Full Length Research Paper

Women's role and their styles of leadership

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This research had three objectives: determining the level of participation of women in the academic leadership of Addis Ababa University (AAU), specifying the types of leadership styles women leaders demonstrate, and tracing the factors that led to those styles. Two key research instruments were used: questionnaires and interview. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using the instruments. Means were used in the analysis of the collected data. Findings indicate the participation level of women in AAU's leadership is low. As regards the key leadership styles, top-level leaders tend to have more of the characteristic types of transformational leadership. The middle level leaders tend to have characteristics from both the contingent type of leadership style and the transformational leadership style. The middle-level leaders tend to have characteristics of leadership that largely fall towards the bottom line of the Full Range of Leadership Model. They also possess some aspects of the Transformational Leadership. The enhancement of policy and service provisions is recommended to improve the role and leadership skills of women.

Key words: Role, leadership, style, model, women.

INTRODUCTION

The problem

The issue of women's plight is an issue of all humanity. A sizeable research data already confirmed that women constitute the majority of the poor and illiterate both in the rural and urban areas of Africa (Manuh, 2010). While in terms of legal rights and common rationality they should take part in all sectors of life, they are segregated and discriminated in practice especially in the developing world. They do not enjoy equal benefits with men in many parts of Africa while they constitute about 57% of the economic activity of, for example, sub-Saharan Africa (Manuh, 2010). Existing resolutions and forums such as the 1995 4th International Conference on Women, the

1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development, and the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (Onsongo, 2004) illustrate that there is still disparity in treating gender issues globally. In theory, however, a modern civilized democratic government/institution has to ensure that women have equal access and participation in all modes of life in all challenges and benefits. A society that advocates justice, democracy, representativeness and progressivism must ensure equal degree of participation for women to that of men in higher education leadership and management as well.

The Ethiopian context has by and large been a masculine organizational context. The share of women in all areas of life is very insignificant owing to various

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cultural and political factors that long-lived in the country for many years in the past. Women in Ethiopia have suffered for many years from lack of access to ownership, leadership and decision-making opportunities. Comparing the positions of men and women in professional positions in Ethiopia, Meron (2003) states that women occupy only 29% while men occupy 71% of the professional positions. The same writer further argues that Ethiopian women are mainly engaged in clerical and fiscal administrative positions. More specifically research data show that only about 2% of the general management and decision-making positions are held by women while the 98% is held by men (compare this to that of Kenya where women occupy 4.9% of the management positions while men occupy 95.1% of the same, Onsongo 2004) . One can make a reasonable deduction from this disproportionately small percentage that the share of women in Ethiopian higher education leadership may even go far fewer than this figure.

Equally important is the perception women hold towards the nature of higher education leadership and management. Whether they are too many or few, their attitude critically affects the nature of managerial positions they hold and will hold. In response to the contemporary successful style of leadership proposed by many in the field of educational leadership, women leaders are expected to develop a culture of trust between the faculty and the administrative staff as the joint-decision-making of these two units is detrimental in successfully and effectively running the day to day academic tasks of universities.

The Constitution of Ethiopia (1991) grants women equal participation and access to all aspects of economic, social and political life. The Ethiopian government is a signatory of all important gender equality and right assuring international agreements, covenants and regulations. One of these is the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1981) including leadership in higher education.

The Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia's biggest and oldest university established in 1950/51 is expected to demonstrate a gender sensitive environment in compliance with the national policies of the country. And this environment in turn is expected to ensure equal participation of both sexes in leadership as in other facets of life.

Research questions

The general objective of this research was to describe the share of women's participation against the share of men in Addis Ababa University academic leadership in 2011-2012. This objective included also the characterization of the nature of leadership styles the women leaders exhibited during the study.

Specifically, the following research questions were set, given the context of the Addis Ababa University (AAU);

1. What was the share of women's academic leadership?
2. What were the dominant leadership styles they demonstrated?
3. What factors might have contributed to the styles of leadership they exhibited?

