Social Media Framing and Political Communication: Framing on Women's Ministerial Appointment News in Ethiopia

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Abstract: social media particularly Facebook is increasingly used in political context and believed to be an ideal platform for political communication. It is not only used to spread information but also political opinions, public ideology, culture and attitude publicly. The emerged political change in Ethiopia in 2017/18 is believed to be a result of social media communication (interaction) and it is the most communicated public discourse among the users. Framing which mean media is successful in telling its audience "what to think about" not "what to think" principle is used as a theoretical framework of analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative content analyses were employed to interpret the women's ministerial appointment news framing. Six face book pages with 55 posts and 1000 (one thousand) responses (comments) were selected purposively as a sample of study. Facebook users who are believed to have different stand from "change agents" were frame the story of women's ministerial appointment as it happened for political benefit of the so called "change agent team". Gender based role, Humility, Political benefit (political game), and willingness among women's were the selected angels that the news maker were preferred to frame the news story.

Key words: framing, social media, women, political communication
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I. INTRODUCTION

Social media are defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In the past few years, social media have shown a rapid growth of users and billions of citizens turn to the news media daily and social media are being a platform of political discussion.

Through the process mass media has the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agendas to the public agenda: they aren't suggesting that broadcast and print personnel make a deliberate attempt to influence listener, viewer, or reader opinion on the issues. Most reporters in the free world have a deserved reputation for independence and fairness. But according to 2

McCombs and Shaw professionals look to news for cues on where to focus our attention. *They judge as important what the media* judge as important (Griffi, 2012:379). Framing involves a communication source presenting and defining an issue. The notion of framing has gained momentum in the communication disciplines, giving guidance to both investigations of media content and to studies of the relationship between media and public opinion

Moreover, the potentials of social media appear to be most promising in political context as they can be an enabler for more participation and democracy. With this frame work, the research explored the role of social media in promoting women's political participation and their contribution for democratization at the time of new political change in Ethiopia and the reaction of Facebook users towards women's ministerial appointment news in Ethiopia. Three basic research questions (to what extent social media users give coverage for women's political appointment in the emerging political change process? How social media users (both news makers and followers) act in promoting women's contribution to the emerging political change and democratization? And how social media users react towards women ministerial appointment in Ethiopia were answered under the investigation process.

II. Women and Political participation in Ethiopia

Women's political participation has been recognized globally as a parameter of development. Hence, in recent years, women's participation in politics and decision-making has received significant attention across the world. However, women remain seriously underrepresented in decision-making positions.

In many countries, traditions continue to emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and housewives and to restrict them to those roles. A traditional strong, patriarchal value system favors sexually segregated roles, and traditional cultural values militate against the advancement, progress and participation of women in any political process.

Research shows that different casual factors such as; political, economic, social and cultural factors contributed to women's poor socio-political position in the country, Ethiopia. Political participation allows women to address their basic problems and needs in their community and ensures the openness, real fight against rent-seeking, accountability, political commitment, political leadership, and political responsiveness of the existing national, regional, districts, and local levels (Shimelis Kassa, 2015:25). It is true that more than half of the percent world's populations are women. However, they lack access to political decision making as compared to their male counter parts at all levels of positions.

According to Shimelis Kassa (2015) freedom and democratization cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. The objective of reconstruction and development programme will not have been realized unless we see in visible practical terms that the condition of women in our country has radically changed for better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life equal with any other member of the society (p:1).

"The possibility for all citizens to participate in the management of public affairs is at the very heart of democracy. At the same time full and equal participation of both women and men in political decision making provides a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society, and may as such enhance the legitimacy of political processes by making them more democratic and responsive to the concerns and perspectives of all segments of society" Nelson Mandela.

Despite these facts in the majority of countries of the world, the political arena remains largely dominated by men, and is even an exclusively male bastion in some countries. In democratic system, the voice of all is being heard equally and media should work for being voice for the voiceless. However, throughout history, women which constitute fifty percent of global populations are underrepresented in decision-making processes at all governance levels around the world and even they are dominated and marginalized politically, socially, economically, physically and psychologically by their male counter parts.

Therefore, the participation of women in the political discourse and the role of media in promoting women's in political decision-making positions should be recognized as a political right at a recent phenomenon. However, in most countries including Ethiopian, history tells us the press and broadcasting systems have a close relationship to the political and socio-economic system in which they exist which is male dominated system of media regulation.

Participation is a development approach, which recognizes the need to involve disadvantage segments of population in the design and implementation of policies concerning their wellbeing. The strengthening of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourses and hence, socioeconomic development cannot be fully achieved without the active involvements of women in the decision making level in all society. Political 4 participation is understood as a prerequisite for political development hence, by improving women's political participation, given that they constitute over a half of the world's population may help to advance of political development and improve the quality of women's lives. In fact, without the active participation of women, and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

For several years women's political participation in Ethiopia was found insignificant and their participation was limited to lower position mostly on non-political spheres. Here women's equal participation in decision-making and politics is not only a demand for justice and democracy, but also it is a means for keeping women's interests in all sphere of life.

