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Social Justice and Social Justice Leadership: Perspectives of Women and Disables in one of Public Universities in Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research was aimed at exploring prevailing scenarios related to social justice and social justice leadership as perceived by women and disables in selected public university of Ethiopia. Interpretive phenomenological research method was employed. Ten research participants, including women and people with disabilities, were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were also collected using semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions, and analyzed qualitatively using narrations. Accordingly, the research result indicated that participants were not so strange for the concepts related to social justice and social justice leadership albeit their understanding differs. Participants pointed out that community perception towards women and disable people are not so fair and progressive, and tailored policies and strategies are not made available and being implemented in the study context. It was also indicated that different forms of sexual harassments, discomfited classroom buildings, toilets, shower rooms, dining rooms, and distances between classrooms and dormitories were enumerated as major inconveniences and reflection of injustices encountering women and people with disabilities in the study context. On top of this, unjust practices in areas of staff recruitment and promotion in the study context were major challenges identified in this research result. Hence, it is high time for the study context to realize and look critically those discriminatory practices resulting in a lot of injustices among members; and take actions pertinent to national and international agreements and legal frameworks and thereby, ensure social justices in its compound.

Keywords: Disability, Social Justice, Social Justice Leadership

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Introduction

Social justice has rooted from moral, religious, philosophical, and political thinking that the society engage and experience in daily lives (Coninck, Culp, & Taylor, 2013). It is commonly expressed using words/phrases/terms such as fairness, equality, justice, human rights, social benefit, freedom from discrimination and equitable distribution of resources (Bates, 2007, Sturman, 1997). Mostly, social justice is equated with the notion of equality or equal opportunities and burdens that the society need to experience. Although equality is undeniably part of social justice, the meaning of social justice is actually much broader (Scherlen and Robinson, 2008). It has a vision of a future and more inclusive society in which the basic needs of all people are fairly met. According to Cribb and Gewirtz (2003), social justice emphasizes on three major elements: a sense of distributive justice (focused on the allocation of resources), associational justice (focused on the distribution of power), and cultural justice (the need to reflect on a broad range of identities and cultures).

Despite this, human kind across nations are experiencing thousands of social injustices manifested in the form of oppression, discrimination, harassment or other forms of inequalities and inequities. In line to this, many writers and advocates of the interpretive paradigm pronounce that in several occasions existing laws, theories and social practices do not reflect social justice in a way to fit the marginalized or vulnerable groups in the society (Creswell, 2013), rather, they stand for serving the powerful and dominant groups. Unfortunately, the oppressed and marginalized groups internalize the image given by the oppressors and adopt the oppressor's guidelines as Paulo Freire (1979) contended. In order to reverse the situation, however, there should be relentless effort made by all concerned. In this regard, Bogotch (2014) explained that the injustices that people experience in their lives cannot only be addressed but also get resolved by the leadership through political, economic and social means. If so, the questions related to inequality, empowerment, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation will get pertinent and timely answers (Hammersley, n.d.; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Social leadership is among the major strategies that people need to work on in

order to make sure that social justice amongst all groups of the community are being applied (Grogan, 2004).

Therefore, beyond acknowledging the prevalence of various types of social injustices, social justice leadership is required to root out those distorted mental models and socially unjust practices often anchored and embedded in economic and political dynamics in the community (Bogotch, 2014). According to Shields's (2004) explanation, issues of equity or fairness, equality of opportunities, respect for differences and diversity, civic responsibility, the advancement of knowledge and personal freedom are significant components that need to be addressed by installing and exercising social justice leadership. Hence, the prime focus of social justice leadership is to bring about justice and equal treatment of people despite differences in gender, language, beliefs, political as well as economic backgrounds exhibited in their day to day lives. Besides, social justice leadership tries to see all societal issues through the lens of equity and it is an antithesis of inequality or injustice, discriminations, stereotyping, and other sorts of inhumane and pathologizing practices (Shields, 2004; Grogan, 2004).

