SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

ASSESSMENT ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CENTRAL ETHIOPIAN REGIONAL STATE OF GURAGE ZONE: THE CASE OF MESERAK MESEKAN WOREDA

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We hereby certify that we have read and evaluated this thesis entitled **"Assessment on women's political participation in Central Ethiopian Regional state of Gurage Zone: The Case of Meserak Mesekan Woreda"** prepared under our guidance by Seada Hussen Aliye. We recommend that the thesis be submitted as fulfilling the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BPA _____ Beijing Platform for Action

CEDAW ___Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CPR_____ Convention on the Political Rights of women

FDRE _____Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

FGD _____Focus Group Discussion

GoE _____ Government of Ethiopia

IANWGE__ Inter Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality

KI_____ Key Informant

MMW_____ Meserak Mesekan Woreda

MDGs_____ Millennium Development Goal

NOW_____ National Organization of Women

NPW _____ National Policy of Women

NGO_____ Non-governmental Organization

OSCE_____ Organization for security and co-operation in Europe

RWAB _____ Regional Women's Affairs Bureau

SNNPR ____ Sothern Nation Nationality and People's Regional state

UN _____ United Nation

WLM _____Women's Liberation Movement

WAO _____ Women's Affair Office

WAD _____ Women's Affair Departments

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ABSTRACT

This study is intended to assess women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. For this, a qualitative research approach was followed. The researcher has collected both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through interviews with purposefully selected respondents, and secondary data was analyzed from documents. In doing so, this study was critically analyzed based on the objectives of the study. The study identified that the political participation of women in Meserak Mesekan Woreda is low when compared with men and Women's political participation is not being done at the social level, and there is no activity to increase women's participation at the institutional level in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. Besides, there is no activity to promote women's political participation and decision-making processes. Besides, there is no legal document prepared to promote women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. At the national level, guidelines are prepared by the Federal Prosperity Bureau and implemented in a hierarchical manner, and women's political participation is improving at the federal level. However, the political participation of women in Meserak Mesekan Woreda is still very low. On the other hand, the study found that there were challenges that hindered women's political participation in the study area; these included educational challenges, economic challenges, socio-cultural challenges, and institutional challenges. Thus, the government should confirm equal rights for women based on their competency, experience, and educational background at different levels of government, particularly at the local level, and the local government body should ratify the community awareness training policy.

Key words: Women, Political Participation, Mesrak Meskan Woreda.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Politics is very important for many aspects of human life. Mostly, it is imperative for the existence of statehood and the way in which people interact-how they make decisions and settle disputes. The study of politics is the study of how such decisions are made. It may also be a study of how such decisions should be made. Thus, we can define politics in two ways: first, it can be considered the study of power, and second, it can be considered the study of conflict resolution. Politics relates to the power struggle of the state. It is thus concerned with power and the way in which power is distributed among society (or groups). While power is mostly obviously held by the government and its agents (Bentley *et al.*, 1995).

Women have traditionally been excluded from the structures of the state that determine political and legislative priorities. In recent years, Africa has witnessed a rapid escalation in female political representation as compared to the low rates that existed in the 1960s. The participation of women in decision-making has more and more been placed at the heart of the global agenda. Confirmatory developments in African governance, which have been eased by the ever-increasing consolidation of democracy on the continent, have led to an increase in women's participation in politics. Numerous achievements have been recorded in the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment, and various policies, programs, and projects are in place to advance gender equality and women's empowerment (Republic of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Women Affairs, 1995).

These changes have engendered the potential for increasing women's access to political power. The new trends in women's political participation have been aided by an amalgamation of numerous factors. Changes taking place in the African region have positively conferred an opportunity for more women to assume positions of leadership. Despite the fact that African women have made significant strides in political participation, worldwide, a colossal gap is still in existence. Women have a gargantuan task before they can be acknowledged as full equals and partners with their male counterparts (Ndlovu and Mutale, 2013).

Women's involvement in politics varies throughout the world, and their participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance. In spite of the clamor for women's political empowerment by international organizations, research consistently shows that in many parts of the world, women still linger on the fringes of the political realm, and their participation in government structures and the democratic process remains low (Vissandjes *et al.*, 2008).

The increasing salience of women's issues and the resurgence of women's movements have raised popular consciousness and intensified academic discourse on the poor participation of women in politics (Peterson *et al.,* 1999; Akinboye, 2004). Women's low political participation is a universal phenomenon (Shaul, 1982; Waylen, 1996; Lewu, 2005; Rai, 2005; & Pokam, 2006); furthermore, the imperative of women's participation in democratic governance and human development cannot be overemphasized (Amadiume, 1997; Bruce, 2004; Babatunde, 2003; Bari, 2005).

However, the participation of the political power of the state is paramount for every citizen of the state. Political participation is "the active engagement by individuals and groups with the governmental processes that affect their lives". This encompasses both involvements in decision-making and acts of opposition. Acts of active engagement include conventional political participation (such as voting, standing for office, and companioning a political party) and unconventional acts, which may be legitimate (such as signing a petition and attending a peaceful demonstration) or illegal (such as violent protests and refusing to pay tax) (Ahmed, 2013). Political participation is thus those voluntary actions through which citizens seek to influence the making of public policy. Political participation, in fact, matters for the life of every individual human being, both men and women. Recognizing the essence of political participation for every individual human being, the UN exerted its human rights core instruments and recognized it as a fundamental political right (Ahmed, 2013).

According to Meaza (2009), cited in Menase (2018), Ethiopia is a member and part of international treaties, including the most important human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW), which calls for equal participation of women in public decision-making, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BDPA), which requires governments to attain a 30% benchmark for women's representation in all public decision-making positions. Moreover, various literatures argue that, as compared to prior decades, the participation of women in Ethiopian politics throughout the country is somehow increasing. But, in spite of the incremental progress towards women's participation in political spheres, it is generally recognized that women have largely remained outside of formal counseling roles due to various factors (Alemu, 2014).

The importance of this research is based on the fact that attitudes toward women in politics affect women's participation, and in turn, women in positions of political leadership engage in policies that positively affect women (Caiazza, 2004). This reciprocal effect furthers the process of gender equality in the workforce and promotes an environment where women are supported to move into autonomous and independent activities. This process gradually leads to further acceptance of women in political activities. In line with this, the purpose of this study is to analyze women's political participation status in Gurage Zone in the case of Meserak Mesekan woreda.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Women in Ethiopia account for 50% of the population but do not equally participate in and benefit from development and progress, even if the country‘s constitution ensures their rights (Bizuneh, 2016). Due to this problem, the Ethiopian constitution, particularly Articles 25, 34(1), and 35(3), places greater emphasis on women‘s political participation and representation, equality of women with men, and protection of fundamental rights of people. Particularly, Article 25 of the constitution describes that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled, without any discrimination, to equal protection of the law. Article 34(1) of the Ethiopian Constitution reads, "Men and women, without any distinction as to race, nation, nationality, or religion, who have attained marriageable age as defined by law, have the right to marry and find a family. They have equal rights while entering into, during marriage, and at the time of divorce."

Moreover, Article 35(3) of the constitution stipulates that "the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia takes into account women, in

order to remedy this legacy, who are entitled to affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them to compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social, and economic life, as well as in public and private institutions." In addition to this, Article 35 as a whole provides detailed rights for women.

Despite the positive policy environment created and progress for women in Ethiopia, their participation in key growth and development programs and sectors and their role in the decision-making process at all levels of government are still minimal (UNEGEEW, 2014). This is because "women experience lower socio-economic status in general and hence is marginalized from making decisions at all levels. Nonetheless, women are poor in terms of access to resources, services, and employment" (Shimelis, 2015). In line with economic significance and benefits, as well as political participation and representation, Ethiopian women are less in accordance with the opportunities that are given to them by the constitution and their contribution to the country‘s total population.

Recently, some studies on women's empowerment and political participation have been conducted by different researchers at the national level; a case in point is the study conducted by Asrese (2020). He attempted to study "women's political participation and representation at the local level in the Ethiopian federation" and concluded that" the deep-rooted traditional attitudes, cultural values in the community, low levels of literacy, and low commitments from concerned government bodies are some of the factors that hinder full-fledged women‘s empowerment.

Similarly, a survey study has also been conducted by Mignot in 2017 on "the role of women’s in the decision-making process in federal Ethiopia". He concluded that there was a cross-section of factors that hinder women‘s access to political participation in Ethiopia; however, the government of Ethiopia has declared its commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women by stipulating the rights of women in its constitution, issuing the women‘s policy of the country, and developing a national action plan for gender equality to put gender mainstreaming into action in Ethiopia and in its regions across various policies.

Despite all these, women are still in subordinate positions in the country, and they occupy low status in society. Thus, in Ethiopia, women‘s political participation and public decision-making processes at different levels of government have not yet reached the required level (50%). This overall problem exists in the Southern Nation Nationality and People Regional State in Gurage Zone, particularly in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. Accordingly, all of the above researchers merely focused on women‘s empowerment, political participation, and decision-making processes at the national level. Unlike the above researchers, this study is focused on women‘s political participation at the local level, particularly at Meserak Mesekan Woreda, where no study has been conducted so far on women‘s political participation.

