Article on opportunities and challenges women’s participation on decision making(1)

Agenagn Kebede¹

¹Affiliation not available

October 25, 2019

Abstract

This paper aimed at investigating opportunities and challenges of women’s participation in decision making as little attention was given to opportunities and challenges of women’s participation in decision making at local level. There are few researches on opportunities and challenges of women’s participation in decision making at local level and more focus on opportunities and challenges of women’s participation in agricultural, economical, educational and leadership. The purpose of the study is to explore challenges that women face in their decision making and reflect on the opportunities that are being undertaken by stake holders and local government. A qualitative research method utilized in the study to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher used case study research design which helps to deeply study a phenomenon. The researcher then employed thematic analysis to come up with findings and discussion. Purposive and referral chain sampling techniques have also been employed in the study. The finding of the study is based on semi-structured-interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Empirical data gathered through interviews and FGD in Debre Tabor City Administration. The research findings indicated that women faced a number of constraints to participate in the decision making at a local level. These constraints were cultural beliefs, illiteracy and low level of education, economic and financial problems, religion, nature, household activities, negative perception of the society, men oppression and chauvinism, lack of confidence and interest among women and weak bureaucracy. Within those challenges, there were opportunities which enabled and designed to maintain women toward the decision making participation. Those opportunities were international law and convention, constitutional and different legal orientation, packages, programmes, policies and initiatives, different governmental structure of women, education, training and awareness, preparation of periodical meeting, economic empowerment and the quota system. The study recommends the creation of an enabling environment for women’s decision making ability empowerment.

Introduction

In a democratic system it is impossible to say gender equality and the democratic values have applied without considering the role of women in decision-making. Nations, in their journey of consolidation of democracy, are contributing value on the decision-making empowerment of women. They have adopted international law and conventions (i.e., the United Nation Charter on human rights and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) to support women’s decision-making participation (Gylman, 2008).

Women are contributing a vital role in community. Women are mothers, domestic workers, home managers, and community organizers and sociocultural activists. However, most of the time women are discriminated from their decision-making, sociocultural and political activities. Women have not carried out roles in decision-making and politics and they have not held other higher government positions (Booke, 1972).

The nature of political systems, culture, religion, men domination of the political arena and so on make women invisible in decision making. Women’s participation in decision making at the world, at a country, at a regional and a local level is very low. For instance, in 2005, the World Fund stressed that world women
are under-represented in high level decision making bodies (Ama & Ekundayo, 2014). Beyond this, women
are not decision makers for their own issues and they do not participate in meetings which are interest to
them (Askale, 2005).

In African countries, women access to decision-making process and political participation is extremely low
(Ama & Ekundayo, 2014). In Ethiopia, even though the legal frame work and some institutions promote
women’s empowerment, women participation in decision-making is still heinous. The culture, the patriarchal
hierarchy and the community have played a role in the suppression of women’s decision-making activities.
The culture never appreciates women’s participation in decision making equal with man. The patriarchal
structure always considers man as superior (Shimels, 2015).

In Ethiopia, women’s involvement in decision-making at regional administrations, City administrations and
district governance is also remarkably low when it is compared with men (Meseret Shiferaw, 2007; Medhanit
and Sofanit, 2009). This problem may deal with illiteracy, backwardness; cultural, social, economic and
religious barriers (Meseret Shiferaw, 2007).

Women participation in decision-making is indispensable for women’s interest to be incorporated into gov-
nernance. Women participation in politics and leadership would help to solve many problems associated with
poverty and inequality (Burchard, 2014). It helps to balance decision-making concerned with education,
reproductive health, agriculture, trade, community needs, political representation and gender equality.

The research, focusing on South Gondar Administrative Zone, Debre-Tabor, examined the opportunities that
enable women to remain an active participant in decision-making. It also examined the challenges which
have been barriers to be an active participant in decision-making. Further, it forwards ways how gender
equality and women’s participation in decision making is maximized.

