

## **Women Participation in Higher Education Management in Ethiopia**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Despite improvements during the last two or three decades, female participation in higher education is generally low, and their participation in higher education management is strikingly low in many countries. The main purpose of this study was to find out the factors disabling women from participation in university management in Ethiopia. Data was collected from three public universities in Ethiopia namely Addis Ababa University, Hawassa University and Debremarkos University by using questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis. The participants included 10 women administrators, 20 men administrators and 82 academic staff (30 female and 52 male). These amounted to a total of 112 participants; where 40 are women and 72 are men. The respondents were selected using stratified random sampling and purposive sampling methods for both the female and male managers. The findings from the study show that women are indeed underrepresented in the management of universities in Ethiopia. There are several factors at the personal, institutional and societal levels preventing women from ascending to management positions in universities. Data revealed that policies of recruitment and promotion; family commitments, lack of motivation, lack of confidence and aspiration and cultural constraints such as discrimination against women; lack of support from spouse and family etc were considered as the core reasons of females' limited access to higher education management. Male administrators were found to be more biased. These biases and stereotypes might be the major cause of gender gap in higher education management as they dominated in numbers and authority. Females' broadened access to education, training and research opportunities and discouraging the stereotypes and legislative and governmental support can facilitate more women to come up to take positions in higher education management and thus flourish their abilities as well as serve the nation. The researcher argues that for women to participate in university management effectively some of these barriers must be removed, and suggests ways helpful to enhance women's participation. The study therefore concluded that women faced differential experiences and challenges as a result of their multi-faceted roles and gender-based stereotypes which stemmed from the patriarchal culture prevalent within the university environment.*

**Keywords:** *Women, Academia, Higher Education Management, Representation*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In most countries, women constitute approximately 50% of the population, and wherever they are denied the right of equal participation with men in national affairs, a great human resource which could be brought to bear on the task of national development is lost. Ensuring equal access to higher education is fundamental to promoting the status of women for both the good of the individual and that of the nation. In many countries, female participation in higher education is generally low, and their participation in higher education management is strikingly low. In the area of higher education, both in teaching and management, women are still a long way from participating on the same footing as men (UNESCO 2002). In Ethiopia, women have made some progress in achieving parity in teaching but are grossly under-represented in higher education management (MoE 2014). The UNESCO 2002 report on higher education also talks of the 'snail's pace at which women's academic career prospects are improving in many countries. Many research reports on women in higher education management observes that the pyramid and the glass ceiling are found everywhere (Cook & Glass 2014, Ogbogu 2011, Singh 2002 and Lund 1998) With hardly an exception, the Ethiopian picture is one of men outnumbering women at about five to one at middle management level and at about twenty to one at senior management level (MoE 2007).

Three perspectives explain the continuing dearth of women in senior management positions: The first perspective is person-centered in which the paucity of women is attributed to the psycho-social attributes, including personality characteristics, attitudes and behavioral skills of women themselves. Among personal

factors are family commitment, lack of motivation and self-confidence; limited aspirations in the field of management, lack of motivation and ambition to accept challenges ‘to go up the ladder’, being less assertive and lacking ability to handle a crisis (Yousaf & Schmiede 2017)

The other constraint is the institutional barriers, the structure-centered paradigm advances the view that it is the disadvantageous position of women in the organizational structure (few numbers, little power, limited access to resources) which shapes and defines the behavior of women. The ‘problem is vested in the structure and the remedy is a fundamental change to eliminate inappropriate discrimination in institutional policies and practices. Among structural factors may be listed: discriminatory appointment and promotion practices; male resistance to women in management positions; absence of policies and legislation to ensure participation of women; and limited opportunities for leadership training and for demonstrating competence as a result of the power structure in the workplace (Chliwniak, 1997). The third perspective explores societal constraints ‘which links gender centered and organizational structure perspective’. This perspective is concerned with ‘the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations to women and to men’. These gender-based roles, irrelevant to the work place, are carried into the workplace. Higher education institutions therefore reproduce gender differences via their internal structures and everyday practices’ because of the cultural perceptions which ‘determine the attitudes and behaviors of individual men and women’ and form barriers to the equal participation of women in senior management’ (Smulders, 1998).