By the same token, social justice leadership is required and should be exercised by educational institutions as they directly involve and reflect the social, political, cultural and economic practices of the larger society. Despite this, critical theory, as emancipatory theory, desperately expresses its concern and also strongly criticizes educational leaders and leadership for their imbalanced attentions given to both the curricula and justice issues. Educational leadership and leaders emphasize much on educational ideas, policies, and practices that serve the interests of the dominant class while simultaneously silencing and dehumanizing "others" (Brown, 2008). Thus, it is crucial to address issues of power and privilege to weave the concept and practices of social justice into the fabric of educational leadership curriculum, pedagogy, programs, and policies at sectoral level.

Therefore, to understand the status and the true sense of social justice and social justice leadership practices in the university, we need to see through historically disadvantaged groups' per-

spectives or spectacles. Consequently, the major purpose of this study was to investigate social justice and social justice leadership based on the perspectives of women and disables in the study context. With the aim of this, the following basic questions were formulated:

1. How do women and disables perceive social justice and social justice leadership in the study context?
2. What are the challenges that women and disables are facing related to social justice and social justice leadership in the study context?

Thus, the investigation was meant to understand the lived experiences of participants' social justice and social justice leadership in the university. Besides, the results of the study attempted to expose problems and pinpointed possible feedbacks about the status and praxis of social justice and social justice leadership. It is also hoped that leaders may get information and see their leadership practices from women and disables' point of view. On top of this, it may help leaders craft and come up with different policies, rules and regulations which can bring back fairness and benefit most importantly women and disables. Beyond this, the investigation may kindle the attention of top management bodies and others to learn more about women and disable groups in their respective universities.

Context Description

Similar to other higher education institutions across nation, the university under study has bestowed the responsibilities to run the instructional processes, conduct research activities, and initiate innovations. It is also working hard to be premier research university; and contribute substantially for the nation and beyond through high quality education, research and community services. The target university encompasses students, academic staffs, administrative staffs and other support staffs in permanent and temporary employments. All university members belong to different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds as they came from different parts of the country with different identities and characteristics. Thus, the university is expected to entertain these diversified groups, especially women and disables get equal treatment in ev-

ery life endeavors and should act as exemplary to other organizations. As an academic institution, it is also expected to reflect professionalism and rationalism. The university also consists of more than six campuses; but this study was delimited mainly to its main campus.

Moreover, the university under study also consisted of 2449 academic staffs (male=2008; female=441), 50,575 students (male=35,266; female=15,309), 4512 administrative staffs (male=1888; female=2624), and 239 technical staffs (male=181; female=58). Totally, in the university under study, there are 7200 staff including academic, administrative and technical staffs; which accounts 4077 (56.63%) males and 3123(43.37%) female staff. Besides, it has 43,674 undergraduate students (male=29,770; female=13,904), 5758 Masters Students (male=4711; female=1047), 226 PhD students (male=212; female=14), and 917 postgraduate diploma in teaching students (male=573; female=344). In addition, female students' participations in percent for undergraduate, Masters, PhD and PGDT programs are 30.27%, 18.18%, 6.19% and 35.51% respectively. On top of this, the university under study consisted of 72 disable students (male=50; female=22). When split into programs, there are 52 undergraduate students (male= 36; female=16), and 20 Masters Students (male=14; female=6). Compared to total students participating in the university, disables account only 0.14% (male= 0.14%; female= 0.14%).

Furthermore, it was also important to describe the composition of women at various leadership positions in the university. Accordingly, 18 females (at higher level=2; middle level=5 and lower level=11) got leadership positions in the university, which is practically insignificant or almost nil as compared to the leadership positions available in the university. Worst of all, none of disable people were found at leadership positions of any echelon.

Methods

This study was a qualitative research design aimed at gaining in-depth knowledge about the topic under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). More specifically, interpretive phenomenological research method was employed as it helps to describe

and understand about the lived experiences and perceptions of homogeneous participants (Cresswell, 2009).