Research Methodology

Description of the Study Area

Location: Debre-Tabor is a City administration in North Central Ethiopia. Debre-Tabor City is found
in South Gondar Zone of Amhara region of Ethiopia. Geographically, Debre-Tabor is located from 100 km
South East Gondar and 50 km East of Lake Tana. It lies between 110 51’N latitude and 380 1’E longitude.

Population: According to the 2015 report of Debre- Tabor City Administration Mayor Office, aggregate
population of the Debre-Tabor City is 78,706. Among them 37,683 are men and 41,023 are women. Further,
according to the 2015 report of Debre- Tabor City Administration Mayor Office, the majority of the inhab-
itants are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. 96.72% of the total population is Orthodox Christian. 2.54%
of the combined population is Muslim. The remaining 0.74% of the total population is followers of other
religions.

Finally, let the researcher elaborate reasons of selection Debre-Tabor City as study area of the research.
The study was undertaken in Debre Tabor City Administration because of accessibility, time and economic
factors. In addition to this, the researcher lived in Debre-Tabor City for long time and experienced or
observed the problem. Debre-Tabor was a City where women’s participation in decision making is passively
operating.

Research Approaches

There are three research approaches, namely quantitative research approach, qualitative research approach
and mixed research approach. The quantitative approaches implement statistical measurement and facilitate
numerical data during the research process (Theam, 2014).This approach can produce the objective verifiable
unit and reliable output. It is philosophical base is positivism. It requires a short time frame for administered
surveys. However, it is difficult to use for examining human perceptions, beliefs and practices since those
are unmeasured numerically.

Qualitative research uses to interpret social reality from people’s beliefs and practices (Berg, 2001). It is
consistent with the constructivist paradigm. It explores a meaning, purpose and realities. Realities are subjective, multiple and socially constructed by its participants. Through qualitative research, it is possible to discover and understand the experiences, perspectives and thought of the participants (Bryman, 1998). In qualitative approach, the researcher often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (Creswell, 2003). Moreover, when the research uses both quantitative and qualitative approach together the approach is called mixed and its philosophical underpin is pragmatism.

This study explored the truth, beliefs, experiences and realities from the participants. It understood the opportunities and challenges of women’s participation in decision-making from the participants’ perspectives. In that manner, the research approach was fundamentally a qualitative research.

**Research Design**

The research design employed a case study. Robson (2002) refers to a case as the situation, individual, group, whatever it is that one is interested in. A case study refers to research that focuses on a single issue. In addition to this, case study is a particular suitable design to examine the process and the problem of issues (Merriam, 1998).

Thus, this design is preferable to understand the cases that challenges women’s participation in decision-making. In addition to this, it enables the researcher to investigate what opportunities are put by stakeholders to initiate women’s participation in decision-making.

**Sampling Procedure**

In this study non-probability sampling, namely, purposive sampling and chain referral sampling employed to select the participants of the study. The researcher selected non-probability purposive sampling design which was reliable and appropriate for this study.

When the research is qualitative and its goal is seeking to examine what is and more concern with a deeper understanding of the research problem rather than generalization, purposive sampling will in use. Researchers select participants purposely when they believe that those participants are key informants and especially important to articulate a view (Nosrat, 2010). In purposive sampling, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about groups and individuals to select subjects who may represent the population (Berg, 2001).

The researchers will select participants through chain referral sampling when they believe that the participants are likely to recognize the other participants who share the characteristics that make them eligible for inclusion in the study. Further, the chain referral sampling is an advantage for the researcher to include people in the research that they would not have known and easily find (Platt et al, 2015).

Purposive sampling applied to do interview with stakeholders: City Council Speaker; well experienced Women Councilors of the City; Women, Children and Youths Association Office Officer at Debre Tabor City Administration; Women and Children Branch Office Officers at four Kebeles. As afar off, purposive sampling implemented to make interview with religion leaders to understand religions orientation toward women’s participation in decision-making, i.e., with Ethiopian Conjoined Orthodox Church, South Gondar Zone Sermon Office Officer and an Islamic Eqeh Instructor and an Imam of a mosque in Debre Tabor City.