Consequently, this study tried to assess the status of women in Woreda cabinets, the opportunities and challenges of women‘s substantive and descriptive political participation and decision-making in the study area, and also to evaluate the current representation of women in local government structures, including councils and committees, as well as to identify the proportion of women participating in key decision-making processes by addressing the following research objectives and questions:

1.3. Objectives of the study

This study addressed the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to assess women’s political participation in Central Ethiopian Regional state of Gurage Zone: The Case of Meserak Mesekan Woreda.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

- To assess the legal, institutional and socio-cultural norms that promotes women‘s political participation in Meserak Mesekan woreda.
- To assess the current status of women‘s political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda.
- To identify challenges that constricts women’s political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda.

1.4. Research questions

This study specifically addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the legal, institutional and socio-cultural norms that promote women‘s political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda?

2. What is the current status of women’s political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda?

3. What are the challenges that constrict women’s political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda?

1.5. Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its ability to show the actual political participation of women in political positions. The suggestions from the study also led to policymakers' new orientation in the formulation and implementation of affirmative action policies that could enhance women’s participation in politics and suggest ways to overcome it. Finally, the study will help other researchers as a secondary source.

1.6. Scope of the study

Women‘s political participation can take place at different administrative levels: national, regional, and local. However, this study aimed to evaluate women's political participation at the local level, particularly an assessment of women‘s political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. This study is geographically limited to the selected government sectors such as women, children, and youth offices, urban development and construction offices, public service and human resource development offices, prosperity party offices, social and labor affairs offices, health offices, education offices, local council offices, plan commission offices, and administration offices in the Meserak Mesekan Woreda in the Gurage Zone of Ethiopia. This was to make the study more manageable and to focus on the assessment of women’s political participation in selected government sectors in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. The study population for this study was limited to only female civil servants in selected government sectors. Other factors that hinder women’s political participation in the whole country stayed beyond this study.

1.7. Limitation of the study

In conducting this study, the researcher faced numerous limitations. This includes: firstly, time and budget limitations; secondly, the absence of adequate written materials about women's political participation; and thirdly, interruptions of internet connections to download available materials.

1.8. Organization of the study

This paper contains five chapters. The first chapter covered the introductory part, including the background of the study, a statement of the problem, the objective and significance of the study, and the scope and limitations of the study. Chapter two contained a review of related literature; Chapter three presented research methods and methodology. The fourth chapter covered data analysis and interpretation on the targeted topic of the study. The final chapter depicted the conclusions and recommendations.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This study was conducted on women‘s political participation in the cases of Meserak Mesekan Woreda, Gurage Zone, Central Ethiopian Regional state. Under the literature review, I tried to include conceptual, theoretical, and relevant empirical studies. In addition to this, I tried to access information on political participation, women’s participation, challenges, and experiences of women’s political participation at the national level in relation to my study. Furthermore, the empirical literature provides evidence from previous studies related to women‘s political participation for this study.

2.2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

2.2.1. Definition of Political Participation

Political participation is an essential component that is required for ensuring the stability and legitimacy of every political system (Kumari and Kidwai, 1999). According to Agbaje (1999), political participation is one of the fundamental ideas of a democratic society. It is the sine qua non of democracy because democracy involves a commitment to equal opportunity for men and women to develop their individual capacities (Remi Anifowose, 2004). According to Pateman (1970), however, citizens’ participation in politics is very important because it determines how much power is controlled. Political participation, therefore, describes the extent to which individual members of society share, take part in, or get involved in the life of that society (Agbaje, 1999). It is because of this crucial place that political participation holds that Kumari & Kidwai (1999) assert that its denial to a substantial part of the population can result in an explosive situation. Consequently, the political power that women or any group of persons in a society have would be linked directly to the degree of their participation in the political process of that society (Lewu, 2005), cited in Olorunmaiye (2009).

Anifowose (2004) defines political participation as those voluntary activities such as holding public and party office, being a candidate for office, attending election campaigns, voting, and exposing oneself to political stimuli. Similarly, Maclosky (1968) defines political participation as a series of voluntary activities through which members of a

society share in the direct or indirect selection of rulers and the formation of public policy. Sanghera (2005), on the other hand, defines political participation as the active engagement by individuals and groups with the governmental processes that affect their lives. This encompasses both involvements in decision-making and acts of opposition. For Lawson & Wasburn (1969), political participation 'is the process by which individuals acting singly or through group organization attempt to influence decision-making or alter the manner in which power may be distributed and the principles by which it may be exercised in a particular society.' However, Lawson (1997) argues that those within the democratic systems appreciate the fact that individuals have little or no capacity to influence the course of politics; thus, a desire to bring about serious changes in the course of politics is fueled by the concerted efforts of people of the same socio-political interest, such as political parties or social movements. Furthermore, Anifowose (2004) noted several interesting trends that have been identified concerning political participation in liberal democracy. These include an increasingly informed and critical citizenry, a decline in trust in the effectiveness of political elites and institutions, a decline in loyalty to traditional political parties, a drop in turnout rates in elections, and an increase in unconventional political participation.

Political participation is generally thought of as any activity undertaken by people with the aim of shaping, affecting, or involving the political sphere. The United Nations (UN) Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) defines political participation as more than just electoral process participation; it encompasses freedom of speech, assembly, and association, the ability to partake in public affairs conduct, the chance to register as an aspirant or a candidate, the opportunity to campaign, the opportunity to be elected, and the opportunity to hold office at any government level (Otieno, 2013).

2.2.2. Concepts of Women's participation

Women, who are considered to be the cornerstone of society in the modern period, and to protect women's political rights and to involve them in the political decision-making process, we are formulating different declarations and conventions. These declarations and

conventions provide clear provisions for women‘s political rights and their political participation and representation (Kumar, 2017).

In line with this, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Article 3 clarifies that:

> *States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic, and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men (CEDAW, Art. 3).*

In general, there has been progress in taking action to address inequalities in women‘s political participation and representation. Many federations have adopted temporary special measures, defined in Article 4 of CEDAW as measures intended to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. In 2004, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) committee established to oversee the convention clarified the meaning of temporary special measures by way of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23 on political and public life and General Recommendation No. 25, on Article 4 of CEDAW, on temporary special measures. At times, non-identical treatment of women and men is required in order to address the differences between women and men and to pursue the goal of substantive equality, including equitable access for women and men to all spheres of life. General Recommendation No. 25 makes clear the need to address the underlying causes of discrimination against women within each country‘s context. It sees temporary special measures as part of a necessary strategy by state parties towards achieving de facto or substantive equality of women with men in the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms (OSCE, 2016).

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) enshrines “equal rights of men and women,", including the right to participate in government. The Declaration paved the way for further international commitments in the area of women’s rights, most comprehensively in the 1979 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Expanding upon this “bill of rights”

for women, as CEDAW is often called; the 1995 UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action mandated that Member States "take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making." The Beijing Declaration, building on commitments made during the United Nations Decade for Women (1976–1985), reflects a new international commitment to the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women. Similarly, the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, contains a statement of values and principles as well as eight specific goals, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with related targets, which constitute an international agenda for the twenty-first century. In it, UN Member States agreed to "promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable." Fulfilling Goal 3-to promote gender equality and empower women is widely recognized as essential to achieving the other seven Millennium Development Goals. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, also passed in 2000, reaffirmed the importance of women's participation in the security sector and in peace processes, emphasizing the importance of their "equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. OSCE-participating states have repeatedly pledged to end gender-based discrimination and strengthen gender equality in political and public life. The 1990 Copenhagen Document, For example, it contains non-discrimination provisions that can be particularly relevant to the protection of women's rights and commits participating states to "prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground." The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality directly links equal rights of women and men to "peace, sustainable democracy, economic development, and, therefore, to security and stability in the OSCE region." The OSCE Gender Action Plan remains the most comprehensive OSCE framework to date for guiding OSCE institutions and participating states in advancing towards true and meaningful gender equality.

The OSCE Gender Action Plan's emphasis on ensuring the equal participation of women and men in political and public life, including political parties, was elaborated upon at the December 2009 OSCE Athens Ministerial Council, where the Council adopted Decision No. 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life. This decision calls on all

participating states to encourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making. As this comprehensive range of international obligations, standards, and instruments shows, OSCE participating states are committed to promoting gender equality and women's political participation, including in decision-making positions.

2.2.3. Challenges on Women's political participation in Ethiopia

In the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, women's political participation and representation have made some progress in overcoming women's oppression. However, it is disproportional to their contribution to the total population. Though it is impossible to ensure equality and overcome challenges regarding women's lives in a short period of time, it is believed that revising the previous approaches and overcoming the weaknesses will significantly increase women's political participation and representation in Ethiopia (Frew, 2010). In this regard, some of the challenges facing women in Ethiopia are stated as follows:

2.2.4. Economic issue on Women's political participation

Women's historical experience of discrimination is highly related to their lack of economic resources, and the economic status of women, to a greater extent, plays a significant role in enhancing their participation and representation in the political decision-making process. Thus, women in Ethiopia have restricted access to productive financial resources and tend to have less financial means and independence compared to men. This is largely due to the remaining discriminatory provisions in matters of personal status, which often limit their ability to participate in the workforce, and for most women who do work, in some cases, their salaries are sent to their husbands. Moreover, there is a societal expectation that women are the primary caretakers of children and families. The pressure for women to mainly devote their time to family and household duties can limit their ability to undertake activity outside of their home (OECD, 2018).