The participants of the study included one visually impaired male lecturer, three women lecturers (two of them at leadership positions), one visually impaired male student, and five physically disable female students (two visually impaired and three physically disabled). To maintain the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms were used and hence; SELAM- women lecturer one, HANA- women lecturer two, EMEBET- women lecturer three, EYOB- visually impaired lecturer, SOLOMON- Visually impaired male student, and TIGIST- physically disable female student. Thus, ten (10) participants were chosen using purposive sampling as it is the best way or preferred approach to such a small number of individuals for understanding perceptions, problems, needs, behaviors and contexts, which are the main justifications for a qualitative oriented research (Baley, 1994).

Another important element in the qualitative study is the procedures followed in the data collection process. Accordingly, as a procedure followed in this study, participants were selected purposefully and informed about the purpose of the study, and they were asked if they could participate in this research. Among the twelve participants who were asked to participate in the study, ten of them were willing and involved in the research. It was promised that their identities would be kept in secret to ensure confidentiality. Following this, interviews were planned to be held on an agreed-upon day, place, and participants were visited on commonly agreed date and place. Prior to interviewing and focus group discussions, ethical approval was established by giving participants an informed consent. Consequently, all interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions and were recorded which approximately took 30-40 minutes with each participant, and the focus group discussion was also made with four disable students (two visually impaired and two physically disables). Both the in-depth interview and focus group discussions conducted, in general, helped the researchers of this study to get the subjects to freely express their thoughts around particular issues raised for investigation, and hence, the collected data are thematized, presented and discussed in the fol-

lowing section.

Results and Discussions

The finding and analysis of the study are presented in parallel. Thus, the study participants' perception on the essence of social justice and social justice leadership, perceived understanding of university community towards women and disables, policies and strategies related to women and disables, practices of social justice and social justice leadership in the university and major challenges were presented as themes. Therefore, this study was meant to pronounce the perception of women and disables for social justice and social justice leadership in the study context.

Perceptions on the Essence of Social Justice and Social Justice Leadership

Participants have expressed their own perceptions and understandings about what social justice and social justice leadership meant to them. Some attempted to relate with equality; others with equity/fairness; and still others relate social justice and social justice leadership both with equality and equity or fairness issues. According to SELAM, justice means fair distribution of resources. She added that fair resource distribution means proportional distribution of available resources according to the need, urgency and other criteria's. Justice is not merely equal distribution of resources. To elaborate her definition further she gave us an example, "Assume you have water to distribute to different animals. If you use equality criteria, you are being unfair. You cannot give a camel and a rat equal amount of water to ensure equality. The share of a rat may be a swimming pool for it (luxury)". From her explanation, we learnt that justice needs to be proportionate distribution of resources to the beneficiaries based on their need, urgency and other life challenges. Similarly, Molla (2013) argues, equity is beyond securing equal access to resources and opportunities. It includes reasonable adjustment to provide a differential treatment in accordance with the conditions and needs of the target groups for equality of outcomes and/or benefits.

On the other hand, EYOB also shared the idea of Lynch and Baker (2005), which states that social justice or justice is the key dimension to pursue

equality of conditions so that people can pursue a good life, resources, respect and recognition, love, care and solidarity, power, working and learning. Moreover, EMBET understands social justice and social justice leadership as the process of creating “equal access and opportunities as well as empowering people to be self-reliant. As a result, people can make decisions of their own and determine their destiny”. Furthermore, SOLOMON also explained that to define justice we need to look into the situations of different sectors and areas of life. He further explained that most of the facilities are made available targeting normal (non-disable) people disregarding disabilities. He added that the education coverage in the country is good but there are only few schools with proper considerations and facilities for learners with disabilities. For instance, classroom buildings and the roads are not apposite; rather expose disable students to other types of disabilities. The technological advancements and outputs have also showed little considerations for disables in filling their gaps or limitations. Although he touched various issues and conditions, his explanation told us that to ensure social justice and social justice leadership, fair allocation of resources, proper services, societal support and other equality of conditions should be ensured. Therefore, social justice and social justice leadership as perceived by participants does mean fairness in all aspects just like others fortunate enough to entertain both the benefits and burdens as well creating strategies that bring these into effect.