In Ethiopia women’s participation in key decision-making positions is still minimal. In the public service, women in management positions are very few as compared to men. Women in executive positions, like in university board council represent only 1.1%, compared to 99.9 % of men in the same groups (Seyoum Tefera 1991). Research has revealed that women mainly occupy junior positions in university management in Ethiopia. A survey of university staffing positions conducted in six universities (four public and two private) reveals that women are missing from among the top management positions of the universities. In many University board councils which determine who manages the university is comprised of mainly men. For example in Hawassa University, out of the fourteen members of the council no one is female. The situation at Addis Ababa University and Debremarkos University is not different. Of the ten deans of faculty only one is a woman (institute of language studies), and of the 42 heads of department only six are women (MoE 2007). The fact that women are missing from the major policy and decision-making forums of universities has an implication on their recruitment and promotion opportunities ( Almaz 2003; Seyoum 1991)

### **1.1. Rationale for the study**

The presence of a high number of women in management positions would play an important role to boost the efforts to promote the education of girls and women in Ethiopia. Women need to be present in top university management positions to voice the needs and different programs that would affect women. Decision making requires the empowerment of the various actors involved in higher education and women are one of the major actors. When women possess the expertise required for decision making, are well represented in higher education management and are gender conscious, they will have the power to shape policies and introduce change that can be useful for both for women and men. In Ethiopia women have been under-represented in management positions, especially in higher education institutions and little is known about their experiences and challenges. Despite the existence of formal policies to redress these inequalities and in the wake of equal opportunity policies such as the „gender policy“ and “equal employment opportunity“ in Ethiopia, women are still grossly underrepresented. The Policy-making bodies in the University system seem to be overwhelmingly occupied by men. This has prompted an interest to investigate the major barriers that affect women participation in higher education management positions and how the few women who had managed to get to these positions had done it, and what their experiences and challenges were, thus, the experiences and challenges these women face in management positions may be unique to women and are therefore worth investigating.

### **1.2. Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the factors disabling women participation in higher education management in Ethiopia. Specifically, the study aims:

- ✚ To establish the status of women in higher education management in Ethiopia
- ✚ To identify the barriers that affect women’s participation in university management
- ✚ To recommend possible solutions that could ameliorate the dismal situation of women in higher education management positions

### **1.3. Research questions**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current status of women in university management in Ethiopia as compared to men?

2. What are the major personal, institutional and societal barriers that hinder women participation in higher education management in Ethiopia?
3. What are the possible strategies to increase the representation of women in higher education management?

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Three types of instruments were used to gather information from the key informants. The questionnaires were administered to women and men faculty members. The interview guides were designed for and used with women and men administrators, such as presidents, vice presidents, registrars, deans of colleges, gender office directors, directors of institutes, department heads, chief librarians and finance heads. Both men and women managers were interviewed regarding the policies that govern recruitment, appointment and promotion of staff to senior management position and the possible reasons for the absence of women from these positions. Questionnaires were administered to both women and men academic staff. Document analysis guides were also employed to analyze such documents as recruitment, appointment and promotion criteria, job advertisements, job application forms and interview guides, as well as staff development policies. This instrument was beneficial to see the extent to which equal opportunity rights for both women and men are stressed and how they affected women's participation in the university management.

### 2.1 Sample and sampling procedures

The study was conducted in three government universities in Ethiopia: namely Addis Ababa University, Hawassa University and Debremarkos University. These universities were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Addis Ababa University was selected because it is the oldest institution of higher learning in Ethiopia. It is fairly large in terms of student population, staff establishment and offers a variety of disciplines in both sciences and humanities. It was therefore assumed that the management functions of the institution are many and hence the need for many managers. The other two public universities are relatively new and were included to determine whether they were incorporating gender equity issues in their recruitment and appointment policies. The respondents in the study were both men and women occupying management positions as well as academic staff members in the selected universities. These were presidents vice-presidents, deans of faculties, registrars, deans of students, directors, heads of departments and senior academic staff. The administrators were selected purposively whereas academic staffs were selected by stratified random sampling technique. Academic staff with the rank of assistant lecturer and above who worked at the universities for a period of more than one year was included in the sample. These amounted to a total of 112 subjects; where 10 were women administrators, 20 men administrators and 82 academic staff (30 women and 52 men).