To overcome this problem, the Ethiopian government formulated Economic Reform and Policy in 1993, which aims to promote economic development and improve the living

standards of the most vulnerable sections of society, particularly women, but still, in most Ethiopian societies, women have no right to decide on their own property because the household head is always the father, who can control every asset and property of the family. Due to these facts, women always need to get permission from their fathers to buy some consumption materials and other household resources. Even if women are salaried, most of the time their income is controlled by men, and sometimes if father and mother have their own income independently, women cover household expenses while men enjoy activities outside the home like hotels and bars. So women are always economically dependent on men, this is the main reason for their low participation in the politics of the country (Shimelis, 2015).

2.2.5. Socio-Cultural values on women's political participation

In many countries, traditions continue to emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and housewives and restrict them to those roles. According to Otieno (2013), traditionally, politics has always been male-dominated, a structure that is both hostile and unwelcoming to women. In general, many societies are patriarchal and undermine women who try to change the existing situation. Women also have to deal with physical barriers like a lack of financial resources, relatively lower levels of education, marginal access to information, and more family responsibilities. But cultural foundations of role expectations, patriarchy, and social norms that allocate females to domestic life are some of the backward practices behind women's low participation in political decision-making. In addition to this, traditional beliefs and inadequate educational and occupational predictions prevent women from attaining the skills needed to compete for public office successfully. Moreover, women lack support from interest groups and government leaders to actively participate in decision-making. Thus, without doubt, most power agents are men who are economically powerful and unlikely to support women from the beginning (Otieno, 2013).

Today, there is a system in our country that ensures women's rights and their full-fledged equality and that refuses the prevalence of male dominance in political decision-making. Thus, an encouraging environment that ensures women to participate and represent themselves equally with men in political and socio-economic activities is in the process of being created now; however, gender inequality, which has various expressions, is still an

obstacle to women‘s political rights. As it is a deep-rooted problem, it is not possible to eradicate it within a short period of time. This is established by the attitude that refuses to accept the truth that women should be equal to men and is demonstrated by claiming to accept that women should be equal to men but failing to practice it and rejecting being ready to work towards guaranteeing women‘s equality at all (Shemelis, 2015).

Accordingly, the problem exists at different levels of government structure, starting with their own family and the community at large. It is clear that this situation has made a significant contribution to hindering women from equally participating in and benefiting from our country‘s overall development, democratization, and peace. Allowing women to participate in any decision-making positions that are compatible with their capacity, knowledge, and experience, increasing their income, and improving their lives is a real challenge, as there are circumstances where they are denied the opportunity through various backward, traditional, and cultural beliefs. Thus, special attention should be given to solving these backward, traditional, and cultural beliefs among societies, and women‘s strong and continuous struggle is almost as important.

2.2.6. Low conscious on political participation of women

In Ethiopia, women‘s exclusion from decision-making positions is highly related to traditional and cultural beliefs. Thus, in many societies, women are described as weak and incapable of making smart decisions. From ancient times, Ethiopian society described women as an unimportant part of the community in political decision-making, totally incompetent, and less intelligent. This was projected and reinforced through the years by male-dominated institutions and patriarchal societies that adopted the idea that women were subordinate to men. With the constant strengthening of the idea that women are inferior in every aspect to men, it became hard for women to follow their political rights as active participants. For a woman to enter politics, such patriarchal attitudes make it even harder. The truth is that such attitudes are not a thing of the past. Such attitudes towards women still exist in societies all over the world today, in both developed and developing countries (Shemelis, 2015).

From this, it could be understood that women’s problems can be solved primarily through their own active participation in the decision-making process, leadership positions, and

committed struggle to ensure their equality with men. Women's active political participation means that all women are aware of the fact that the challenges that face them can only be solved through their own consciousness, their capacity, and their active participation in political decision-making. After ensuring this, women must advance to the implementation process and ensure their effectiveness, practically, by developing their own capacity. But developing and advancing such a competitive capacity for women in our country is very difficult because women's associations and concerned organizations about women‘s rights and their equality with men are not well developed, and it is impossible to change women‘s proportion in the near future.

To overcome this problem, there should be correct policies and strategies that address the economic, socio-political, and cultural challenges that face women, which need to be part of the overall struggle of the whole society and government. Thus, women‘s issues cannot be addressed in isolation from the overall economic, social, and political struggles of the whole society. However, the role of women is below the expected level when it comes to their participation in the political decision-making process at the local councils. This leads their position to household activities while leaving out the political decision-making positions to men, who are clearly holding it as a monopoly for a long period of time. But democracy provides equal opportunities for both women and men to participate and represent themselves in the management of political, economic, and societal affairs. Therefore, it can be assumed that decision-making will be severely hindered when women are not elected or appointed to the local councils. Political Participation and representation of women in local governance provide them with opportunities to contribute to national and local development initiatives, in addition to the space it provides for them to adapt policies to grasp their local desires and opportunities (Rameez, 2018).

Furthermore, the attention given by the political leaders to the quest for women‘s equality has not reached the desired positions at all levels of the government. The problem starts when women are prevented from having sufficient participation in decision-making and leadership positions in different government structures, particularly at local levels. Satisfactory work has not been done to build the political capacity of women so as to enable them to be active participants in political decision-making. Due to a lack of accurate

and strategic responses for women‘s rights and their equality, fluctuating activities have been performed, and women are still subordinates of society. Women’s underrepresentation is negatively impacted by the implementation problems of developmental policies, strategies, and good governance programs that harm women‘s consistent advantages. Despite the political commitment, legal support, and institutional arrangements, bureaucratic resistance at different levels of government structure is another problem that makes women‘s participation in the decision-making process more difficult to perform effectively because of the traditional set-up of society and thinking (Rameez, 2018).

2.2.7. Legal norm regarding women’s political participation

Ethiopia, as a member of the global community, has allowed for agreements and normative frameworks that protect and promote the rights of women and gender equality. It has ratified the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) in 1953 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981 and has made the provisions of these conventions an integral part of the law (UN, 2014). In addition to this, Ethiopia adopted the principles of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) as well as the political declaration and outcome document post-Beijing +5 in 2000. The country has further endorsed the Millennium Development Goals of 2000. The MDGs outline gender-sensitive commitments with specific objectives. These commitments include ensuring the access and quality of universal primary education for both boys and girls, as well as urban and rural communities; eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education; and reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015 (UN, 2014).

In terms of regional conventions, Ethiopia ratified the African Charter on Human and People‘s Rights in 1998. It is, however, yet to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples ' Rights of Women in Africa. Ethiopia, having adopted these international legal and policy instruments, has progressed in domesticating these frameworks, implementing them, and issuing periodic progress reports for the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW (UN, 2014). In line with this, the African Charter on Human and People Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Ethiopian

Constitution guarantee the rights of women as equal to those of men in all spheres, including equality in marriage, the right to equal employment, the right to maternity leave with pay, the right to acquire, administer, control, use, and transfer property, with an emphasis on land and inheritance issues, and the right to access family planning and education. Ethiopia is therefore making several efforts to strengthen national structures for achieving gender equality (Shimelis, 2015).

At the national level, the National Policy on Women, formulated in 1993, was a milestone for development as it was the first policy formulated on women. The policy encourages equal participation of women in the political, social, and economic spheres of life in the country and subsequently institutionalizes the rights of women by creating the appropriate institutional mechanisms within government institutions to ensure gender sensitivity of public regulations and interventions. The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which is aligned with international legal instruments, guarantees the rights of women and equality with men (UN, 2014). Particularly, Article 38 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Constitution provides equal rights for all citizens to participate in public and political affairs.

Accordingly, sub artcle 1 of Ethiopian constitution reads:

> *Every Ethiopian national, without any discrimination based on color, race, nation, nationality, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, or other status, has the following rights: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly and through freely chosen representatives; (b) On the attainment of 18 years of age, to vote in accordance with law; (c) To vote and to be elected at periodic elections to any office at any level of government; elections shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors (FDRE Constitution Art. 38 (1)).*

Moreover, Article 38(2) of this constitution recognizes Ethiopian citizens right to organize themselves in political and public organizations and professional associations based on their free will, and it reads as follows: The right of everyone to be a member of his own

will in a political organization, labor union, trade organization, or employers ‘or professional association shall be respected if he or she meets the special and general requirements stipulated by such organization. From this, women, who make up more than half of the population in the country, will benefit.

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK OF THE STUDY

2.3.1. Feminist Perspectives on Women in Politics

Feminists first appeared in English in the 1880s, showing support for women all over the world for their justice, equality, and political rights with their counterparts. Feminists stem up so that they can compete with the traditional ideologies that prevent women’s from actively taking part in decision-making. Feminists argue that women have the right to employment, education, full equality, and the right to participate in politics Stephen et al., (2017).