In this regard, researchers such as Nussbaum (as cited in Coninck, Culp, & Taylor, 2013) argues that in conceptualizing justice, the idea of capabilities remind one of the needs to make special efforts to address those unequal needs of people who begin from a position of social disadvantage. According to Molla (2013), social justice requires fair, not necessarily equal, access to opportunities and resources for all members of a society. It necessitates what Therborn (2006) calls ‘compensatory capacitation’, which leads to equality in capabilities and opportunities. This entails women and disables should get support based on their needs. Needs are different, and should be taken into considerations to ensure justice. Therefore, to realize social justice and social justice leadership, fair and equal grounds should be in place for women and disables to fill

in the deficiencies and gaps. Above all, despite their scope, research participants’ awareness about and perception of social justice and social justice leadership were not so different from one another and not far-off from the scholarly definitions.

Women and Disables’ Perception of University Community Views towards them

People may develop different understanding about themselves and what others view toward them. Thus, interviewees were asked to explain their experiences related to other community members’ views towards women and disables. Accordingly, albeit differences in expressions, interviewees have unanimously confirmed that in the eyes of many groups of the community, disability is something associated with evil deeds committed and resulted from divine curses. They also explained that, “Most community members, especially illiterate people, consider disabilities as cursed”. As a result, people with disabilities especially in rural parts of the country are denied of exercising their rights such as education and kept at home, cannot create love and friendship or marriage except fortunate few escaped from such oppressions and exclusionary practices. And this was directly related to the research finding of JICA (2002) which states that in many parts of Ethiopia (both urban and rural), people view and associate disability (handicap) with spiritual evil and do not let disable persons to go out in public and exercise their rights. Because of such exclusions and undesirable community attitudes towards disabilities, a large proportion of people with disabilities are suffering from segregation and deprived of their rights. And this was also further explained in the study done by Barton (1996) and McDonnell (2003) (as cited in Lynch and Baker, 2005), stating that because of undesirable community attitudes towards disability, even those fortunate people with disabilities are receiving non-standard and poorer quality education in separate schools, which ultimately results lower educational qualifications, fewer job opportunities, lack of job choice, lower pay and higher unemployment.

Moreover, interviewees further explained that they became fortunate for education and other opportunities to exercise as they were adopted and supported by donor and charity organiza-

tions which are few in number to respond the demands of many disables in the country. On top of this, one of the interviewees, TIGIST, stressed that societies do not view positively and encourage people with disabilities to be strong by giving examples of successful individuals with disabilities. She further said, "Mostly I felt hopeless, I usually see people with disabilities being mendicant and I felt many times as if that was my destiny". Therefore, lack of educational access, family and community supports made most people with disabilities segregated and forced them to lead impoverished living. And we have learnt from the responses obtained from TIGIST and others that such undesirable outlook towards disability is also sometimes reflected by some university community members albeit the magnitude differs.

Concomitant to views toward disabilities, community views toward women is not also desirable and of supportive. In this regard, one of the interviewee, HANA, explained that, "Women are always disregarded, considered as incapable and incompetent by many groups of the community, even women themselves. Because of inbuilt perception in the community as women are incapable and perform less than men, even by chance when given leadership positions, they are always expected to prove their capacities unlike men." This was further confirmed by another interviewee, SELAM, stating that "Most of the time when women suggest ideas in meetings, nobody gives consideration/attention unless it is supported or approved in another men speaking next to them. This is a deep-rooted belief of the community that we currently experience." She further explained that even if women participate in leadership positions, they fear failure. This is mainly because when they fail, it is magnified on them. And it seems that failing is normal for men. It was also said that "Everybody watches carefully our failure, they wait until we make mistakes, then they say you failed, they ridicule, you women repetitively say we are equal to men, where is it in real sense?" She angrily added that when women compete and win leadership positions based on their capacity and competence, many people think as if they get positions by virtue of gender as an affirmative action and do not have even trust on women leaders."