However, currently Ethiopia is found to be exemplary nation in Africa in terms of assuring women's political participation. The new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed assigned ten female ministers which constitute 50% of the cabinet. This is historically a remarkable improvement of women's political participation in Ethiopian politics. It is not only a representation also women are appointed at higher level of political position. It shows women take up key posts including Minister of National Defense Aisha Mohammed the first woman to hold the position and a new Ministry of Peace MuferiatKamil who oversee the federal police and intelligence agencies.

III.   GENDER AND COMMUNICATION
Globally, media could create fertile ground for democratization and the relationship between media, politics and the public in a democratic system which is depending heavily on the media for legitimizing power through control and criticism, providing a forum for the competition of ideas and interests, and enabling social inclusion, civic participation and responsible action of the citizens.

The media systems should be in ways that reflect attitudes towards economic organization, the rights of individuals, political traditions, and so on (Papathanassopoulos, 2004) and governments may treat different media in significantly different ways (Seymour-Ure, 1987) cited in Skamnakis (2006).

In Ethiopia context, research shows that there is a traditional belief that, women are made to take care of children and do kitchen works than participating outside home activity. Hence, there is division of works between men and women, which means home activities are belongs to women and outside home activities are belongs to men. Women are overburdened with different household activities like cooking, take caring kids, washing and so on. These all activities make women busy in the household and impede their involvement in the politics of the country.

A study conducted by Gidudu et al (2014) on Socio-cultural factors that hinder women's access to management positions, revealed that women has to do house duties, gardening, and washing up while men go out for duty and also go for further studies outside the family as women stay back to take charge of the family.

Media, which contributes the significant changes in politics and democratization, should strive for being forth estate of the government and should work for maintaining the wellbeing of democracy by playing the watchdog role that led to a re-examination and re-definition of the relationship between the two fields. According Lowenstein and Merril, 1990, Hiebert, Ungurait and Bohn, 1982) cited in Skamnakis (2006) it is well known that the development of a media system is influenced by population and cultural traits, physical and geographical characteristics, political, social and economic conditions.

The most strategic use of a Core Story is to pull from it at every opportunity, in order to diffuse reframed understandings of the issue into the public conversation and to take advantage of the power of repetition. With this in mind, it's clear that social media communications are an important tool for reshaping the public conversation, offering a frequent and flexible venue to use frame elements. By responding in 'real time' to civic dialogue, well-framed social media can help to change the conversation about an issue.

Communication will be contextual and gender which is the psychological and social manifestations of what one believes to be male or female (a way of behaving) will matter how to communicate issues. The following three theories helps to create a macro-perspective of understanding communication based on gender as a cultural viewpoint.

Standpoint theory: men and women have different experiences that shape the way they view the world. Because of these variations, men and woman communicate differently.

Tannen's gender styles: women use communication to establish connections with others, whereas men use communication to establish or maintain power over others.

Muted group theory: because men have more power in society, language and meaning is biased toward a male perspective on life. Women must adapt and use male language or go unheard. 6

IV.   SOCIAL (NEW) MEDIA VERSES TRADITIONAL MEDIA

The new media described as the growing media that is widely used by all and sundry. It is an on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, and on any digital device such as, smart phones, computers among others. Nowadays sophistication in social media marketing is on the rise and creates unprecedented opportunities to connect with customers and constituencies. What once was a low-cost channel seeking simple results such as Facebook "likes" now is a more polished discipline: one that builds by word of mouth through complex interactions and enables a better understanding of who influences whom and how tipping points are reached (Brent McGoldrick,2013).

However, before the inception of the new media, only the traditional media that is, television, radio, and newspaper were available for use. In fact, politics and politicians ideology was communicated for along decades through these media since there were no other alternatives. The communication was one directional which focus on the sender's perception and the interaction among the public was not as such interactive and multi-directional. However, with the advent and increase in the use of the new media across all fields, the public who are found at any level of understanding have engaged to the new media platforms for sharing their ideology.

The advent of new media has had tremendous influence on every aspect of human information dissemination. Consequently, a number of researchers have pointed to the internet as the medium for the modern day public sphere (Dahlgren, 2005; Gimmler). Studies of political participation indicate that internet use has led to an increase in the public's political interest and it is claimed that the public sphere of today is moving to the digital realm. It is found in the media and in networks, and acts as the "cultural/informational repository of the ideas and projects that feed public debate" (Castells, 2008 p.79).