Feminists further argue that “women are valuable and are superior to men, and the only difficulties they face are not discrimination or capitalism but male power”. It points out that due to male power women do not get equal representation in decision-making, which is highly dominated by men in terms of power control. The quest for equal representation of women has been known throughout the world, but still, women's equal participation in political life has not yet been given much importance. The National Organization of Women (NOW) plays a vital role for women's rights in that it seeks for women equal rights, participation, protection of women, the right to education, etc. The core belief of the feminist perspective towards women’s low participation in politics is because of the gender relations that stem up in a society. It argues that men seem to have more power, advantages, and opportunities in politics as compared to women Stephen et al., (2017)

From a feminist point of view, one of the most important parts of women's representation in politics is the obvious differences among women's, such as caste, ethnicity, class, race, etc., that have a great impact on women’s priorities and their level of interest in politics. Some of the arguments made by feminists on the grounds of the political representation of women in politics can be discussed one by one, Stephen et al., (2017).

2.3.2. Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism fights for women's liberation; they believe that discrimination against women is not right. They argue that women all over the world should have the same opportunity to achieve in public areas or in life as men do. The liberal feminist program aims to have a sudden change and action so that women will be completely removed from political oppression. Liberal feminist thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, and Elizabeth Candy Stanton further argue that women are like men; they can make decisions and are independent, and women have the full and equal right to participate in political activities. Liberal feminism tries to reject the traditional thoughts of gender differences and women's roles and, in fact, demands women's economic independence and their equal rights. Liberal feminism argues that "right" should be given importance instead of "good". It means that rights form a legal framework in which individuals can choose their own goods, freedom, etc. without jeopardizing other people. Classical liberalism, on the other hand, claims that a state should protect civil liberties (voting, property, freedom of speech and expression, and association). In short, liberal feminism seems to fight for equal possibility and opportunity for women in all spheres. Liberal feminism gives importance to an individual's value, all forms of life, and access to resources for women Stephen et al., (2017).

2.3.3. Radical feminism

Radical feminism was first thrown up by the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in the late 1960s. Radical feminists think they are completely different from other labels of feminism. They want to change the conditions of women that prevail and stop women from public life. They believe in radical change. Radical feminists claim that "personal life is political" and all women are "sisters". They argue that gender identity limits the full development of women and encourages women to have both the characteristics of masculine and feminine roles. They focus much on gender, sex, and reproduction as a particular set of rules that determines the development of women. For women's liberation, radical feminism goes for revolutionary means, as they believe that all patriarchy and political systems need to be ripped apart from their roots Stephen et al., (2017).

2.3.4. Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism believes that material forces are the source of inequality in a society. Social existence determines the awareness of the force of production in a society. Marxist feminism uses some tools like the state, the bourgeois and pre-capitalist society in order to understand women's oppression and its destruction. It believes that women can be aware or conscious of themselves as a class of workers, i.e., through engaging in productive work. Marxist feminism gives an understanding of how to help women liberate themselves from forces within the workplace, such as violence, harassment, etc. Marxist feminists claim that the root cause of women's oppression is the capitalist mode of production. For them, they do not accept the ideas of liberals like thoughts, values, and humans as distinctive from animals, but in fact, they argue that material force and society's mode of production create a superstructure that consists of political, social, and legal ideas. Marxist feminism also tries to liberate people, especially women, from oppression Stephen et al., (2017).

2.4. Empirical framework of the study

Alemu (2014) conducted a descriptive study in pursuit of identifying the factors that affect women's participation in leadership and decision-making positions in Ethiopia. His finding revealed that in public institutions, women's had low education status and non-leadership positions; furthermore, he found that socio-cultural attitudes, lack of acquisition of the necessary experience for taking part in public decision-making, overburden of domestic responsibilities, continuation of the negative attitudes regarding women's ability to lead and govern, and lack of role models of women leaders for young women and girls were the main factors that hinder women's active political participation.

Kassa (2015) made secondary data-based qualitative research on the challenges and opportunities of women's political participation in Ethiopia; basically, he used secondary sources, such as published journal articles, books, and reports of government and non-government organizations.

The findings of the study show that different casual factors, such as economic, religious, social, and cultural factors, contributed to women's poor political participation in the country. The study further revealed that 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, district, and local levels. Furthermore, he contended that more than half of the world's population is made up of women. But they lack access to political decision-making as compared to their counterparts at all levels of government. So that women's equal participation in decision-making and politics is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but a necessary pre-condition for women's interests to be taken into account.

Losindilo *et al.* (2010) used a causal research design of logistic regression and cross-tabulation in order to examine the factors that hinder women's participation in social, political, and economic activities in Tanzania. According to the findings of their study, place of residence, region of residence and age group are the factors that hinder women from participating in social, political, and economic activities. Their study also concludes that levels of education and religion contribute less to women's poor participation in social, political, and economic activities. Moreover, the study further concludes that place of residence (urban or rural) has a great effect on women's participation in social, political, and economic activities. The study observes that women in rural areas have little knowledge of loan programs compared with women in urban areas; also, rural women work more than urban women do.

Tundi (2015) employed a descriptive survey research design to study factors influencing women's participation in political leadership in the Kimilili constituency of Bungoma County, Kenya. The study found that women were ignorant of their rights, and the patriarchal system is still a hindrance to women's participation in political leadership. Due to social-cultural, economic, educational, and political factors, they influence women's participation in political leadership.

The study also recommended that changing culture to suit the political needs of women would be a very challenging option to carry forward. It is not an issue that is solvable overnight; hence, women's participation in politics should be actively pursued by women. Blomgren (2010) conducted a case study on women and political participation: a minor field study on hindrances to women's political participation in Georgia. The study revealed

that the major obstacles for women to participate in politics are public opinion, the electoral system, and the nomination process in political parties. Further, influential individuals, so-called policy entrepreneurs, are seen as having an important role in increasing women's political participation and gender equality issues in general. The most likely action to be seen is continued training and education for society as a whole, mainly targeting women. Affirmative action's such as party quotas seem far away.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is the third chapter of the study; it deals with the way and method by which this study was carried out; hence, this chapter incorporates a description of the study area, research type, population and sampling design, research instrument, and data analysis technique.

3.1. Description of the Study Area

The Central Ethiopian Regional state is one of the twelve regional states of FDRE that contains seven zones, forty nine woredas, and three special woredas with twelve city administrations of which Mesrak Meskan Woreda is part of this regional state in Gurage Zone. It shares the boundary with Sodo Woreda on the North, Silti Woreda on the South, Mareko Woreda on the East, and Meskan Woreda on the West. It is one of the twelve Woredas' that is found in Gurage Zone, which includes seventeen rural and one urban Kebele (local administrations). According to 2019 Woreda Finance and Economic Development Office data, the Woreda population is estimated to be 87,366; among this, 42366 (49%) are men and 45000 (51%) are women. Thus, from the data, I understood that more than half of the populations in this study area were women.

3.2. Research Design

The researcher has employed a descriptive research design. The major purpose of descriptive research design is the description of the state of affairs as it exists at present (Kothri, 2004). It was a fact-finding study with an adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings. Besides, it described what reality is and what actually exists within a situation in different aspects of the study. Since the present study was concerned with assessing women's political participation in Gurage Zone in the case of Mesrak Meskan Woreda, the researcher applied the descriptive type of research design.

3.3. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach based on appropriate data collection tools. Qualitative research seeks to describe various aspects of social and human behavior through particular methods such as interviewing, focus grouping. The choice of an appropriate research approach can be determined by the nature and characteristics of the study as well as the data needed. In this study, a qualitative research approach was

employed to collect data by exploring attitudes, behaviors, and experiences through interviews about women's political participation in Mesrak Meskan Woreda.

3.4. Target population of the study

This study was intended to examine women's political participation in the Mesrak Meskan Woreda public sectors of Gurage Zone. Therefore, the target population of the study was all female leaders and female civil servants of the 23 public sectors in Mesrak Meskan Woreda.

3.5. Data sources

To attain the aim of this study, both primary and secondary data sources were used. The primary data were gathered from sample respondents through semi-structured interviews, which served as a source of primary data. The secondary data sources were sourced from previous studies, journals, books, reports, and other published and unpublished documents.

3.6. Data gathering Instrument

To find valid and reliable data for the study, interviews were used to get detailed information from the participants regarding women's political participation in Mesrak Meskan Woreda. In this study the following data-gathering instruments like semi-structured interviews and document analysis were applied.

3.6.1. Semi-structured Interview

An open-ended interview was implemented to collect primary data from the key respondents. Based on the interview questions, I considered interview protocol in the preparation of the interview questions. The researcher used tools and notebooks to record the data.

3.6.2. Document Analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to assess or give voice and meaning to an assessment topic. The researcher obtained women-related sources from the Internet and other printed materials. Relevant books, journals, articles, policy documents, and reports were reviewed.