### 2.2 Data analysis procedures

The data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. The information obtained from interviews was categorized into themes and analyzed through a process of content analysis. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts of managers, and percentages of women managers was used to show the status of women in the university management. Document analysis was also utilized to cross check, supplement and confirm information obtained from interviews and questionnaires.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Background information on the respondents

*Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age, marital status, experience and qualification*

Age Group	Men managers		Women managers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<20	-	-	-	-
20-29	18	25.8	30	76.8
30-39	29	40.0	8	21.4
40-49	19	26.8	2	1.8
50 and above	5	7.4	-	-
Total	72	100.0	40	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	56	77.9	26	64.3
Single	16	22.1	14	35.7
Total	72	100.0	40	100.0
<b>Experience</b>				
1-5	14	19.4	30	75.0

6-10	25	34.7	8	21.4
11-15	21	30.0	2	3.6
16-20	9	12.0	-	-
21 and above	3	3.9	-	-
Total	72	100.0	40	100.0
<b>Qualification</b>				
Ph.D	11	14.7	2	5.4
Masters	39	54.2	10	25.0
Bachelor degree	22	31.1	28	69.6
Total	72	100.0	40	100.0

As can be seen in the table 1 above there was no one below 20 years old from both sexes. The majority of the female subjects were young: 76.8% between 20-29 years; 21.4% between 30-39 years; and the rest 1.8% aged between 40-49 years. There was no female respondent aged 50 and above. This shows that since most female faculty are at young age they are late comers to management positions. On the other hand, the majority of male subjects (66.8%) fell in the age category of 30-49(middle adult hood) years which is perfect year to assume management positions in higher education institutions. Data on the marital status showed that 64.3% of the female respondents were married and the remaining 35.7% were single. Of the male respondents (77.9%) were married, while (22.1%) were unmarried. It was also learned that one third of the married female subjects have children; the number of their children ranges from 1 to 3. This indicates that women are highly burdened by dual responsibilities at home and at work place.

Regarding years of experience both in teaching and management 75.0% of the female respondents have served in their respective universities from 1 to 5 years and the remaining 25.0 % have served from 6 to 15 years. However, the majority of male subjects (64.7%) have served from 6 to 15 years. And even there were male faculties who have been serving for 21 and above years (3.9%). However, in the case of female subjects there was no one served above 15 years. When it comes to qualification most of the female subjects have bachelor's degree (69.6%) and very few (5.4%) holds PhD degree. This implies that women lack the necessary service experience and academic qualifications to participate in leadership positions as compared to men. On the other hand, men's long years experience in higher education and high academic qualification is a manifestation of their dominance in academia.

### 3.2 Extent of Women's Representation in Management Positions

*Table 2: Respondents opinion on the extent of women's representation in management positions*

Extent of women participation in mgt position	Frequency n= 112	%
Low	67	59.8
Moderate	39	34.8
High	6	5.4
Total	112	100

Table 2 showed that out of all the 112 respondents, 67 (representing 59.8%) indicated that the extent of women's representation in university management positions was low. Also, 39 respondents which accounted for 34.8% of the total perceived the women's level of representation in university management positions as moderate; while 5.4% perceived their representation to be high. From the analysis of data, it was revealed that the extent of women's representation in university management position is low. This finding corroborates Chliwniak (1997) view that because of the masculinized nature of university leadership, women are more often than not placed at the lower levels of university leadership, for example, as either heads of departments and/or as directors of gender studies. Women are poorly represented in management positions in the old universities and newly established universities, though the representation is lower in latter.

### 3.3 Status of women in university management compared to men

Documented list of academic and administrative staff from the registrar offices of each university were used to find out the positions women occupied in the university management as compared to their men counterparts. Analysis of the obtained data from the documents and information revealed that women are occupying a small percentage of the senior management positions of the universities surveyed. The findings are summarized in the Table 3.