Purposive sampling also applied to identify participants for the FGDs which were classified in two categories: FGD 1 encompassed participants who were selected deliberately from active members of Women’s Association at City Administration. The researcher selected those participants since they were active members in Women’s Association for the past ten years and came from different backgrounds. They experienced opportunities and challenges toward women’s participation in decision-making. FGD 2 held with active members of Women’s Association at Kebele 02 purposely because more women participants in women’s issues at City level were drawn from this Kebele than others.

Through chain referral sampling it was possible to identify women who were active Village to Village Coordinators of Women for empowerment purpose for more than five years; and women who served in political parties. Those women were interviewed as they could give ample, accurate and beneficial information. They
were well-experienced, observed and knew how women are challenged from the corner of their family to the corner of their society toward participation in a decision-making process.

Hence, from the participants, it was possible to know the very challenges women have experienced before and during decision-making participation; and the status quo opportunities that increase their decision-making participation.

Sources of Data

The data were collected through primary and secondary sources and the time framework of the study was in the post 2010. This time framework coincides with the (Growth Transformation Plan (GTP) of Ethiopia (since 2010). This GTP of Ethiopia takes women political, social and economic empowerment as one of its mission at national, regional and local levels. In the post 2010, examining opportunities and challenges of women’s participation in decision-making at a local and City level was the aim of this study.

Primary sources: Primary data were collected from interviews and FGDs. A researcher used semi-structured interviews to have depth and wide information from participants. Through FGD, it was possible to explore attitude, perception, feelings and ideas about a specific topic from participants who were organized collectively, homogeneously from different backgrounds for the same purpose.

Secondary sources: The study collected secondary sources of data from published and unpublished documents, journals, books, magazines and newspapers which have direct relations to the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis must be a coincident process in qualitative research and data analysis is taking place throughout the data collection process (Cresswell, 2003). Data collected from the interviews of participants were recorded and transcribed. Every interview was recorded before the end of the conversation to make sure the recording was done. Dealing with FGD, core concepts of the discussion recorded before the end of the meeting. The data which were collected from an interview and FGD were prepared based on the aim of the study and analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis used to analyze classification and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data (Zagreb, 2012).

Ethical Issues

Ethical clearance considered in the process of the study. Informed consent gained from participants before conducting interviews. Key informants and Focus groups informed to discuss and admit the truth about what they know issues related to women’s participation in decision making. The researcher secured identity and confidentiality of the participants.

The researcher used code to report the findings from the study. Information of the participants and their identity related to the information they gave are kept. Data collected have been utilized exclusively for this study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the way of being sure the accuracy of finding from a researcher and participants. To insure the trustworthiness of the research, the researcher employed triangulation method after which the findings were correlated. The interview guide, discussion guide, participants and the type recorder employed during the protest. This process helped the researcher to identify the ambiguities, unrealistic and inappropriate questions before the main interview. The researcher used straightforward language and description to convey the findings. The researcher also used peer examination. Teachers and friends served as a peer examiner. Above all, the researcher also employed multiple sources of data.

Results and Discussion

Opportunities of Women’s Participation in Decision-Making
The adoption of international law and convention: Ethiopia adopted the United Nation Charter on human rights and National Action Plan for Gender in 1981. By considering this in 1992, the Ethiopian government has established Women’s Affair office within the Prime Minister’s office, and the office is headed by women with rank of a minister. In 2005, Women’s Affairs upgraded to Women’s Affairs Ministry (Bill and Melinda Foundation, n.d.). In addition to this, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that women’s equal participation in decision-making. Ethiopia has applied this platform action (Okumo et al., 2008).

Constitutional and different legal orientation toward women: The Ethiopian government formulated national policy on women in 1993 (Shimels, 2015). The aim of this policy is to achieve equality between men and women in economical, social and political life. This allows women to hold public office and take part in decision-making.

The FDRE constitution which was adopted in 1995 guarantees women equal rights with men and provides affirmative action to remedy gender inequalities. For instance article 25 of the FDRE constitution guarantees equality before the law and prohibits any discrimination on the ground of gender. In addition to this, article 35 also states that principles of equal access of resources, economy and political participation by considering women (FDRE Constitution, 1995).