3.7. Sampling Technique and procedure

A sample is a subgroup of a population. It has also been described as a representative taste of a group. The sample should be representative, meaning that each sample unit should be represented by the characteristics of a known number of units in the population. The sample size is the actual number of subjects or a subset of the population chosen as a representative sample of the target population in a given study. It is a basic unit within a population that can be used to represent the whole population. It is impossible to study the whole target population, so the researcher used a sample population. The sample size was determined by a three-based criterion: the level of precision, the level of confidence, and finally the degree of variability in the attributes being measured (Cooper and Schindler, 2014).

To select respondents from the total study population of 48 female civil servants including female leaders from 10 public sectors, the researcher used a non-probability sampling technique. This is because Meserak Mesekan Woreda has a large number of populations, and it is difficult to implement an interview with all populations. In this case, the researcher used a semi-structured interview and a non-probability sampling method for the representatives of women's political participation in the study area. Purposive sampling was employed in order to select a sample of the public sector. From the total of 23 public sectors in the woreda, ten (10) were selected purposefully. The sample size of this study was determined by the saturation level of data collected from those targeted key informants in ten (10) public sectors, such as Meerak Mesekan woreda Council office, Meserak Mesekan woreda Public and Human Resource and Development office, Meserak Mesekan woreda Female and Child Affair office, Meserak Mesekan Woreda Social and Labor Affair Office, Meserak Mesekan Woreda Plan and Development Office, Meserak Mesekan Woreda Education Office, Meserak Mesekan Woreda Health Office,Meserak Mesekan Woreda Administration Office, Meserak Mesekan Woreda Prosperity Party Office and Meserak Mesekan Woreda Urban Development and Construction Office including female civil servants and female leaders.

3.8. Method of data analysis

The data collected by using different data collection instruments, such as interviews and document analysis, was analyzed and interpreted based on the selected strategies using qualitative methods. Data was collected using themes and sub-themes and thematically analyzed. The data was collected in a language that the respondent understood, and it was translated and described correctly in English. Data analysis and interpretation were the end processes of the collected data that were used to sum up the study and draw conclusions. This helped to achieve the relevant results for the study and reach the true finding. The data was gathered in a qualitative way, and the data was analyzed in the form of a description and narration based on the specified guidelines by the researcher. The data was analyzed in a qualitative way and interpreted in the form of a qualitative description. Finally, the findings were summarized with careful evaluation and interpretation of the data available from the courses of study.

3.9. Ethical Consideration of the study

The ethical issues a researcher anticipated with particular relevance to this study were the issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, this research was based on interviews, document analysis, and different official reports with the proper consent of participants. The research was conducted in accordance with general research ethics.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze, present, and discuss the data collected through interviews and document analysis regarding the political participation of women in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. Here-under, the study basically assessed understanding about legal, institutional, and socio-cultural norms to promote women's political participation, the current status of women's political participation, and challenges that constrict women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda thematically. To achieve this, an interview was directed to ten selected public sectors. Hence, presenting the views of key informants in accordance with the code given in KI1, KI2, KI3, KI4, KI5, KI6, KI7, KI8, KI9, and KI10 on the order of the date of the interview is necessary to ensure their privacy. Therefore, this chapter discusses, analyzes, and interprets in order to make the study sound and rational.

4.2. Legal, Institutional and Socio -Cultural norms to promote women's Political participation

To promote women's political participation and representation at all levels of government structures, the FDRE and the former SNNPR constitutions recognize women's equal rights with men in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. With regard to this KI10, forwarded the following view:

> *Women's political participation is not being done at the social level, and there is no activity to increase women's participation at the institutional level in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. Besides, there is no activity to promote women's political participation and decision-making process, even if women's political participation is totally forgotten (KI10, Meserak Mesekan, on July 26, 2023).*

Moreover, KI9 forwarded the following view:

> *At the institutional level, we are fighting to develop women's political participation and to bring them to the forefront, but there is a reluctance to bring mature women forward for the absurd reason that there are no academically competent and self-*

confident women in the woreda. On the other hand, at the legal level, there is a situation set by the constitution of FDRE, but nothing more than paper is being done on it and At the level of society and culture, society has no awareness about women's political participation, and the societal perception of women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda is low, which means that women's are not competent and political participation is only given to men (KI9, Meserak Mesekan Woreda, on July 18th July 2023).

Additionally, KI8, mentioned the following view regarding the legal level to promote women's political participation:

To promote women's political participation, especially, there is FDRE Constitution Article 35, but it has not been implemented in Meserak Meskan Woreda. But the relevant body should have worked to increase the political participation of women and change society's attitude, but it is not working in the current situation; society's attitude towards women has not gone away from the idea that a woman should marry a man (KI8, Meserak Mesekan, on July 17, 2023).

Consequently, KI7, clearly described the following:

The Woreda female and child affairs office, as an institution, promotes women's political participation by building capacity through training, facilitating short-term training and awareness creation with regard to the rights and responsibilities of women, indicating loan opportunities and saving systems for those women who are responsible for job creation, organizing women to benefit from their constitutional rights, and improving women's involvement in educational and health sectors are some of the vital responsibilities for this institution (KI7, Meserak Mesekan, on July 14th July 2023).

According to these key informants, women's associations are institutions established based on the free consent of women to promote their free movement in political, economic, and social activities, to facilitate a favorable condition for women's political participation and representation, and to respect the constitutional rights and full-fledged equality of women with men. Further, the key informants said that, although women's associations and

women's forums are not governmental organizations, they are well organized and recognized institutions from federal up to Kebele government structures to protect disadvantaged women in overall political, economic, and social affairs. Besides this, the key informants mentioned the vital importance of non-governmental organizations to empower women in economic and social activities. As to their saying, there are many non-governmental organizations that are working with respective Women and Child Affairs and Women Association offices from federal to Woreda to empower women, particularly in economic and social activities. Most of the time in Meserak Mesekan Woreda, these organizations: promote women‘s capacity building through training and education; provide short-term training schedules for women‘s job creation opportunities; facilitate saving and credit utilization systems; engage in improving the health and sanitation programs of mothers; and so on. In doing all this, these organizations encourage women to participate in public and social activities, which lead them to political decision-making processes. On the other hand, the social norms existing in communities with regard to women reveal that women, relative to men, are industrious servants, submissive, lawful, respectful, and community members. All of these characteristics are expected of women in our locality, and a woman who passes away with these characteristics would be isolated from the community. These believed qualities of women are assumed to be traditional norms that would benefit the whole community, and this traditional norm makes women better loyal than men in their disciplines.

With regard to this, KI8, forwarded the following view:

> *If we compare and contrast a man and a woman who are appointed as chief executive officers in higher economic organization, a woman is better at exposing corrupt systems than a man. In addition to this, if we compare and contrast a policeman and a policewoman in regulating the rules and laws, a policewoman is better than a policeman in terms of her discipline. Women's commitment to their discipline is an inherent traditional norm that ensures the openness (transparency), real fight against misrules, and accountability of women in their community. Thus, society and the government itself will benefit as women's political participation and representation*

increase in existing government structures at all levels (KI8, Meserak Mesekan, on July 17, 2023).

Accordingly, the existence of such legal institutions and social norms makes women: to ensure their democratic rights and to take part in the conduct of public and social affairs; to participate in the political decision-making process directly and through their elected representatives; to vote and to be voted to any level of government organizations; and to be a member of any political organization, professional association, or cooperative organization based on their own willingness. As a result, the number of women in decision-making and leadership positions is increasing significantly, even if their participation in positions of political leadership is very low as compared to their male counterparts.

4.2.1. Legal and policy frameworks at national and local level that promote women Political participation

The government of Ethiopia has reaffirmed its commitment to the equitable development of women, drafted the National Policy on Women in 1993, and promulgated the new Constitution in 1995, where women's rights are mainstreamed. The National Policy on Women aims to institutionalize the political and socio-economic rights of women by creating appropriate structures in government institutions. As a result, the Women's Affairs Office was created within the Prime Minister's Office and mandated to coordinate and facilitate conditions to promote gender equality in areas of development; at the respective sectorial ministries, the Women's Affairs Departments were put in place, the Regional Women's Affairs Bureaus at the regional administration level, and women's coordination and desk officers at the respective Zonal and Woreda levels. The extensive structure was meant to ensure that gender and women's development issues could be addressed comprehensively at all levels of administration and society (ibd).

To promote women‘s political participation and representation at all levels of government structure, KI1 forwarded the following view:

There is no legal document prepared to promote women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda, but there is also nothing in terms of policy

implementation. At the national level, guidelines are prepared by the Federal Prosperity Bureau and implemented in a hierarchical manner, and women's political participation is improving at the federal level. However, legally, promoting the political participation of women in Meserak Mesekan Woreda is still very low. So, the local government body should ratify the community awareness training policy (KI1, Meserak Mesekan on July 05, 2023).

Ethiopia's constitution and national policies are consistent with international legal instruments on gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the most comprehensive treaty on women's human rights, which came into force in 1981 and has been ratified by 165 states worldwide (Shimelis, 2015).