**Table 3: Distribution of men and women by occupational category in the three selected public universities**

Level	Women%	Men%
<b>Administrative</b>		
Presidents	0	100
Vice- presidents	1.5	98.5
Registrars	3.9	96.1
Deans of faculties	11.8	88.2
Heads of departments	43.7	56.3
Finance heads	19.8	74.2
Chief librarian	25.3	74.7
Gender office director	65.7	34.3
<b>Academic</b>		
Professors	1.1	98.9
Associate professors	3.6	96.4
Assistant professors	12.3	87.7
Lecturer	31.1	68.9
Assistant lecturer	48.9	51.1

Table 3 shows that women are disproportionately underrepresented in management positions as compared to men. Similarly there are more men professors (98.9%) and associate professors (96.4) than women. Women are relatively better represented in assistant lecturer (48.9%) and lecturer (31.1%) ranks. The majority of university gender officers were women which indicate the prevalence of gender based stereotypes related to job categorization. Women also occupied such positions as heads of departments (43.7%), chief librarians (25.3%) and finance head (19.8%). Overall the public universities surveyed seemed to have more women as gender office directors, heads of departments, chief librarians and registrars. It was observed that the majority (75%) of women headed the departments of language studies, humanities and social sciences. However, there was few (25%) woman who headed departments in science and engineering areas. This shows that women representation in the sciences is disproportionately low compared to humanities and social sciences. The findings from this study agree with the general picture painted in the literature about the positions women occupy in university teaching and management (Lund 1998; Asmah 1993).

**3.3.1. Main Responsibilities of the Male and Female Managers**

To investigate further the role women played in university management, the men and woman managers were asked to indicate their main responsibilities in the university. The purpose of this question was to find out the extent to which women were involved in key decision-making responsibilities in the universities. The responses to this question indicated that there were differences between women managers and male managers’ responsibilities. The summary is given in Table 12.

**Table 4. Distribution of male and female managers by main responsibilities**

Responsibilities	Male	Female	Total
Administrative	3	5	8
Program development	3	1	4
Teaching	1	10	11
Coordination of Gender programs	2	3	5
Supervisor/staff	3	3	6
Student discipline	0	2	2
Recruitment	3	1	4
Policy development	5	2	7
Guidance and counseling	0	4	4
Monitoring and evaluation	2	0	2
Budgeting	3	1	4
Research	3	1	4

Table 4 shows that most of the women managers (10) were involved in teaching, (3) in co-ordination of programs and supervision of staff, (3) in administrative work, and (4) in guidance and counseling. None of the women were involved in key decision-making activities in the universities, for example, in policy-making, monitoring and evaluation and budgeting. Instead, they shouldered heavy responsibilities in the support services like student discipline, teaching, guidance and counseling, roles which have been traditionally associated with

women. These findings agree with what has been found in the United Kingdom (Cook & Glass 2014; Smulders 1998)

**Table 5. Reasons for involvement of women in various activities**

Reason	Percent
Appointed	10%
Self-interest	8%
Professional growth	5%
For institution's growth	5%

From Table 5 it can be observed that most women (10%) were appointed to these responsibilities in addition to their managerial appointments; other women (8%) were involved because of self interest, while others (5%) saw them as career development opportunities. However, these responsibilities have been known not to count for promotion purposes into senior academic ranks. Therefore, the activities only take away the women's time for research and publication which is important as main criterion for promotion to senior academic ranks (Onsongo 2004; Morley 1999).