Further, in Ethiopia, a new family law came into effect in July 2000 (Shimels, 2015). This family law is focusing on the advancement of women, affirmative action, provision for higher education, employment and promotion in the workplace (Taddasse et al., 2013). Peculiarly, the Amhara National Regional State issued family code in June 2003. In this code section 2, Article 60, sub 1 states the following: “The spouses owe each other respect, support and assistance” and sub 2 states the following: “The contract of marriage shall not derogate such rule” (Zikre- HiG of the Council of the Amhara National Regional State in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2003, p. 60). The above-mentioned rules and codes have a giant role by providing a get for women’s political, economic and social empowerment at national and local level.

Packages, programmes, policies and initiatives toward women: Different packages, programmes, policies and initiatives are practiced. This has its own opportunities by appreciating and advancing women toward politics. For instance, there is Ethiopian Women’s Development and Transformation Package and the vision of this package is to achieve equal participation of women on social, economic and political space at all levels. Since 2006, the package has practiced to realise its vision (FDRE: Women Affairs Ministry, 2006).

In addition to this, under the roof of the United Nations, there was Ethiopian Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. This programme stayed from July 2012 to December 2015. Its aim was to improve women’s livelihoods, increased opportunities for education and leadership and decision-making. It worked with federal and local governance institutions to maintain gender equality, women’s empowerment and promote the rights of women and girls (Joint Programme Document, 2015). This programme made its contribution to the empowerment of women for different issues at Debre Tabor City (Personal Communication, Women, Children and Youth’s Affairs Office Officer at Debre Tabor City Administration Alemnesh Wagaye, January 10, 2016).

The World Fund Programme is also one Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) which empowers women economically. In Debre- Tabor City Administration, women were beneficial from the debt of World Fund (ibid). These, in turn, generate good opportunities for women’s active involvement in decision-making.

Further, in 1993, the government of FDRE issued the National Ethiopian Policy on women. Due to women’s disadvantaged position in the society, the aim of this policy is to institutionalize the political and socio-economic rights of women. This policy has created different women structures in government institutions to empower women, politically (Michiko, 2006). By structured women in various wings, this policy has worked on the enablement of women’s decision-making at federal and local level.

Further, the participants portrayed that the government had packages like Ethiopian Women’s Development
and Transformation Package. For women, describing the packages on earth were important to actualize themselves.

**Different governmental structure of women:** There were different governmental structures of women in local governance that assist them for further political empowerment. These were Women Federation, Women Association and Women’s League (Tadesse et al., 2013).

From the participant word, we understood that different governmental structure of women had pursued political, economic and social empowerment in different ways. The findings agree with Forum for Social Studies and Atos Consulting (2012) who reported that to pursue political benefit with among others for women is the goal of that women’s association, league and federation.

**Education, training and awareness:** The findings from the participants reported that access of education, adult education, open vocational and special skills linked with women’s ability to establish a space for themselves in decision-making.

This finding is supported by Khadar (2013) who reported that access of education, adult education, open vocational and special skills linked with women’s ability to create a space for themselves in politics and decision-making.

**Preparation of periodical meeting:** In *Kebeles*, the Women’s Association has prepared meeting monthly. At the City level, the meeting was also held monthly. In the meeting through their *Kebeles* and City, women discussed every issue concerned with them. Political discussion was one among others.

The participants explained that women had participated in *Kebele* meeting which occurred monthly. The meeting was arranged for women to discuss issues start from house and extends to political and economic issues. This was a superb opportunities for women to develop the culture of decision-making.

**Economical and financial empowerment:** Strength or empower women economically and financially build up confidence for women to play a considerable role in decision-making. The participants argued that economic empowerment enabled women to devote more attention to politics. Economic empowerment increased their confidence and initiated them to unclothe their eye for political participation and decision making. Even be independent economically chopped off other oppressions of women and it gave them air to breathe about politics and discusses their issues. The finding is supported by Domingo et al. (2015) who reported that economic empowerment enables women to influence over decisions in the household and political activities outside the home.