METHODS

Subjects

A case study design was chosen for the study. As is common in leadership behavior/style studies, surveys may not yield in an in-depth description of leadership styles. The Addis Ababa University (out of 33 public universities) as a case institution and six women leaders (out of 9 women leaders in the university) as individual subjects were chosen purposely for the study. The Addis Ababa University (AAU) is the oldest and biggest university in Ethiopia. Unlike many other local universities, it has greater diversity in terms of academic population across age, range of programs and several management functions, and richer experience in higher educational leadership. The six faculty leaders were drawn conveniently and purposively from three levels of leadership: top, middle, and lower management positions as individual subjects. Top-level admini-strators include women appointed as president or chancellor or vice president or chancellor, etc. Mid-level women administrators include women assigned as deans or vice deans, directors or vice directors, or department heads, etc. Low-level women administrators include women administrators in positions that fall under departmental leadership in a hierarchy such as coordinators of courses or programs. This division was made for the sake of this research following patterns similar researchers have used (Tomas and et al., 2010).

Data sources and instruments

The first group of informants (three AAU officials) was selected (irrespective of their sex) purposely on the basis of the potential they had for providing background information about the status of women leadership and related issues in the university by filling out semi-structured questionnaire. These officials were the academic vice president, the chief academic officer for staff affairs, and the head of the university's gender office. The data that were collected from these informants served as a basis for undertaking the next levels of data collection in relation to the objectives of the research.

The second group of informants was the selected women leader subjects themselves. It was the analysis of these women leaders' leadership style that made the critical mass of the research. The women leaders were made to analyze their own perceived leadership styles using a standard self-rating Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire called MFLQ and they were requested to provide their background information and opinions using a self-made assessment or background assessment questionnaire.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio, 2005) is a 45 item questionnaire that has questions in it that ask both the leader in question and the selected staff members to rate the frequency of actions and behaviors of the leader on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (frequently, if not always). The instrument contains 9 leadership components which have been elaborated so far as major lines of styles of leadership

Table 1. The AAU's faculty by gender and nationality.

| Staff nationality profile | Number and percentages by gender | | | | | |
| | Female | | Male | | Total | |
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ethiopian	210	10.10	1741	83.78	1951	93.99
Expatriate	21	1.01	106	5.10	127	6.11
Total	231	11.11	1847	88.88	2078	100

Source: Addis Ababa University Academic Staff Profile (2008/2009 (2001 E.C, p.5).

by various researchers along the line of the full range of leadership model and a full range of leadership styles. The nine components are the contingent reward, intellectual stimulation, management-by-exception (passive), management-by-exception (active), laissez faire leadership, idealized influence (behavior), idealized influence (attributed), inspirational motivation, and individual consideration. The classic form of the MLQ includes both self and rater forms. The self form measures self perception of leadership behaviors. The rater form is used to measure leadership as perceived by superiors, peers, and subordinates. Reliability tests and validation researches (Antonakis, 2003) already conducted on large samples as many as 3368 leaders on the items of the instrument have shown that the degree of reliability ranges from 0.74 to 0.94 for each leadership factor scale, with a nearly 0.76 with the subjects in this study.

The third group of informants (known as external raters) was selected (irrespective of their sex) by the six women leaders in the second group on the basis of, again, purposive sampling. Each subject woman leader was made to select two other external raters (to rate the woman leader's leadership style externally) from any one subordinate or boss (leadership acquaintances) around them in the university on the assumption that those to be selected know the woman leader best in action. Therefore, this group consisted of twelve informants or external raters. This group used the standard MLQ Raters Questionnaire.

Data analysis

Interview data were thematically classified and discussed in narrative forms. Means and aggregate means were used for comparing and contrasting numerical data from standard questionnaires. In the study pseudonyms were used for ethical reasons. Formal permission was secured from the author (Bass, 1990) through the Mind Garden Company upon written request to use the MLQ for this research purpose.

RESULTS

Interview and documentary sources indicate the share of women in AAU's faculty was 11.11% during the 2008/2009 academic year can be seen in Table 1. The figure for this same period includes women expatriate staff. The remaining 89.9% was the men's share. Numerically the number of women in AAU's academic staff was 231 out of the total 2078 AAU's academic staff. Table 1 describes the AAU's faculty by gender.