Using new media technologies can facilitate the creation of parallel poleis, a public sphere of dissenting voices (Lagos, Coopman, & Tomhave, 2014]. Previous studies of the relationship between traditional and social media found that the two were mutually informing and building on each other (Sayre, Bode, Shah, Wilcox, & Shah, 2010], and that social media can function as an agenda-setting tool (Meraz, 2009).

In Ethiopia, social media with the above mentioned functions are being advantageous in practicing free speech in a place where freedom of speech is dominated particularly on political sphere of a country. Particularly face book is become a weapon for political communication for the so called emerged political change since 2017. Different activists and human right protester were believed and expressed the emerged political change in Ethiopia is the result of social media communication that is face book. Facebook is used as a means of political communication particularly in driving the Amhara and Oromo protest in Ethiopia. In fact, the movement may not be realistic if it was communicated through traditional media. The communicators were played a great role in giving agenda for public mobilization and framing the issue accordingly.

FRAMING: transferring the salience of attributes

"The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people *"what to think",* but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers *"what to think about."* In other words, the media make some issues more *salient.* We pay greater attention to those issues and regard them as more important (Durham, 1998).

Framing according to James Tankard, one of the leading writers on mass communication theory, is "the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of *selection, emphasis, exclusion,* and *elaboration."* The media not only set the agenda for what issues, events, or candidates are most important, they also transfer the salience of specific attributes belonging to those potential objects of interest (Griffi, 2012 p 381-82).

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Robert Entman) Cited in (Griffi, 2012:383).

The power of the press is to sets the agenda of public discussion; It determines what people will talk and think about. Public opinion is shaped, in part, by media coverage. News media presents audience with an „agenda‟ for what events public „should‟ consider as important which means: news media have an agenda and tells people what „news‟ is important and most people would like help in understanding and evaluating politics and public reality. What news media presents as important is perceived as important by the public and framing the News will be determined by the following four elements (Lawrence, 2000):

1. Selection: What stories are chosen?
2. Emphasis: What particular focus is taken?
3. Elaboration: What is added to „beef up‟ the story?
4. Exclusion: What stories are not covered because of selection, emphasis and elaboration?

Certain topics are more likely to influence audience thought and certain individuals are more likely to be influenced by these issues. *Need for orientation*: depends both on a topic's relevance as well as on a person's uncertainty. Thus, the news media influence their audience to think about selected issues in a certain light.

V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Coverage of woman's ministerial appointment news on Facebook

Social media, particularly face book in Ethiopia is used as a prioritized source of information. Most of the youth including primary school, high school, preparatory school, college and university level students are become Facebook users. Therefore, as observed from Facebook pages starting from the appointment date 2 April/2018 most of Ethiopian face book users posted the appointment news and all most all of the users shared the news on their own time line and to the group pages. This was with the individuals heading to the event. From the sample size taken for this study around 96.7% of the users were post the event with their own heading and symbols that will reflect different feeling. Around 3.3% of the sample also shared the event on their time line.

Therefore, it is quite clear that the entire Facebook users were gave coverage for the women's ministerial appointment. It was covered as a hard news both by the supporter of the new change emerged in Ethiopia and the resistant group as well.

Face book audience's reaction towards women's mistrial appointment news

As an audience of the Facebook, friends of the selected Facebook pages were used. Most of the comment that was written by identified and unidentified audiences shows that, the comments reflect the traditional belief that exists in Ethiopia. Mostly the patriarchal system which reflects the domination of male as a right approach for leadership is widely reflected. Some of the influential user's expressions were targeted to shape the Public opinion towards political benefit than achieving gender equality. The public starts to question the reality and the communication was focused on the relevance of appointing women ministers. The most forwarded ideas indicate the prime minster is doing the action for the sake of gaining acceptance from the international community and for controlling the whole system. Understanding and evaluating politics and public

reality were there in the framing process. Also most of the comments posted on the selected Facebook pages were the reflection of socially constructed role of men and women. The given comments are categorized in the following three thematic groups based on the meaning they confer.

Gender based role

From 461 comments taken from face book page 137 which constitute 29% were targeted to gender role that bases on division of task between men and women. The overall intention of the comments was seen as women are overburdened with different household activities like cooking, take caring kids, families and washing. The following comment is given under the post of women's ministerial appointment news. It says:

"Surprisingly, now a day, baby sitters will be the most employable in Ethiopia. This is because of Dr. Abiy's target towards job opportunity. It should be appreciated."

The meaning of the above comment, which appears following the post heading with "bright future for our sisters" with the appointed women's photo, is describing women as responsible body for caring their baby. The appointed ministers need baby sitter (other woman instead) to accomplish their office duty. In other hand, the audience wants to emphasis on role division of man and woman. One of the appointed ministers said:

Bringing women into the top ranks of government is a big change, from my professional experience, not only at the national level but also in different parts of the country; it was very difficult for people to see women in leadership positions. Because women have many responsibilities: they are mothers, wives, sisters, teachers and community bearers. Formerly, there has been a big struggle everywhere and now there is hope for change. I expect our team to have open minds and hearts.