### 3.4 *Barriers to women participation in higher education management*

The current study revealed that women hold less than 1% percent of top academic and administrative posts in higher education institutions in Ethiopia. They are relatively better represented in lower level management positions and their participation relative to men decreases at successively higher levels. Representation in the committee system follows a similar pattern with women more likely to be members of departmental and faculty committees than on governing boards or councils. A consequence of this pattern of decreasing representation at successively higher levels is that senior women frequently find themselves isolated in hierarchies which are predominantly male. What can be the reasons for the low numbers of women in higher education management? The study of administration is not generally regarded as a traditional male discipline in the way that science or engineering might be. Indeed one might think that the research and analytical skills developed through the study of the humanities and social sciences or the nurturing, interpersonal and intuitive skills with which women are supposedly endowed by nature, would be very much in tune with the strategic planning, policy making and staff management responsibilities of senior managers. There are increasing numbers of women in top positions in politics, and in both private and public sectors world-wide. Yet top management in higher education is overwhelmingly a male preserve. Similar studies have consistently shown that women are underrepresented in university management in Ethiopia and in other parts of the world (Yousaf & Schmiede 2017, Bobuwela & Dealwis 2013, Singh 2002, Asmah 1993). The path to top management in a university is generally built on experience as head of department and dean. Factors which interrupt that natural progression for women are personal, institutional and societal. These factors are summarized below.

#### 3.4.1. *Personal barriers*

In spite of increased participation in higher education, women are underrepresented both in teaching and management positions in many Ethiopian universities. Their underrepresentation amongst academic staff is consistent with their limited access to higher education. This is consistent with what Seyoum (1997) notes the need for a critical mass in higher education to provide the «quarry» from which higher education managers come. The current study acknowledges that the necessary pool of women talent is not yet there. A majority (95%) of the women managers said they had encountered some personal obstacles, while a few (5%) of the women said they did not encounter any personal obstacles in route to their current position. Some of the personal barriers encountered were time management, family responsibilities and lack of confidence. Responses show that family responsibilities were the major obstacles faced by most women managers.

**Table 6. Personal barriers – responses from the women and men participants**

Personal factors	Frequency		
	Male	Female	Total
Women don't aspire higher	15	6	21
Lack of confidence among women	6	4	10
Eligible women turn down appointments	5	2	7
Timidity of women	2	3	5
Family commitments	20	8	28
Lack of ambition	0	2	2
Low academic qualification	0	3	3
Lack of motivation	11	5	16

No role models	5	3	8
Women tend to be helpers	0	1	1
Lack of experience	7	3	10
Women want favors	1	0	1
None	0	0	3

The data in Table 6 reveals that family commitments stands out as the single most personal factor that explains the absence of women from management positions in Ethiopian universities. This is closely followed by women not aspiring for higher positions, lack of motivation and lack of experience. These findings conform with other findings; Singh (2002) reports that in a workshop conducted for women in higher education management in Malaysia, the participants identified family commitment and lack of the necessary qualification and experience as the two main disabling factors that prevent women from ascending to senior management positions. The other factors included were: women’s less assertiveness or aggressiveness, poor networking, lack of support to other women, lack of personal conviction, lack of adequate knowledge and skills.

Responding to a similar question during the interview session on why women are missing from senior management, the senior academic staff (men and women) also concurred that some of the reasons include: lack of adequate qualifications, fear of public office and fear of competition. Some of the senior academic women had the following reasons: One woman said, “Women due to their upbringing have a fear of public office”. Another one added, “Women have little or no time to take these positions due to domestic commitment and responsibilities”. Similarly another one noted, “We are still few who have at least achieved the foundational basic qualifications (PhDs)”. A male senior academic staff also noted, “Very few women have the qualification and willingness to participate in senior management positions”. Unlike women, men often have the tendency to take risks and apply for jobs for which they fulfill few of the requirements, and the qualifications. On the other hand, women tend to do the opposite (Dines 1997). This could be true of some Ethiopian women in the study. However, Ethiopian situation is also different because most of the senior positions are not advertised for open competition for the women to apply.

**3.4.2. Institutional barriers**

It cannot be expected that numbers of women in senior management will increase while so few are employed in academic or administrative positions compared to men. Several writers note that in spite of the difficulties that women face in gaining access to education, there are women well-qualified for academic positions who nevertheless fail to be selected. To quote Zamora cited in Seyoum, «A man is preferred because he is a man.» Discriminatory appointment and promotion practices constitute barriers in institutions without equal opportunity policies Seyoum (1991). The women managers were asked to identify the institutional barriers they had encountered in route to their management positions. The institutional barriers faced by the women managers are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7. Institutional barriers**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Few numbers	5	4
Male chauvinism	0	3
Management positions dominated by male	0	2
Patriarchal structure	3	4
Political appointment	4	6
Men fear female domination	0	2
Notion that women are not good managers	0	3
Discrimination against women	3	5
All panelists are men	0	0
Unclear promotion procedures	1	1

