian Political Leadership (Legislative and Executive) Process: The Pursuit for Gender Sensitiveness and Gender Neutrality**

It is well known fact that gender neutrality and sensitivity of the political decision-making process play very significant role for the achievement of gender equality in the political leadership process of the particular country. Conversely, in most parliaments of the world, women are given roles and responsibility which are closely related with their traditional roles assigned to them by the society. “Rarely would you find them heading committees for economic

concerns like the budget, local government (or interior), foreign affairs, justice and defense. This also manifested in the Executive branch where cabinet positions for the social sectors might be given to women but not for the other sectors". Gender bias and stereotypes are expressed in the legislative and Executive leadership positions of the different countries. These problems are so worrying in developing countries of the world where most of them have infant democratic system (Miranda,2005, p.7).

The scenario of Ethiopian political leadership process manifests these settings in which Ethiopian Executive and Legislative leadership are not characterized by gender sensitivity and neutrality rather roles including committee headship of the parliament and headship of the ministry are integrated with the traditional or domestic roles of women of the country. The Ethiopian community including top political leaders always correlate women's productive activities with their traditional and reproductive as well as unpaid roles. Women those who break the societal stereotypes of women's leadership and participating in the Legislative and Executive leadership positions faces gender bias and assigned to social issues including women issues, child issues, disability issues, cultural issues which are not regarded as high political issues such as defense, foreign affair and other critical leadership positions. Roles given to political leaders are not gendered neutral but rather they are perpetuating the prevailing gender inequality between men and women of the country.

In this regard, participants of the study those who are working as a parliamentarian and Executive body portrayed that the decision-making process of the Ethiopian political system is not gender sensitive rather it reflects the ideas and perspectives of patriarchal male political leaders. Debates and discussions of the parliament and other national decision-making process are totally dominated by men political leaders those who are considered as decision maker by the society despite their individual differences between them. In most of the decision-making process the male perspectives are enter tend and manifested so that the policy, project and laws are resulted from this perspectives and desires of men without properly articulate the interest and perspectives of women political leaders. Thus, there is a need of gender sensitivity and neutrality in Ethiopian political leadership process.

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