According to FDRE's national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2000, Ethiopia adopted international agreements to promote gender equality and improve the lives of women. As a means to implement these global agreements, different policies and legislation have also been enacted. These are the National Policy on Women, National Population Policy, Education Policy, Cultural Policy, and other legal documents. The National Policy on Women, introduced in 1993, was the first policy specifically related to the affairs of women. The objectives of the policy include facilitating conditions conducive to the speeding up of equality between men and women, ensuring the right to property and other human rights are respected, and ensuring that they are not excluded from participating in decision-making (Jelaludin et al., 2001).

In addition to the aforementioned national policies, gender equality is guaranteed by the FDRE constitution. Article 35 of the FDRE Constitution provides equal opportunity for women to participate in the decision-making process by giving them the right to vote and be elected. Taking into account the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination experienced by women in Ethiopia, women are entitled to affirmative measures to address this legacy. The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them to compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social, and economic life, as well as in public and private institutions (FDRE Constitution Art. 35).

More specifically, FDRE Constitution Article 35(1) provides that women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this Constitution, have equal rights with men. Women have the right to full consultation in the formulation of national development policies, the designing and execution of projects, and particularly in the case of projects affecting the interests of women (FDRE Constitution Art, 35). Equality between men and women, and boys and girls, is one of the central pillars of the Growth and Transformation Plan of the national development plan of Ethiopia, and the Development Plan for Women and Children (2011–2028) has included specific commitments to increasing women's participation in political life and decision-making, promoting women's economic empowerment, and reducing violence against women (MOFED, 2010).

4.2.2. Institutional and Socio-cultural Norms to Promote Women's Political Participation

In many countries, traditions continue to emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and housewife and restrict them to those roles. Traditionally, politics has always been male-dominated, a structure that is both hostile and unwelcoming to women. In general, many societies are patriarchal and undermine women who try to change the existing situation. Women also have to deal with physical barriers like a lack of financial resources, relatively lower levels of education, marginal access to information, and more family responsibilities. But cultural foundations of role expectations, patriarchy, and social norms that allocate females to domestic life are some of the backward practices behind women's low participation in political decision-making. In addition to this, traditional beliefs and inadequate educational and occupational predictions prevent women from attaining the skills needed to compete for public office successfully. Moreover, women lack support from interest groups and government leaders to actively participate in decision-making. Thus, without doubt, most power agents are men who are economically powerful and unlikely to support women from the beginning (Otieno, 2013).

Today, there is a system in our country that ensures women's rights and their full-fledged equality and that refuses the prevalence of male dominance in political decision-making. Thus, an encouraging environment that ensures women to participate and represent

themselves equally with men in political and socio-economic activities is in the process of being created now; however, gender inequality, which has various expressions, is still an obstacle to women‘s political rights. As it is a deep-rooted problem, it is not possible to eradicate it within a short period of time. This is established by the attitude that refuses to accept the truth that women should be equal to men and is demonstrated by claiming to accept that women should be equal to men but failing to practice it and rejecting being ready to work towards guaranteeing women‘s equality at all (Shemelis, 2015).

With regard to this key informant, 3 forwarded the following view:

> *Women's political participation is not being done at the social level in Meserak Mesekan Woreda, and society lacks awareness about the equality of women's political participation and decision-making processes with men. Also, there is no activity to develop or increase women's participation and decision-making process at the institutional level in Meserak Mesekan Woreda, especially concerning governmental bodies. There is no enough attention given to promoting women's political participation and decision-making process, even if women's political participation is totally forgotten by the concerned bodies (KI3, Meserak Mesekan Woreda, on July 10, 2023).*

Moreover, key informant 7 was forwarded as follows:

> *At the institutional level, we are fighting to develop or promote women's political participation and to bring them to the forefront, but there are no academically competent and confident women in the woreda. Additionally, the woreda women's are not promoted in politics and in the decision-making processes, and society by itself has not created awareness about the equality of women's with men on political, economic, and social levels (KI7, Meserak Mesekan, on June 14, 2023)*

To conclude the above narratives, in many countries, traditions continue to emphasize women‘s primary roles as mothers and housewives. As well, traditional politics has always been male-dominated, a structure that is both hostile and unwelcoming to women, and many societies are patriarchal and undermine women's ability to deal with physical barriers

like a lack of financial resources, relatively lower levels of education, and marginal access to information.

4.3. The current Status of Women's Political Participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda

Women's political participation and representation show a bit of progress since the promulgation of the FDRE constitution in 1995. In Meserak Mesekan Woreda, even if their representation is very low as compared to the representation of men and their contribution to the Woreda is slightly increasing now. In line with this, Tefra, 2017 in his journal Nature of Women Empowerment in Ethiopia: Constitutional and Policy Provisions, indicated the progress of women's representation. According to him, there are significant improvements in the numerical representation of women in all spheres because of the formulation and implementation of the national policy and some of the constitutional provisions. Despite improvements in numerical (descriptive) representation, substantive representation and its decision-making power are still facing critical challenges (Tefra, 2017).

In addition to this, Key informant 2 forwarded the following opinion.

> *Currently, women's political participation and leadership positions in Meserak Mesekan Woreda are not equal when compared with men, the voice of women is not being heard, and women do not participate equally in politics as men. So the current status of women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda is low. The FDRE Constitution Article 35(3) clearly states about women's political participation, but in Meserak Mesekan Woreda, the constitution has been forgotten, and women's political participation is ruthless (KI2, Meserak Mesekan, on July 6, 2023).*

Additionally, KI4, revealed the following view:

> *Women's political participation and representation are not progressing in Mesrak Mesekan Woreda because their descriptive representation in Kebele and Woreda councils and executive bodies is decreasing. In addition to this, the existing government, by formulating the rules and regulations, including the federal and regional constitutions, and by adopting international and regional conventions and*

covenants, is improving women's representation and political participation. Moreover, in each sector throughout the Woreda, there is a focal person who follows the issue of women, which indicates the attention given by the existing government to keep the rights of women and their equality with men, but still, women's political participation and decision-making in Meserak Meskan Woreda are not approved (KI4, Meserak Meskan Woreda on July 11, 2023).

To sum up, even if there is an increase in women's political participation and representation, the number of women leaders and decision-makers at various levels of the local government structure particularly at Woreda is still very low.

4.3.1. Women's political participation in voting during election

One way to take part in politics is by participating in elections. Regarding this, the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia grants equal rights of electing and being elected to both women and men. In line with this, Shimelis, 2015 in his journal Challenges and Opportunities of Women Political Participation in Ethiopia'' According to him, women have the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs directly and through freely elected representatives, the right to vote and to be elected to any level of government offices, and the right to be a member of any political organization, labour union, trade organization, employer, or professional association of their choice (Shimelis, 2015).

The democratic process is able to grow and develop effectively when all people are given equal encouragement to exercise their democratic rights and when women can experience benefits equally with their counterparts. In addition, to evaluate the participation of women in elections, the researcher asked the key informants whether or not they took part in the previous local election and whether they had thought of running to be elected. Accordingly, a greater majority of the interviewed key informants stated that they cast their vote in the previous local election. Only a few of the key informants cast their votes in the previous national election. Those who missed the event of the election pointed out that they did not cast their vote, believing that their vote would not bring any change at all, and others mentioned personal inconvenience as a reason for their absence from the event. Regarding the interest of women in running for the national election to be elected; only one-fourth of them indicated that they want to run for office, and the remaining greater

majority of the women interviewed replied that they do not think of running for an election. In line with this, the key informants interviewed expressed that the participation of women in elections as voters is really appreciated.

4.3.2. Women's political participation in holding political leadership in public office

At the local government level, the highest decision-making body is the woreda/town administration council. The Kebele administration council is the highest decision-making body at the kebele level. Therefore, the woreda and kebele administration councils are considered to be decision-making bodies and local power structures. Given that women account for more than half of the population, the seriousness of the under representation of women in the local governance structure is indeed staggering. While the revised constitution of 1995, article 35 explicitly states that in each government body, special arrangements like affirmative action will be made to increase the representation of women, a significant portion of the kebele and town administration council still have very few female members. Women's representation in the prosperity branch party office is low compared to their male counterparts. Out of the total members of the Meserak Mesekan Woreda prosperity party office, it reveals that women's representation out of the total members of the prosperity branch party (12272) in Meserak Mesekan Woreda is 4550) or 37 percent. Women's representation in the Kebele administration council (cabinet) is even worse. Out of 14 kebele administrations in Meserak Mesekan Woreda administration, in 13 kebele administration councils, the council does not have a female member (cadre) at all. Out of 14 Kebele administration cabinets, there is only 1 female cadre. These on women cadre present from Bamo Kebele. This only accounts 7 percent of the total. In the kebeles, where women are indeed represented in the different committees, the number of female members very rarely exceeds one (Meserak Mesekan Woreda, council office report).