At the institution level, discrimination against women was viewed by the women managers as the reason why women were missing from management of universities. On the other hand, the men managers, felt that the few number of women in the universities was the reason they were not appointed to senior management positions. The women managers as well as the male managers also pointed to the appointment, recruitment and promotion procedures as an explanation for the absence of women from university management. Such factors as political appointment of presidents and vice-presidents, irrelevant questions asked at interviews, male chauvinism, patriarchal structure of the academy, and the fact that appointment required long experience were some of the reasons given by the respondents.

One woman manager commenting on the experience requirement noted that: “The fact that one cannot become a dean of faculty without having been a head of department was problematic for most women because most heads of departments are men”. In response to a similar question the senior academic staff pointed out institutional factors such as, few numbers of women and the fact that the top ranks are dominated by men were responsible for women’s absence from senior management positions. The researcher further investigated the issue of few numbers through document analysis. It was proved that women were indeed few and they occupied junior ranks in the academic ladder.

**3.4.3. Societal barriers**

Stereotyped notions about women constitute major barriers. Assertiveness is frequently interpreted as aggression. Women in some cultures find it difficult to exert authority over males. Women in advanced industrialized societies as well as those in the developing world still suffer from the myth that women are too emotional or too illogical for senior management, or best suited to the domestic maintenance aspects of administration. It does not make it any easier that women frequently share these stereotypes and accept uncritically roles which leave them marginalized and with limited career prospects. The study findings indicated that culture influences participation of women in leadership in university management in Ethiopia. The analysis of data established that patriarchal structures and socialization of girls discourage women from seeking leadership positions. Traditional beliefs and cultural attitude regarding the role and status of women in society are still prevalent and top leadership in any institution is viewed as a masculine domain.

The majority of the women managers said they had faced some social barriers in route to their current positions, while some said they did not face any social barriers. These responses may give an impression that the Ethiopian society was beginning to accept women in leadership positions. This may not be true because in the universities most of the positions held by women are mainly lower academic management positions for example, heads of departments, registrar and finance heads. Besides, some of the positions are in the areas traditionally considered feminine like director of gender office, HIV/AIDS directors, and chief librarian. To illustrate the societal barriers, one woman manger commented: “Women are not expected to excel in the sciences – computer scientists. Again – nurturing roles leave little time to pursue one’s career”. Another female respondent said, “There is discrimination against girls’ education in societies. People are more comfortable relating to male.” In most cases those that go for these positions are seen as social outcasts who do not have enough time for their family responsibilities, and some of them end up being divorced as was the case with three women in this study.

**3.5 Strategies to enhance women’s participation in university management**

The respondents were asked to suggest strategies that would be used to enhance the participation of women in university management. The respondents suggested various strategies at personal, institutional and personal level. Their suggestions are presented in the sections below.

**3.5.1 Strategies at the Institutional Level**

The male managers who felt that something needs to be done proposed that women should be given equal opportunities, gender awareness campaigns should be mounted, more training opportunities for women to enable them attain academic qualification and promotion of the few qualified women on merit.

**Table 8. Strategies at the institutional level (male and female managers)**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Encouraging women to acquire qualifications	7	5
Promotions on merit	3	2
Training opportunities for women	4	2
Gender awareness campaign	2	20
Gender balance the positions	0	8
Develop a non-discriminatory procedure for recruitment & appointment	2	10
Scholarships, sponsorship for women	2	2
Affirmative action	8	4
Equal opportunity for men and women	2	2
Seminars and workshops	0	6

The majority of the male senior academic staff and male managers felt that encouraging women to acquire the necessary qualifications and affirmative action would go a long way in improving women’s participation in university management. Whereas most women senior academic staff and women managers felt



that gender awareness campaigns in the universities would improve women's status. Institutional sexism should be discouraged at all costs to put men and women at equal pace in all socio-cultural considerations.