The same source describes out of the total number of women mentioned 2.24, 5.11 and 1.62% have a first,

second and third degrees respectively as terminal qualifications. This is in comparison with the 44.55, 11.68 and 26.24% of parallel male qualifications. It was found out that women held 20, 5, and 10% of the position of presidential, deanship and senate positions respectively during the study period.

When it comes to leadership styles, the six subject leaders might be put under three locations on the continuum line (within the framework of the Full Range Leadership Model): the top leaders towards the top of the model, the middle-level leaders somehow in the middle and the low level leaders towards the bottom of the continuum line. The continuum line diagram below illustrates the subject leaders dominant leadership styles.

The Full Range of Leadership Model continuum line

Passive-avoidant region	Transactional region	Transformational region
Lower level leaders	Middle level leaders	Top-level leaders

It may be interesting to see slightly in detail how women leaders at different levels evaluated their own leadership styles using the MLQ. It may also be interesting to see how they are evaluated by external raters and then see the average of both as Table 2 shows. The average evaluations are however more or less the same as indicated in the above continuum line. The overall evaluation indicates the leadership style tendency of middle level leaders towards transactional leadership style.

Once we tentatively establish the leadership styles of women leaders, it might be interesting to see next their background even though it may not be possible to conclude that their given background was the reason for their current styles of eldership.

Scholars such as Tomas et al. (2010) have confirmed that there may be a meaningful relationship between leaders' background such as national and contingent factors and the styles of leadership they demonstrate. Thus, an attempt was made to find out the educational, training, and socio-cultural backgrounds of women leaders selected for this study. Table 3 exhibits findings

Table 2. Women Leaders styles of leadership as rated by themselves and external raters.

No	Leadership	No of items	TL1(Birtukan) Mean Score			LL2(Aster) Mean Score			ML2(Kokeb) Mean Score			TL2(Azalech) Mean Score			ML1(Tsion) Mean Score			LL1(Lydia) Mean Score			Grand grand mean
			L	R1	R2	L	R1	R2	L	R1	R2	L	R1	R2	L	R1	R2	L	R1	R2	
1	Idealized influence_ total (Attributed)	4	3.00	3.00		3.00	3.75	3.00	3.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.75		3.75			3.50	1.25	3.00	3.25
2	Idealized influence_ total (Behavior)	4	3.67	3.5		3.25	3.75	3.00	3.50	4.00	3.25	3.25	2.50		4.00			3.00	2.25	3.00	3.28
3	Inspirational motivation	4	3.67	4		3.00	3.25	3.00	3.50	4.00	3.75	4.00	2.75		3.75			3.00	1.50	3.00	3.29
4	Intellectual stimulation	4	3.00	4		3.00	3.75	3.25	3.75	4.00	2.75	3.50	2.00		4.00			3.50	3.50	2.00	3.28
5	Individualized consideration	4	3.00	2.25		3.50	3.25	3.50	3.50	2.00	3.00	3.75	.75		4.00			3.750	1.00	3.00	2.87
6	Contingent reward	4	3.67	4		3.73	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.75	2.25		3.75			3.25	3.75	4.00	3.65
7	Management by exception (active)	4	2.33	2.75		3.00	2.75	2.75	1.75	.75	3.25	3.25	.25		.50			2.00	0.75	1.00	1.93
8	Management by exception (passive)	4	0.00	0.75		1.50	2.50	1.25	.00	.00	2.50	.75	.00		.75			0.00	1.75	1.50	0.94
9	Laissez faire leadership	4	0.00	0.00		1.75	1.00	2.5	.50	.00	.25	.25	.00		1.75			0.25	1.50	3.00	0.91
10	Extra effort	3	3.00	4.00		3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.33	3.33	1.00		2.67			2.67	2.33	2.67	2.92
11	Effectiveness	4	3.67	3.25		2.75	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.75	---		3.00			3.50	2.00	2.75	3.28
12	Satisfaction	2	2.5	4.00		3.50	3.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.5	3.00		4.00			3.50	2.50	3.00	3.39

Table 3. A summary of target leaders' national and contingent factors and dominant leadership styles.