To crystallize the issue more, HANA told us her

practical experience encountered while she was conducting a research with her friends sponsored by the University Research Directorate. The research office grants a budget for a research work. She and her research colleagues took 60% of the budget according to the rule and made significant progress. Then she goes to research office for the remaining 40% pay with sufficient reasons and to provide progress reports about the research. However, she was asked, "have you made this truly? How did you make such progress with this short period of time etc.?" Based on her perception, the intention of such question was not to release the remaining budget. So, she strongly argued that this demands extra effort to secure women's rights because she was simply perceived as incapable woman. On top of this, all interviewees added that most of the time, officials and the government prefer to take unnecessary credit by budgeting leadership positions as quota for women even when they are competent enough. This not only discourages women but also violates our (women's) rights.

In support of the above witnesses, a study by Alemu & Asnake (2007) explained that low status placed by the community characterizes virtually every aspect of girls and women's lives. The study further elaborated that different roles in the community make girls and women left with few opportunities to make and act on their own decisions. Consequently, these undesirable and harmful community perceptions discourage women not to participate actively in all walks of life similar to men. Our women interviewees emphasized that the perception of the community towards women was not so favorable; rather demoralizes women in leadership positions and forces them to fail before trying the actual leadership tasks. One of the interviewees (HANA) told us her typical experience when she was at her office acting as department head by stating, "People bring a letter to my office and said please give this to the department head", considering her as secretary. This is typical example of how much the society look down women and associate jobs (being secretary is only for women). Moreover, significant number of people understands affirmative action wrongly and perceive as women are incapable or inferior, and this seems the reason as to why affirmative action is given. This is in congruent with Subrahmanian's idea (as cited in Molla,2013) that affirmative ac-

tion policies for women may result in unintended negative consequences such as reinforcing the prejudice of incompetence and inferior status attached to women, which may eventually result in socio-psychological effects of negative self-perception and poor performance.

To sum up, according to the perspectives of our research participants, we have learnt that the perception of the university community towards women and disables are not favorable; and demands a lot of down to earth works to alter or correct such misconceptions and malpractices against these groups of people.

Policies and Strategies related to Women and Disables

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995) recognizes the degree of inequality between men and women, and it introduces affirmative action in economic spheres and social services, including education and training (Molla, 2013). The government declares equality for disables, minority and women via different legislations. However, in Ethiopia, both the Proclamation (FDRE, 2009) and the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality (MoE, 2004) do not explicitly recognize the specific nature of gender-related inequalities in the subsystem, and this undermines the effectiveness of the equity instruments of the policies. Supporting this, SELAM argued the existence of different life challenges for women and disables which the legislations did not consider. "People say you can win, the opportunity is there. Everybody preaches but in practice let alone fairness, there is no change in attitude in the first place". She further explained that "in every sector in the name of democracy and affirmative action, attempts are being made to create equality without understanding the actual gaps for women".

According to Lynch and Baker (2005), women are marginalized in literature, art, science and history. They do not get equal attentions in class, their extra-curricular interests are defined as secondary to those of boys, and men disproportionately hold positions of authority. This neglect of women may be considered as cultural imperialism. Similar to this, another interviewee (HANA) argued that the education system do not reflect equality of men and women because the curriculums and pedagogy are still male domi-

nated. She raised the question, "Have you seen examples like pilot-Abebech (women name) in textbooks? Rather they associate women with secretary and lower office tasks".

People with disabilities also suffer injustice or discrimination, and continue to encounter barriers to their full participation in employment and in society more generally (Bogotch, 2014). In favor of this, SOLOMON argued that in Ethiopia there is no inclusive policy, which gives high emphasis to disable individuals compared to women let alone non-disables. In the Ethiopian Constitution, the rights of disable people are only described in article 41, section 4. This article states that the government is responsible for the supply of rehabilitation services for disable persons and stated as: "The State shall, within available means, allocate resources to provide rehabilitation and assistance to the physically and mentally disables, the aged, and to children who are left without parents or guardian" (FDRE, 1995).