The other critical decision-making body at the local government level is the Woreda administration council. The Woreda administration council is also termed the Woreda cabinet, and the members are heads of different sectors of the Woreda administration. Accordingly, in the Meserak Mesekan Woreda administration, there are 23 Sector offices. Out of 23 woreda administration councils or cabinets, there are only 3 female cabinets'. This means, out of the total number of Meserak Mesekan woreda administration cabinets',

the female cabinets constitute only 11 percent. The remaining position is totally dominated by male cabinets. On the other hand, even among those women who make it to the local government bodies or cabinets, the role they end up taking also suffers discrimination (Meserak Mesekan Wreda, prosperity party office report).

4.4. Challenges That Hinder Women Political Participation

Multiple factors contribute to the situation today, where women are underrepresented in political leadership. Women's political involvement, participation, and access to formal political power structures are linked to many different structural and functional constraints that differ across countries. Several authors claim that women's absence in the political arena derives from hindrances related to political, socio-economic, ideological, and psychological barriers. Accordingly, the researcher identified different factors raised by key informants as a constraint for women's political participation. The factors that are considered a constraint on women's political participation are critically organized and analyzed as follows:

4.4.1 Educational Challenge

In relation to the issue under investigation, it is important to look at the determinants of the problematic situations in local government regarding women's political participation. Above all, a relatively low level of education makes women disadvantageous when compared to their male counterparts. Social science research has extensively shown education as a critical factor affecting an individual's ability to harness economic, social, and political opportunities. More specific to political participation, education partially determines an individual's cognitive skills, social and political capital, and civic competence (Delys, 2014).

During the interviews, almost all women stated girls' education as an important factor in promoting women's participation in politics. Data obtained from key informants in a sample public office is highly forwarded. The majority of interviewed women received a college diploma (10+3) for their college education. Only one-fourth of them were able to go to University. The educational disadvantages of women in political participation are evident in how important education is as a factor affecting the likelihood of a woman being involved in local governance. In all woreda public offices, the females involved in local

government possess a level of education much higher than the average female in the woreda. In the Woreda administration's three female cabinet members, all of them joined University and a woman with a college education or above is more likely to become a local government cadre. Hence, the small number of females who received a relatively high level of education has a much higher probability of involvement in local politics.

Furthermore, Education is important not only because it prepares the individual with literacy and other cognitive skills that are necessary for involvement in local politics, It is important because it helps to overcome psychological barriers within an individual that prevent from becoming a competent citizen (Delys, 2014).

4.4.2 Economic challenges

Regarding economy as a challenge for women's political participation KI4, forwarded the following view:

> *The major element affecting females' participation in politics is their lower status in the economy. Traditionally, in agricultural society, the division of labor is highly gendered. A man takes charge outside the household, while a woman takes charge of domestic issues. Mentality still dominates many people's thinking. Hence, it is normal that women are not expected to actively engage in public affairs. Men being the main breadwinners for their families, women take a subordinate position even at home, and the majority of the family's income is earned by men. As most women are economically dependent on their husbands, only very few women earn more than their husbands. As a result, they assume much less active roles when it comes to participating in politics (KI4, Meserak Meskan Woreda on July 11, 2023).*

In line with this, Shimelis, 2015 in his journal Challenges and Opportunities of Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia, showed the influence of economic ownership on women's political participation and representation as follows:

> *In most Ethiopian societies, women have no right to decide on one's own property in the household because the household head is always the father, who can control every asset and property of the family. Due to these facts, women always need to get permission from their fathers to buy some consumption materials and other household*

resources. Even if women are salaried, most of the time their income is controlled by men, and sometimes if father and mother have their own income independently, women cover household expenses while men enjoy activities outside the home like hotels and bars. So women are always economically dependent on a man, which is the main reason for their low participation in the politics of the country (Shimelis, 2015).

Therefore, women's political participation and access to formal political leadership structures were facing several obstacles. Among these, long-lived cultural and traditional beliefs, especially those associated with religion, and the low status of economic background.

4.4.3. Socio-cultural challenge

According to Shemlies, 2015 in many countries, traditions continue to emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and housewives. 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. Societies all over the world are dominated by the ideology of 'a woman's place'. According to this ideology, women should only play the role of 'working as mother', which is generally low-paid. Also in some countries, men even tell women how to vote. This is the environment in which a certain collective image of women in traditional, apolitical roles continues to dominate, which many women face (Shemlies, 2015).

In line with this KI8, shared the following idea:

The low level of women's political participation in Mesrak Mesekan Woreda generally revolves around socially constructed gender roles. The previously existing beliefs in the community that limit the participation of women in domestic affairs are not totally eradicated. Also, there is still a limitation in bringing women's to the party membership, and the town administration's commitment to increasing women's political participation in terms of appointing them to cabinet and other decision-making positions is still not enough. Moreover, the perception of the community toward women in our local area is a critical problem that hinders women's political participation. Our community perceives women as weak, inefficient, and incapable members of society, and the traditional belief that came from our parents,

grandparents, and ancestors might have been trained previously through training, awareness creation, and mainstreaming of gender issues for the community by concerned bodies, but the problem is still perceived. (KI8, Meserak Meskan Woreda on July 17, 2023).

Furthermore, KI6, forward as follows:

The traditional belief, which existed for a long period of time in Meserak Mesekan Woreda, defined the division of tasks in such a way that women were made to take care of children and do kitchen work rather than participate in outdoor activities. Hence, these divisions of tasks between men and women, which belong to indoor activities for women and outside home activities for men, make women overburdened with different household activities like cooking, taking care of kids, washing, and so on. All these activities make women busy in the household and hinder their involvement in political activities (KI6, Meserak Meskan Woreda on July 13, 2023).

In line with this, Shimelis, 2015 in his journal Challenges and Opportunities of Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia, showed the influence of religion on women‘s political participation and representation as follow:

Exclusion of women from religious institutions and religious leadership may have a negative impact on women's status in society and limit their opportunities in politics and public life. Hence, religion is one of the anachronistic cultural beliefs in many communities in the country that excludes women from the mainstream of leadership. In most religions, power and authority are believed to divinely belong to men, hence subjugating women (Shimelis, 2015).

From the above discussions, one can understand that a socio-cultural values and traditional beliefs of society through awareness creation and capacity building, which highly contributes to women playing a significant role in improving their participation and representation in political decision-making.

4.4.4 Institutional challenge

While the current institutions of local elections and local government have provided the necessary foundation for women‘s involvement in local politics. To ensure stronger

representation and more active involvement of women, many problems still need to be fixed. Many have pointed out that insufficient attention is given by the ruling party to increasing the representation of women in local government. But, in a very small area, the government is on the way to improve women's representation. Regarding this, KI1, forwarded the following:

> *At a party level, there is a principle that guarantees women to be represented by an appropriate quota, and it is vague to refer to an appropriate quota; there is no definite regulation on how many females should have membership. As a result, this legal requirement has not substantially improved the political status of women in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. Often, the female member of the Kebele and Woreda administration council is assigned the position of women's affairs, hence reproducing the gender inequality in the local political structure. Women's membership in such governing bodies becomes a decoration for political correctness. Some nominal political positions are going to be assumed to be reserved for women, while key positions are left for their male counterparts (KI1, Meserak Meskan Woreda on July 05, 2023).*

Generally, based on the data collected through interviews and document reviews, the study critically examined the mix of numerous factors, including traditional patriarchal stereotyping of women, gendered division of labor and responsibilities, economic structures, institutional norms and procedures, low educational levels of females, political culture, and male-centered social practices, that have all been put forward to explain low participation of women's in politics and decision making.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings which was presented and discussed above. The conclusions drawn on the basis of the findings and recommendations that are considered to be useful to assess Women‘s political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda and for those who have interested for further study related with the topic.

5.1. Conclusions

This study's primary goal was to ascertain the level of women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda as well as the variables influencing it. Women were underrepresented in council and executive bodies, and their voice in political decision-making was not given the same weight as that of men. They continue to be largely underrepresented in public, social, and political spheres and face significant obstacles to their ability to participate in politics and make decisions. While women's descriptive representation in Mesrak Mesekan Woreda is gradually improving, this does not ensure substantive representation or equitable participation for women in decision-making processes.

Accordingly, the number of female leaders and decision-makers in Mesrak Mesekan Woreda is still very low. This is because there are different obstacles to implementing constitutional provisions and the policies provided by the federal and regional governments to promote the equality of women in this study area. Among these, the education, economic, and social status of women in society have a direct influence on their political participation in the decision-making process. In addition to economic obstacles to women‘s political participation, social burdens such as historically deep-rooted gender-based division of labor, traditional attitudes associated with religion, cultural values in the community that perceive women as weak, inefficient, incompetent, and incapable of making smart decisions, and a low level of literacy are some of the factors that hinder women‘s equality and their participation in decision-making in Meserak Mesekan Woreda.

The existence of such legal institutions and social norms makes women: to ensure their democratic rights and to take part in the conduct of public and social affairs; to participate in the political decision-making process directly and through their elected representatives;

to vote and to be voted to any level of government organizations; and to be a member of any political organization, professional association, or cooperative organization based on their own willingness. As a result, the number of women in decision-making and leadership positions is increasing significantly, even if their participation is very low as compared to their male counterparts.