	TL1(Birtukan)	LL2(Aster)	ML2(Kokeb)	TL2(Azalech)	ML1(Tsion)	LL1(Lydia)
Age	35	42	43	40	26	46
Qualification	MSc	MA	PhD	PhD	MA	PhD
Area of Sp.	Information Scs.	TEFL	Sociology	Linguistics	Cultural Studies	TEFL
Marital Status	Married	Married	Divorced	Married	Single	Married
No of children	2	1	---	3	1	4
work experience	12 yrs	23 yrs	16 yrs	13 yrs	7 yrs	25 yrs
leadership experience	5 yrs	10 yrs	2 yrs	4 yrs	1 yr	2 yrs
training on management	Short term	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Ethnic group	--	Amhara	Amhara	--	Oromo	Amhara
religion	Christian	Orthodox Christian	Christian	Orthodox Christian	Protestant	Orthodox Christian
Dominant leadership style	Inspirational motivation and contingent reward	Contingent reward	Inspirational motivation	Idealized influence (Attributes)	Idealized influence (Behavior)	Contingent reward

available from the questionnaires administered. The table also makes comparisons between leadership styles and the leaders' background.

According to the above table subject leaders at all levels of leadership had a significant level of academic qualification, the minimum qualification being an MA degree and the maximum qualification being a PhD degree. In fact, half of them had a PhD level qualification. This finding might be encouraging in that it gives a clue as to the educational level of women in Ethiopia (that women reach highest level of qualification) despite that there are numberless problems of all kind that they face in education. Many leaders seem to have come from the social sciences and communications disciplines as the table illustrates and almost all were from the Christian denomination in religion. Three of them had descended from the Amhara ethnic group while one was from the Oromo ethnic group and two others were not willing to describe their ethnicity in the administered questionnaires. Four of the selected leaders were married and with some years of experience in training with management/ leadership related areas

It might be insightful to trace the overall background of the subject leaders in order to know more about the perceived leadership styles they had. The overall background in this research context refers to the wider context of the research, the Ethiopian context, and the way selected leaders were brought up, educated influenced by the environment, and overall living and working situations of these women leaders in particular. In order to understand and discuss the key elements of these women leaders' overall background, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 19 items was administered to each leader. Table 4 presents the findings in terms of means.

The table shows that the key factors that most contributed to the betterment of the leadership skills of those selected leaders (according to the leaders' own evaluation) were items numbered 5, 7,3,2,8, and 6 in almost descending order of evaluation. These are when described (respectively) parents' or family or upbringing's positive influence on becoming a leader in general, schooling (primary-tertiary) positive influence on becoming a leader in general, the positive influence of career for becoming a leader in general, the positive influence of maternal responsibility for my becoming a leader in general, and professional leadership com-petency. Whereas the key factors that contributed least towards making those women leaders were in ascending order items such as 1, 13, 4, 15, and 16. These are when described (respectively) interest in getting involved in leadership, the role of organizational culture in AAU in promoting women leadership, interest in getting involved in politics, the role or contribution of the organizational structure (tall or flat) in AAU in promoting women's role in leadership, and the overall role of different policies in AAU

in promoting women's leadership in AAU.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to describe the status of women leadership in Addis Ababa University, describe selected women leaders 'leadership styles and show the background of those exhibited styles. The level of participation of women in general in the faculty of AAU is very low (on average 10.10%) and the level of women in AAU's leadership in particular is even smaller (5-10%). Compared to the commonwealth universities this figure of participation is even minimal. A number of factors both continental and international have been identified through research (Heiskanen, 1993; Kamau, 2001, Lodiaga and Mbevi, 1995; Manuh, 2010; Nzomo, 1995) as factors that hinder the legitimate participation of women in higher education leadership and decision-making. Some of these barriers confirmed in this research report are inadequate formal education and training, lack of prominent women visible as role models, lack of mentoring, lack of women's self-empowerment by believing in themselves, lack of self-confidence, research and publication, and lack of fair and comprehensive policy framework. Obstacles elsewhere (implied in this research) towards women's route to leadership also include lack of practice in encouraging women, exposition and subjection to pressures and experiences not met by men, heavy domestic responsibility, deep-rooted traditional and cultural beliefs about women and their roles in community, stereotypical views, biased recruitment and promotion procedures, attitudes of employers to women employees, multi-fold intimidation, unsafe working environment, and absence of strong women's movement.