### **3.5.2. Strategies at personal level**

Women have been accused of being their own enemies by most men. What could be done amongst women to improve their status? The answers to this question are summarized as follows:

- Women should compete with men as par,
- Women should be assertive
- Sensitization and emphasize on girl child education at all levels,
- Political networking, publishing papers and improving their qualification

It is clear that most respondents see emphasizing girl education at all levels as key in improving the status of women in the society and in higher education management. This was closely followed by networking among women, administrative and academic training and empowerment of women to bridge the gender gap. Women were also urged to be assertive and aggressive so as to get management positions by some of the respondents.

One male academic staff said, "Women should assert themselves by genuinely and aggressively participating in all aspects of academic life and should not think that men are not giving them the opportunity". The respondents were also asked to propose strategies that would involve the whole society. The socio-cultural attitudes towards women have been found to have a big impact on the access women have to education, employment and other facilities. As Zamora (2007:13) cited in Seyoum (1991) argues: "providing women with more education without changing the gender and power structures that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequities, will not facilitate their access to educational, employment level and political opportunities equal to those of their male counterparts". The strategies proposed at the societal level are summarized as follows.

- Fight culture that hinder the progress of women
- Change societal attitude toward women
- Stress girl child education
- Discourage societal sexism
- Train women on how to plan child births and child rearing
- Develop and implement sound policies that support women

The data also shows that the majority of the respondents advocated for the development of policy and legislation to enhance the participation of women in management. Some respondents also suggested sensitization of society's members to accept women's leadership.

## **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Despite gender equality commitments and women's educational attainment, still, women are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education management. Regions and countries may vary in term of culture, achievements and development, but barriers for women's representation in academia are surprisingly similar in many regions. It is found that there are several barriers which women might be experiencing in academia ranging from personal, organizational to societal. The current study revealed that the major factors for the low representation of women in university management is generally their low representation as students and as academic staff. Personal factors like family, parenting, inadequate support at home, lack of opportunity networks could also have an impact on women's less progress. Similarly, the institutional environment in Ethiopian universities is not supportive of women in management positions. There is also indirect discrimination against women in the appointment, recruitment and promotion of university management. All in all the study concluded that women faced differential experiences and challenges as a result of their multi-faceted roles and gender-based stereotypes which stemmed from the patriarchal culture prevalent within the university environment.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made for the improvement of current practice.

### **✚ Broaden access to higher education**

Improve access to education to girls and women so that they can fairly be represented both as students and academic staff. So that there will be enough pool of qualified women that can successfully compete for higher education leadership positions. Of course, improving access to higher education requires the legislative back-up to support changes in cultural attitude. Formal requirements for gender balance in the provision of financial assistance and scholarships have proved effective in increasing the participation of women in higher education

✦ ***Review appointment and promotion procedures***

Sound personnel management policies are needed to increase the number of women employed as academics or administrators in higher education institutions. Frequently this is a contentious issue with those supporting women as well as those opposed arguing against the appointment of token women. But at the heart of the issue is the principle of merit. In country after country it has been shown that when traditional appointment and promotion practices are put under a microscope it becomes clear that women are being excluded for reasons that are peripheral and unrelated to their capacity to do the job. Again it has been shown that when formal procedures are introduced to ensure that irrelevant criteria are excluded from the process, women are much more likely to be selected for positions on merit. This is to the benefit of the organization as much as to the woman concerned.

✦ ***Provide legislative and infrastructure support***

The provision of legislative and infra-structure support is a tangible expression of organizational recognition and undoubtedly can make a great difference to the capacity of women to manage multiple roles. Gwen Williams points to the importance of reasonable provisions for maternity leave, child care facilities and mobility allowances. Special bodies to deal with women's issues have also been effective in changing deep-seated cultural bias against women.

✦ ***Provide special training programs for women***

Leadership training is necessary to equip women with appropriate skills of management. Leadership training programs, special seminars and workshops are all offered as strategies for preparing women for top management. An important element of a special program is the opportunity it offers of a metanoia, a change of heart at the level of the unconscious. Only a deep-seated change at this level will have a lasting impact on the way in which women perceive themselves and give them confidence in their own capacity to be effective leaders. They have to feel like vice-chancellors if they are going to be vice-chancellors.

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