Therefore, socially constructed gender role is highly reflected on the appointment news than their ability to accomplish the given task. Most of the given comments recognize women's goodness towards household activities management and behind support for their male counterpart.

Humility

Consciously and unconsciously women's sympathy is considered by some Facebook users. Particularly, comments towards the appointment of ministry of defense were related with woman's kindheartedness nature and military role.

"A nation cannot be led by weeping and begging"

It shows naturally that women are negotiator and it will impede their involvement in leading military. As a result most of the comments emphasizes as appointing woman to ministry of defense may not be the right decision by the prime minister.

On contradictory side, there are comments which show women's leadership style which helps Ethiopia to secure peace and security across the country. Dr. HirutKassaw Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Ethiopia repeatedly says "Ethiopia's instability is a result of male dominated leadership, we women are conscious and understand how instability will suffer us than you male understand. Participating women in higher leadership is a solution to secure peace in Ethiopia." Some also believe bringing women to higher position and leadership foster honesty and discouraged corruption. However, some people have strong recommendation. They agreed with the coming power of women the next step will be decided by performance. This is to say that we do not favor women for the sake of their gender; instead we have to favor them so long as they are competent. These ideologies are the most reflected ideas particularly on defense and the newly established Peace Minster.

Political willingness among women's perspective

The need to bring women to higher posts is designed as a result of their minor role in the socio-political arena of their country. It considers only their marginalization: other elements to be considered were ignored. For instance, their capacity for leadership, their education, their, exposure and the like were not considered in magnitude significance. Unlike other mentioned factors, most of the posts and communications outlets indicate the time was not right time for the appointment of women. It broadened their responsibility and makes them more responsible in their duty more than their male counterparts. Previous crisis were the result of patriarchal rule. For current appointees it is not easy to change what already lost by male dominated leadership. This crisis may lead to the wrong conclusion that women are incapable of doing things going right.

Political game among the change agents

Around 40% of the ideas and communications selected for this analysis carry and reflect the audience's trait. The public wants to frame the news as a means of power taking from the previous dominated group. They frame the news as a "hidden political agenda". Behind the appointment of women's, controlling the central (federal) power is more emphasized than achieving gender equality. The audiences argued on the following three approaches which may considered for the appointment:

1. Women's inability to influence the prime minister (audiences are thinking as women are incapable of leading politics. So that it will be possible to control easily.
2. To get attention from minority group and women in the name of gender balance
3. As a strategy for attracting funds from world organization who are working on gender issues.

Therefore, the women's ministerial appointment news in Ethiopia is framed differently. This was driven by different political, ideological, cultural and social factors. Facebook as a means of expressing opinions, shaping political ideology and criticizing politics is used as a remedy.

VI. CONCLUSION

The role of media in Ethiopian political change is paramount. Media in Ethiopia, particularly social media are used widely for communicating politically sensitive issues which changed the traditional means of communication by triggering issues related to women empowerment and related political issues. Now days, the appointment of women in all levels of leadership in Ethiopia is said to have framed differently based on politically sensitive issues both in terms of change and role. But the existing practice and the reality are no longer compatible in the public mind. These situations lead the public to debate widely in Facebook. Political issues are equally sensitive in both private and public owned media. As a result the role of Facebook is increasingly framed the Ethiopian women's mistrial appointment as an opportunity and threat in political terms. Moreover, Facebook is used to communicate and share different extreme ideas. The appointment news is framed differently; gender as a means of political benefit and controlling central power. Difference in political ideology, ethnic belongingness and prior attitude towards women are found as factors for framing the appointment news.

VII. RECOMMENDATION

Media are a means for creating public discussion, mobilization, negotiation and debate among the public. It can contribute for economic, political and social betterment of the society. In a country like Ethiopia, citizen journalism will contribute for changing the existing traditional ideology. Now a day, in Ethiopia Facebook is become more accessible and trusted social media than public or private media. This indicates that Facebook can be a means for building mutual understanding and fostering public discussion without fearing binding press legislation and laws.

Therefore, bloggers, influential activists", writers, and private individuals should work for justice. Pro and against women ought to be based on their achievement rather than taking single element. Of course, women have to be rewarded and exalted but their academic, administrative, and political look must be given due weight. This is fundamental to create balance and the media should mobilize the public to be optimist about the skill and ability of Ethiopian women. This endeavor can potentially be achieved when the issue is framed from the angle of women's ability, capability, competence and opportunity than focusing on political implication which is center of the dialogue for the public. This is what the media is expected to implement in framing which mean media is successful in telling its audience "what *to think about"* not *"what to think"* principle.

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