The above factors or barriers may be regrouped into three levels: personal factors, institutional factors, and societal factors. Yet given all these problems, there were on-going initiatives being made by the University in particular and by the Government of Ethiopia in general to address the issue.

As regards leadership styles, the overall tendency of leadership style with top and mid-level women leaders was transformational leadership style either individually in the form of its key components or in totality as a package of styles making up transformational leadership style as a whole. Top-level leaders tended to be generally transformational in their styles as reflected in their being responsive to the majority of descriptors in the MLQ instrument. It can be argued here that it is quite healthy (Yukl, 1994) for those leaders to fall under this category of leadership for so many reasons. First, transformational leaders create greater alignment around strategic visions and missions. Second, transformational leadership training has been shown to improve leadership and

Table 4. Selected leaders' overall background towards leadership and organizational strategy.

Code no. of items	TL1 (Birtukan) (Response)	LL2 (Aster) (Response)	ML2 (Kokeb) (Response)	TL2 (Azalech) (Response)	ML1 (Tsion) (Response)	LL1 (Lydia) (Response)	Mean of all	Mean ranked
1	3.00	4.00	2.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	2.50	2.50
2	4.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	2.50
3	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.50	2.66
4	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	2.66	2.67
5	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.66	2.83
6	4.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	3.66	2.83
7	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.50	2.83
8	2.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	3.80	3.00
9	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	3.66	3.00
10	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.33	3.17
11	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	3.00	3.33
12	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.83	3.5
13	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.50	3.66
14	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	3.00	3.66
15	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.67	3.80
16	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.83	4.00
17	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.5	4.50
18	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	2.83	4.50
19	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.17	4.66
Dominant leadership style	Inspirational motivation and contingent reward	Contingent reward	Inspirational motivation	Idealized influence (Attributes)	Idealized influence (Behavior)	Contingent reward		

associated performance over time. Fourth, transformational leadership has been found to explain statistically between 45% and 60% of organizational performance and transformational leaders created greater unity, cohesion, commit-ment, and lower turnover. Fifth, transformational leadership predicted higher levels of product innovation in R & D teams. Sixth, transformational leaders create safer work environments. This finding goes in conformity with the argument that many writers such as (Phan, 2011) make that transformational style of leader-ship essentially addresses the humane aspect of employees, the moral and ethical aspects which have all been revealed more in women's leadership styles than men's. Hunt (1999) further attributes communal emotional and democratic characteristic inherent in transformational leader-ship more to women than to men. Middle-level women leaders tended to have more from the middle region of the FRL model such as many characteristics from the transactional leadership such as the contingent reward styles. And yet, leaders at this level had considerable share from the characteristics of transformational leadership. Thus, they can also be said to have good leader-ship values as ascribed to the transformational leaders above. Lower-level leaders tended to exhibit more characteristics from the passive-avoidant region of the FRL model compared to the other two level leaders and yet, they also had important characteristics from the transactional region and from the transformational region.

As regards the overall background of the selected women leaders in the study, significant level of educational qualification and training in leadership development skills was found behind the leadership skills of the selected leaders, almost in all cases. One might deduce that education might contribute to the development of good leadership skills. Work or especially leadership experience was also another notable point behind the involvement of leadership for almost all leaders. Parents' or family upbringing, schooling (primary-tertiary), career, maternal responsibility and professional leadership competency were found to be important in contributing towards the leaders' development of leadership skills according to the leaders themselves in general.

The study finally recommends that in order to ensure a fair participation of women in the higher education academic and leadership sectors, the Addis Ababa University should aggressively work on two things: consolidating the affirmative action policy, and empowering women with overall education and training (including lobbying and advocacy skills) for better life and leadership roles in the community and in higher education sector in particular. Promoting gender issues to the required level of performance through an overall gender sensitization programme and gender mainstreaming should be one of the priorities of the university.

The AAU should provide on campus regular women-affiliated career advisement services and set up Women's Fund (special incentive and funding mechanisms for enhancing more women participation). Future research in this area may attempt to explore in large surveys women leaders' leadership styles as during the time of this study there were no many women leaders to engage in the research. Another impediment in this research was the timing as the AAU was undertaking reform initiatives during the study faculty were generally busy to volunteer as informants.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interest.

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