Currently, the Meserak Mesekan Woreda administration is giving attention to women's participation in political decision-making. Due to its contribution, there have been significant changes in promoting women‘s political participation in decision-making, starting with the equal participation of women in Woreda council, even if their political participation in the Woreda cabinet is very low. Moreover, the accessibility of social institutions such as educational and health institutions helped women in their awareness creation, capacity building, and improving health situations. Additionally, new technological inputs and operations offered to women provided relief in saving resources and improving their economic system. Beside this, transferring the best practices of the models (spearhead women‘s) to others to make most women powerful in material and financial resources is some of the contribution of Meserak Mesekan Woreda to promoting women in decision-making.

Furthermore, meaningful action from the ruling party leaders, existing government, and non-governmental organizations is very important to promote political participation and representation of women in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. To enhance women‘s political participation; increasing women‘s involvement in policy formulation and decision making processes, strengthen women‘s right to vote and to be elected to any level of government offices and to be a member of any political organization, inviting women who have more competency and job experience than others for political leadership, taking committed measures to reduce deep rooted traditional and cultural beliefs which sermons subordination of women and domination of men, giving continuous and sustained awareness creation on gender and gender issues, providing full protection of constitutional rights for the disadvantaged women in economic and social aspects are basic requirements for better participation of women in political leadership in Mesrak Mesekan Woreda.

In general, political participation and representation, which is a vital expression of democracy and allows for diversity of opinion and equality of both men and women, cannot be successful by excluding women that constitute half of Woreda's population. Without equal participation of women in the political process, democracy and democratization are non-realistic. Thus, the democratic process is able to grow and develop effectively when all people (men and women) are given an equal chance to exercise their democratic rights and when women can experience benefits equally with their counterparts. Additionally, the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at local levels of government in decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, and the practice of strong democracy. In addition to this, including women‘s perspective and their experience in decision-making processes can result in finding solutions (that satisfy a larger number of the society, which have social benefits, better and more appropriate social, political, legal, and economic solutions) for their problems.

5.2. Recommendations

Basically, women‘s political participation is a concern of the whole society and should not be left for women alone, even if women‘s struggle for their rights and full-fledged equality play an important role. In the absence of women‘s active political participation and representation, it is impossible to expect a real democratization process. In order to increase women‘s descriptive and substantive representation and meaningful involvement in decision-making, the researcher recommends the following suggestions be implemented with the careful attention and focus of concerned bodies in Meserak Mesekan Woreda.

- The constitutional rights of women should be respected in such a way that the concerned government bodies shall perform their duties in an integrated manner with regard to protecting women‘s rights and equality with men. Thus, the existing government should confirm equal rights for women based on their competency, experience, and educational background at different levels of government structure, particularly in Woreda cabinets in Meserak Mesekan Woreda. For this, widening women‘s leadership positions by taking affirmative measures for women, such as designing a quota system with clear guidelines for implementation in local

government, is very important. Moreover, incessant measures to increase the descriptive representation of women need to be followed by measures to improve their substantive representation by creating various opportunities, such as education and training in leadership, for them.

- Women should be organized to develop their competitive capacity, solve their own problems, and make adequate preparations for the implementation of their objectives. Priority should be given to creating opportunities for women to build their collective assets and establish their own impartial and institutionally capable organizations to help them to clear on their demands and bring pressure on the state and the concerned governmental and non-governmental organizations to create a situation in which women associations plan their activities to benefit women. The major point is not only establishing the associations but also strengthening them to be able to participate in decision-making processes that address women‘s real issues.
- Concerned government bodies (legislative, executive, and judiciary) in collaboration with the Woreda community should increase educational and health institutions to enlarge access and improve the quality of education and health for women. With regard to this, women politicians and public officials at the lower level of government have to create awareness among young girls in schools through citizenship education about the importance of women‘s political participation, which enables them to have a good background and to develop mechanisms to resist the obstacles that hinder women‘s political participation.
- The Woreda administration should facilitate extensive and regular training for unemployed women whose educational qualifications are rather low and whose immediate employment in practice is problematic. They will be offered short-term and non-formal training and simple tasks that will be identified and integrated into income-generating activities such as urban agriculture, handicrafts, and petty trading for women living in both rural and urban areas to increase their income through value-adding activities, ensure their economic independence, and help them take part in work that creates job opportunities for others.
- Empowering women to fight trends that hinder their ability to participate in political decision-making processes and social activities and making them effective in

promoting women‘s rights With regard to this, the local government should facilitate opportunities for educated and experienced women to participate in all fields of work and develop their capacities to become effective in their jobs, and continuous support should be given to them to make a sense of ownership among themselves and a real contribution through their professions and knowledge to solve problems that face women.

- Women must be encouraged to play a frontline role in the struggle against the deep-rooted cultural and traditional practices that influence women‘s pursuit of equality. Thus, deserved efforts should be expected from governmental and nongovernmental organizations to ensure rural and urban communities are aware of the problems that women face due to backward and harmful cultural and traditional practices and to commit them to eradicating these practices.
- Local government, with concerned organizations like civil society in general, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women‘s groups, should play their role in promoting women‘s legal institutions such as Women and Child Affairs, the Women's Association, and the Women Forum, as well as longstanding and accepted traditional norms that were developed on women‘s castes of mind like submissiveness, lawfulness, respectfulness, openness (transparency) to the real fight against misrules, and accountability to their discipline in their community, which leads women to move forward for future political participation and progress in democratization.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. Appendix-A: Interview Questions Guideline for key informants

Dear respected interviewees, I would like to forward my sincerely greetings and appreciation to you for your willingness to share your experience for this interview. This interview is designed to gather primary data that I will use for my thesis on the ***"Assessment on women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan Woreda"***. The study is carried out as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Art in political science. Hereafter, I kindly ask you to take a few minutes of your precious time to respond to my interview, and I would like to assure you that any information you provide will be kept confidential and will only be used for educational purposes.

Thank you for your cooperation in advance!!

By: Seada Hussen Alliye

Phone No. **0912857236**

A. Interview Guideline for Women employees (civil servants) of the selected sector offices

1. Do you believe that women are represented equally with men with regard to political leadership position?
2. What should be the role of different stakeholders in promoting women's political participation in leadership position?
3. What is your opinion about current political participation of women's in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
4. What do you think about the main role of women's in recent national election in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
5. Does women's are equally participating in politics with Men in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
6. What do you think about the current status of women's with men in leadership position in Meserak Mesekan woreda?

7. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of women's political participation in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
8. What are the challenges that hinder women's from political participation with regard to leadership position in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
9. What measures should be taken to deal with the challenges and promote participation of women in politics?
10. What else would you propose regarding the women's participation in political leadership position in Meserak Mesekan woreda?

B. Interview Guideline for Women and Children affairs office officials and female officials in selected sector offices

1. How do you assess the legal, institutional and social norms that promotes women's participation in political leadership position in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
2. How do you describe the status of Women's participation in political leadership position in this Woreda? Is there any improvement?
3. What should be the main role of female, child and youth offices to promote women's political participation in leadership position in this woreda?
4. What are the challenges of women's participation of political leadership position?
5. In order to create awareness about gender equality and implement national policy of women as well as other legal documents related to women political participation rights, what practical activities are being taken?
6. What is the perspective of the societies towards women's participation in political leadership?
7. How do women themselves in your institution perceive to participate in political leadership?
8. How do you express the contributions being made by women and children affairs office, women's league and concerning bodies in capacitating and promoting women's political participation and creating awareness on gender equality?
9. What do you suggest to improve the equal participation of women in political leadership positions with in Mesrak Meskan Woreda?

C. Interview Guideline for the members of women's league

1. What do you think about the Women's participation in political leadership position in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
2. What should be the role of different stakeholders in promoting women's political participation in leadership position?
3. What do you think about the main role of women's in recent national election in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
4. Does women's are equally participating in leadership position with Men in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
5. What should be taken as a good condition that promotes participation of women's in local politics in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
6. What are the challenges that hinder women's from political participation with regard to leadership position in Meserak Mesekan woreda?
7. What measures should be taken to deal with the challenges and promote participation of women in leadership position in this woreda?
8. What else would you propose regarding the women's participation in political leadership position in Meserak Mesekan woreda?

7.2. APPENDIX-B: Key Informants Profile/ Interviews cited/

No	Code of interviewee	Position of informants	Academic rank	Place of interview	Date of interview
1	KI, 1	Office leader	BA dgree	MMW	05/10/2023
2	KI, 2	Expert	BA degree	MMW	06/7/2023
3	KI, 3	Expert	BA degree	MMW	10/7/2023
4	KI, 4	Expert	BA degree	MMW	11/7/2023
5	KI, 5	Expert	BA degree	MMW	12/7/2023
6	KI, 6	Expert	BA degree	MMW	13/7/2023
7	KI, 7	Expert	BA degree	MMW	14/7/2023
8	KI, 8	Expert	BSC degree	MMW	17/7/2023
9	KI, 9	Expert	BA degree	MMW	18/7/2023
10	KI, 10	Office leader	BSC degree	MMW	26/7/2023

7.3. APPENDIX-C: Cooperation Letter