**Applying the quota system:** This refers to the allowed greatest number to be needed. The local governance put quota for women to increase their participation in decision-making. The participants told that quota which is 35% reserved for women by the government was one alternative to cultivate women who will be architect of decision-making.

As shown, applying the quota system would allow women to influence policy making and to challenge the inequalities that women now face in many areas, including politics and education with among others. This finding agrees with Mervis and Nyemba (2013) who reported that the quota system enables women to increase their approach and participation toward politics and the government needs to practice it.

**Challenges of Women’s Participation in Decision Making**

**Illiteracy and low-level of education:** As Amna (2012) illiteracy or low-level of education is the widespread problem which hinders women’s participation in decision-making at local level. The participants experience showed illiteracy and low-level of education made women’s participation in decision-making low. Women, who were illiterate and in low level in their education, encountered challenges to approach on the position of decision-making. The finding agrees with Thresia (2004) who reported that illiteracy and low level of education challenges women toward political participation and participation in decision-making.

**Economical weakness:** Women who were feeble in their economic power never wanted to take part in any
decision-making process. Dealing with this interviewee 9 had this to say: “Women, who were complained of stagnant economy and finance, always run to fulfill day-to-day needs rather than to participate in the community meeting and in any decision-making process.”

Significance number of participants also had similar experience with the before mentioned interviewees on economical challenge for women’s participation in the decision-making process. Thus, being weak economically is one challenge among others for women’s participation in decision-making. The finding of the study agrees with Mahat(2003) and Nahar and Humaidan(2013) who reported that economically and financially frail women could not come toward the decision-making and political arena since their first aim is to win their special and material needs.

Culture: Culture is the other challenge on women’s participation in decision-making. For a long time in Ethiopia, the culture never appreciates women to do tasks out of home and equally participate with men in economic, political and social issues. This problem still reflected on women’s participation in decision-making at the local level. The experiences of the participants informed us how the culture customized the task classification. Rearing children and work at home were given to women. That means the task classification had a negative impact on the process of women’s participation in decision-making. The finding agreed with Meseret Shiferaw (2007) and Shmelis (2015) who reported that Ethiopia culture suppress women to let in only in home tasks and activities and job of politics outside home is given to men.

Negative perception of the society towards women’s participation in decision-making: According to the participants’ precursor, in the studied area, the society believed that women are not capable enough to do something equally with men. The society never thought that women cannot maintain change when they are involved in community issues and decision-making process. Owing to this, women toward their participation of politics are unappreciated since this was taken as the work of men.

Man’s oppression: As Abdul et al. (2011) men’s oppression and anarchy marginalize women’s participation in decision-making. Most participants notified me that the masculine view and the patriarchal culture has still not avoided; and man oppression has continued. This has it is own impact on women’s participation in decision-making. Most women were not participating in politics and decision-making because men oppressed women and did not believe on women’s capability toward decision-making.

Husbands: The husbands, who were habitually accepted as the house holders at local and grass root levels, influenced women to manage only the activities at home. Husbands never allowed their consort to participate on any issues out of home with their colleagues and within the local governance. The participants explained that husbands were not willing to appreciate women work out of home. This finding is supported by Gochhayat (2013) who asserted that the husband at home influence women from taking part in decision-making and politics.

Men decision makers and leaders: In public office, men oppressions are also another challenge that hinders women’s participation in decision-making. Men decision makers, leaders and officials have challenged women toward decision-making position and decision-making. In public office the political arena is organized according to masculine norms, values and lifestyles. Briefly, there is masculine model of politics in public office.

The participants told that women are challenged by men officials and decision makers to carry out decisions and to hold decision-making and leadership positions because men assume that women are not capable enough to do that. Thus, up until now the patriarchal culture has been uneliminated. Women in the eyes of men officials and decision makers are not capable enough to do so and viewed as weak in any condition.