He further argued that, "Of course, Ethiopia is among the 83 countries who have signed the international convention of disability but the implementation protocol is not yet signed. As a result, the issue of equality is almost ignored and officials use only for political purposes". According to his evidence, disables account 15% to 17% of the total population of the country. There are five to eight million women and men in Ethiopia, or 7 to 10 per cent of the population with disabilities (UNICEF, 2009). It is estimated that people with disabilities are more than 7.3 million (MOLSA, 2010). However, their representations in employment and government higher positions are almost none. It was pointed out that the only disable person who holds higher government position at federal level is one (Mr. Asmelash, parliamentarian elect). According to his perception, women have better representations in parliament than disable individuals. Hence, he angrily uttered that, "No person speaks about/for us in House of People of Representatives". Compared to the federal government, the Amhara National Regional State (among nine national regional states in the country), gives better emphasis for disable people. The interviewee exemplified his fact in such a way that: if an individual with disability competes for a job at federal system, additional three marks are given to the person with disabilities; whereas if the disable candidate

scores more than pass mark (usually 50%) in Amhara Region, he/she will be granted the job no matter how the implementation is still inconsistent as per individuals' or leaders will.

The federal government as a policy initiative states that all universities to employ more women as academic staffs. Despite all efforts to increase female staffs in public universities in the last 10 years, women account for only 11% of the academic staff in Ethiopia (MoE, 2011). Worst of all, nothing was said about disable individuals. In this regard, among the interviewees, SOLOMON further argued with examples that, "My friend is visually impaired and he graduated in 2015 scoring cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.8. He is jobless now at Tilili (a town about 70 km far from Bahir Dar City) but a woman, his classmate, scoring below 2.5 is now a graduate assistant at the University". Another interviewee (TIGIST) also strengthened that, "Employers are usually reluctant to employ persons with any kind of disabilities". However, the proclamation concerning the Rights to Employment for Persons with Disabilities, No. 568/2008, requires avoiding discriminatory situations, and recommends the need for providing appropriate working and training conditions for person with disability (MOLSA, 2010). Despite this, our interviewees and participants involved in focus group discussions (both women and disables) explained unanimously that job and leadership opportunities are low and generally unfair.

Therefore, from interviews and focus group discussions conducted, we learnt that regardless of policy issues and strategies set for women and disables, there are numerous hindrances that impede implementations and made those groups fail to benefit. Hence, there is a need for leaders to let their doors open, and have eyes and ears that enable them protect the rights of women and disables. Leaders and the community at large shall also develop positive attitude as people with disabilities can contribute important ideas and solutions to different problems in their own country.

Social Justice and Social Justice Leadership Practices in the Study Context

As Shah (2010) explained, gender is one of the few modes of differentiation that has social, cultural, political, and economic implications every-

where in the world. Besides, leadership concepts, theories and practices also evolve in this context in line to cultural & belief systems. Therefore, the opportunities for women to practice leadership are almost none. Starting from the family to higher levels, women do not get fair opportunities to practice leadership. Their social roles may restrict them from achieving the capabilities to lead the lives that they value and lead to freedoms (Coninck, Culp & Taylor, 2013). Thus, being a woman makes her to be disadvantaged; by being a mother she has many tasks; being a good wife required to take care of household activities including the kitchen and husbands need. These are also real facts on the ground that women experience in their lives in many parts of the globe including Ethiopia.

During interviews, participants agreed that there are still male dominance and chauvinistic thinking reflected in every sphere of life. With surprise, one of the interviewees (HANA) questioned many things as, "Who are classroom monitors? Who are chairpersons' in-group discussions in elementary and higher education? Who are leaders of different committees? Who are class representatives in colleges and universities? Who are at the apex of every sector or organization in the country? Mostly men!" Paradoxically, most men and even women ourselves believe and recognize that when few leadership positions and professions are occupied by females, it is through affirmative action and the will of the government; nobody thinks that women deserved them. This also reminds the statement by Schmuck (as cited in Coleman, 2003), women who have achieved positions, and held predominantly by men have realized, consciously or unconsciously, that there are social roles, cultures and expectations governing the roles and lives of women. Consequently, they must become 'abnormal' women; they must transcend the social expectations of femaleness in order to aspire to socially prescribed roles of leadership. From the above responses and discussion, we came to realize that there are multi-faceted challenges that impede women not to exercise their rights and opportunities. And though many pro-women policies and strategies are in place, there are still long journeys to travel, and deep-rooted societal beliefs and taboos to stand against.