Religion: Religion, in case of its interpretation and doctrine for many years, has remained a challenge for women’s participation in decision-making. Related to this interviewee 15 described Islamic religion’s political orientation toward women as follows:

Allah through his prophet Mohammed told as Hawa (Eve) is half creature of Adam (Adem). That means she is less than man. She is unfull. She is sensitive and hot-headed to make decision and judgment. Further, our
religion not allowed women out of their home to come in the political arena and meeting equally with men. It has defended women in cramped space to be with man. All the more, women need veiling their face or applied “Nika” out of home. This is what women do because evil mistaken men and women to execute adultery, to do sin and be out of the command of Allah. It is impossible for Islam woman to play a role in political life and participate in the making of the overarching objective of her society. We are directed by Quran which doesn’t discuss women’s position toward politics. But I tell you women is sensitive, hot-headed to be leaders, decision makers and participate in community issues with men. For this reason it is unallowed for women to take part in political field. Further during FGD 1 participant 6 was a Muslim and said this: I am Muslim but by myself I am active political participant in the City. If you go to our religion deeply, it never allows women’s political and decision-making participation. Our Imam and religion leaders by referring Quran have told us women are sensitive and extremely fast for decision-making. Women cannot participate in community meetings and any political issues with men because they deceive men in their beauty and make them out of control to make decisions and politics.

The above participants noted that women who are Muslim didn’t participate in decision-making because the religion doctrine and the Quran do not allow them to do so. In Islamic religion women are considered as the supporter of men. They are sensitive and hot-headed to carry out decision and come onto the position of politics and leaders. Further, women cannot participate on community issues with men since they invite men for adultery action.

This finding agreed with Nahar and Humaidan (2013) and Shmelis (2015) who reported that Islamic religion and doctrine are conservative and patriarchal and it sees women as incapable enough and hot-headed in decision-making. And in addition to this, women are unallowed to associate with the crowded men and come out of home for any purpose because they can be cause for adultery.

From the angel of Orthodox Christianity interviewee 14 said the following: Many women have passed through leadership. They have passed in decision-making and leadership positions. They have governed the country. For instance, Queen Sheba, who was believed to be the mother of King Solomon, was the ruler of the country. Queen Tsehayitu was a shrewd Ethiopian politician at her time. We have also many Christian women politicians even if I do not mention their name. In my religion the political orientation of women toward political participation and decision-making is positive. Women can participate in politics. God does not identify that these things for women and that for men. Women can participate in political issues with men and never escape from any decision since they are part of the human creature. So they need participating in any issues to solve their own and community problem. The gigantic mistake in religion is different interpretations which lead to contrary doctrines. Some were misguided by a mistaken interpretation of the bible may say women are weak, inferior, do consider unequal with men and prevent to participate on different things equal with men. But that is not. What surprises is that women were coördinator of the sermon with the apostles when God was on earth and the first who herald the rise of God among the mortals. And God come to the world through women, Mary. God respect women. He does not consider women as inferior. Thus, women are equal with men and actually participate on issues. Women can perform what men do in the political arena.

The preceding experiences from the interviewee implied that in the Orthodox Christian faith women can achieve anything and be participants in any issues equally with men. From this it is possible to infer that women can participate and influence the decision-making arena equally with men. Misinterpretation and misguided doctrine, based on the Bible of Orthodox Christianity, prevents women from doing something and participating on community issues equally with men.

**Domestic task**: Almost entirely, it is familiar to observe women doing household activities. It is possible to say more women are homemakers. The experience of participants revealed us that priority for women wasn’t participation in decision-making; it’s rather their home, family and children. Therefore, they while away their time by managing their family, children and completing the homework. This actually hinders women to come out of their homes and participate in any political and decision-making issues. The finding is supported by Mofoluwawo (2014) who reported that women are confronted with competing domestic work and responsibilities than participate in politics.
Lack of confidence and interest among women: AS Mahat (2003) reported that lack of confidence influences women’s participation in decision-making. In addition to this, the United States Agency for International Development (2014) reported that lack of interest is the key barriers to advancing women’s participation in decision-making. Since women have come with different oppression makeup, they lack confidence and interest on local issues.