Specifically, in the study context, people at top

leadership positions show good desire to participate women in leadership positions but still insignificant as our interviewees explained. In addition, the top managements were given directions by the government to incorporate more women in leadership positions. Currently, the maximum position held by women is vice president and there are deans and directors at various offices but still the proportion is not satisfactory. One of the interviewee (SELAM) told us that, in the college she belongs, she is the only women representing women in academic commission meeting at college level. This forced women to think the university as if it is not willing and committed to hear women's voice; rather preferred to "see every action from their angle and men usually rule their voices". Another interviewee (HANA) also strengthened the idea by citing examples as, "No woman is in promotion committee; women loose promotion if they get pregnant." This shows that there must be someone to see their angle or shout on behalf of them being involved in different positions and committees.

Moreover, it was explained that lack of women as good role models for others is also another problem for women not to be good and confident leaders. Interviewees added that, "There are rare successful women like the former university president but most lessons taken from women leaders are failures". They mentioned an example how one women dean in a certain college botched due to lack of experience. "A woman was assigned as a director despite no single experience in leadership [tasks]. She did not know the work, the [behavior of] the people and even the [type and nature of] bureaucracy. Soon after, she got frustrated; she could not accomplish her duties properly. Ultimately, she resigned from the leadership position". Of course, such practices are bad and frustrating for other women too who aspire to come to different leadership positions.

To point out unjust practices in the study context more vividly, HANA told us that before three years ago, no position payment was allowed for department heads. During this time, almost more than half department heads in the university were women. She added that, "from college X, out of five positions, three were occupied by women". Soon after budget allocations for such positions, the game changed and everybody began shouting for headship positions followed

by competency based policy which nobody was willing and claimed before. Moreover, the university management decided to make headship positions merit/competency based. Sadly, this also made most women to leave their headship positions for assistant professors and associate professors; whom most of them were men. All these were examples of unfair or injustices observed in my working organization, she argued.

Furthermore, participants also explained that information access is another challenge for women in their success of being a leader. They elaborated that, "Men unlike women are not responsible for household activities or children. This gives them to have leisure time, during this time they exchange information while drinking coffee or beer. The information they obtain helps to win micro-politics, and enhance their success at leadership position or office duties". Therefore, by virtue of being a woman and culture, women may not have access to information, even they may lose their rights due to lack of information. Participants added that, another challenge for women is sexual harassment. "Until we get into office, many things destruct our minds including positive and negative suggestions forwarded from men. It does not seem significant but it is a challenge 'usually emphasizes on ridiculing the efforts and status of women; which ultimately make women lose their confidence' and fail to fulfill leadership requirements". Actually, there is anti-harassment policy in the university but we do not report everything especially colleagues; but still it is a challenge for us to do our jobs, they explained.

On top of this, SELAM explained another challenge for women unable to retain their leadership position during pregnancy. Women are forced to lose their leadership positions due to pregnancy. To elaborate a bit further, "let me take what a woman dean suffered such kind of instance", she said. When she returned from maternity leave, another individual already took her dean-ship position. She added that, "It was not due to her capacity or end of her leadership term, it happened because she left her office due to maternity leave". And this was "quite unfair deed!" she angrily argued. Another sad story is, according to the university legislation, securing promotion demands two consecutive years of service and evaluation results. However, if a woman

gets pregnant in the middle, she loses this opportunity. So, “where is fairness or social justice and social justice leadership?” she asked angrily although we did not have answers to reply.