Some participants revealed they still faced lack of confidence to be active in the political arena because men and the society degrade them and their works. Even, repeatedly, during decision-making at the political meeting, the voice of women is unheard. This has a significant role to reduce their confidence. From this it is possible to induce that lack of attention for women at the political meeting is one of the causes which brings about lack of confidence.

The existence of unfair, reticence and complex bureaucracy work on the beholders in the local governance: As Zende (2011) sometimes in the local governance through equality and justice means women are unbeneﬁcial from the political and decision-making leadership. This problem has been seen in government organs and opponent political parties. This causes women uninterested in the position of decision-making.

The experiences of the participants told that the political arena and leadership are held by an intimate elite group. The elite group comes to power through personal relationships and informal networks. In addition to this among those who are concerned about politics, there is no open political decision-making. Further, there are complex bureaucracies, hierarchies and legislatures in the political parties. So the issues are barriers of women’s movement toward decision-making.

The findings of this study go a line with Zende (2011) who reported that rigid administrative structure with the existence non-co-operation from government officials/bureaucrats, unclear legal system and personal networks are hindered women journey of active participation in decision-making.

Conclusion

Women, much, contribute to the development of social and economic value in the World. Despite this, women all over the world have encountered many constraints while venturing into decision making. Women are facing ostracism and discrimination from cultural, economic, social and religious perspectives in resource allocation, political office appointments and political participation.

The study geared towards investigating the opportunities and challenges of women’s participation in decision-making at Debre-Tabor City Administration in the post 2010 periods. Three instruments namely, interview and FGD were used for the collection of data. Participants were selected through purposive sampling system and chain referral sampling system. The case study research design was adopted for the study and data are analyzed thematically. The collected data show that with the existence of diverse opportunities stretched by local governance and various stakeholders, women were unable to take part in local decision-making and unable to take up the opportunities convenient for them to participate.

The study therefore sought to find out the reasons why women at Debre-Tabor City Administration cannot participate in decision-making and how the opportunities are arranged by local governance to participate in local decision making.

Women constituted unsatisfied position in decision-making position, public office and community meeting either in Kebeles or City level as a result of social, cultural and religious attitudes which frequently tend to relegate women to the background. At the side of men, very few men allowed their wives to participate in decision making. The decision making and public office were primarily influenced by men because they tend to practice the dominant hierarchical culture.

Inadequate education was a key constraint to women’s political participation. Women constituted a more considerable percentage of the illiterate groups in our society. That could be attributed to the fact that most parents and families prefer to send sons to school than Daughters. Also, because of various oppressions
women forfeited their confidence. Furthermore, they afraid of an insult and criticism when they came on the political career.

Within existing challenges there were diverse opportunities stretched to maintain women on the political space. The adoption of various international laws and conventions, the constitution and different legal orientation toward women, policies, programmes and initiatives of women, different governmental structures of women, education, training and awareness, preparation of periodical meeting, economical and financial empowerment and the quota system can take as opportunities that enabled women to be active on political participation.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following specific recommendations are provided to the concerned bodies to deal with:

* The local government should seriously continue to give adult education and education for women. It should also facilitate economical benefit for women.

* The local government should also give attention to the existence of women in the City council because this establishes a good advantage for the echo of women political empowerment and for the consideration of women in policy making.

* Awareness creation: Women, Children and Youths’ Affairs Office of the City must always organize periodic seminars, workshops and training for women to gain awareness about equality, rights, to stand for decision-making and decision making position. In addition to this it should also give education and training for the society to alter negative cultural perception toward women. Parallel to this, it is necessity to go down grassroots and create awareness on women about men violation, equality and rights. It is also vital to deliver training and awareness for men officials to change their looking is of women.

* Affirmative action: The stakeholders should work to compensate women’s cultural and religion damage by doing affirmative action since cultural and religion damage has still observed in the local level.

* Finally, it recommended that at least 40% seat must be reserved for women at the City council and kebeles council.

**Reference**


Theam, L. (2014). The strength and weakness of research between qualitative and quantitative.