Moreover, interviewers interrogated both interviewees to see themselves through the lens of applied critical leadership (Santamaria & Santamaria, P. 2011). In what ways do their identities (i.e., subjectivity, biases, assumptions, race, class, gender, and traditions) enhance their abilities to see other perspectives and therefore, provide effective leadership especially in ensuring social justice? They were specifically asked about what type of leader they are and the activities they are doing to ensure social justices. Because SELAM did not have leadership role, she could not tell us what she has done to support women using her position but she explained that if there are opportunities, she aspires to make women’s voice louder. However, HANA told us that, “As a department head, I am supporting women. For example, in practicum supervision, I assign women especially pregnant women in near places. I also fight against wrong grading systems committed due to sexual affiliation with instructors”. She also added that she acts as exemplary for female students as she approaches students and listens to their complaints being department head. She concluded that, if there were many women in leadership position, it could likely that their voices would be heard more and benefits would be secured. This relates to the research finding of Odhiambo (2011) which stated that improving women’s participation in leadership roles is an important part of the struggle to improve the freedom, rights and opportunities of all women worldwide.

With regard to social justice and social justice leadership related to disables Astin and Astin (as cited in Shields, 2004) explained that among the value ends of leadership should be to enhance equity and social justice that disable students desperately aspire to. In line to this, EYOB argued that, “Disable people never have a chance to experience leadership, especially visually impaired”. He further explained that disable people in academic positions are only three in number and none of them are at leadership positions. Besides, these people are also treated in similar fashion like any other academic staffs in the university but nothing special. However, students

are represented in different committees as leaders and members so that they are relatively in a good position to address their feelings and demands. Therefore, leaders of the university have a lot to do to ensure justice to individuals with disabilities since many of them are deprived of leadership positions and actions, as perceived by interviewees of this research.

Furthermore, it was recommended that disable individuals should be members of different committees in the university, not only academic staffs’, students’ should also be represented. Thus, officials at different positions in the university should make their doors open to disable students. From the interview data, we feel that conditions of disable students in the university should be investigated further so that unjust circumstances can be seen and get resolved collaboratively. In addition, there must be clear guidelines and homemade policies that can address challenges of people with disabilities and should be communicated to students. As a result, this will improve their sense of belongingness and shows the university’s concern for people with disabilities.

Challenges to Ensure Social Justice and Social Justice Leadership in the Study Context

In our preceding discussions, a lot of issues were mentioned regarding the perceptions of community views towards women and disables, policies and strategies designed to address the needs of women and disables, and the actual social justice and social justice leadership practices in the study context. Besides, different types of challenges and lived experiences were also dealt with our interviewees. Under this point of discussion, major challenges that are impeding the lives of both women and disables will be looked at based on the responses of participants.

Educational institutions especially higher education institutions should take a lead in the fight against social injustice, and the values and praxis should reflect social justice. Besides, creating awareness, arming such skills and being pioneer in the agenda is expected from higher education institutions. In favor of this, Brown (2008) states that confronting issues of social justice, and arming people with the requisite knowledge and skills are both moral and legal imperatives that higher education institutions are required to do

with passion and intelligence.

With regards to the concern of the legal system, in any governmental and nongovernmental organizations, women are eligible for three months of maternity leave by law. Besides, it is stated that the newly born baby has the right to feed breast for six months. To do so, women require time to go home early or come to office a bit late after feeding their children. However, the challenge happens on practices. To exercise such rights, there is no transport service made available for women because the transport service is meant for the majority most likely suitable for men not for a mother who feeds breast. Moreover, participants angrily said that “women are required to get into first class early in the morning or they are required to fulfill office duties because men and women are assumed equal. For example, women are required to teach 12 credit hours work load per week, publish one article a year, and give one community service activity in a year”. However, this legislation is equal to both women and men without considering any of the challenges that women experience merely by being a woman.

Similar to all universities in the country, there is Gender Office in the study context established to work on gender affairs, especially for the rights of women. According to one of the interviewee (SELAM), Gender Office is perceived as a “lion without teeth”. That is to say, the office is not granted commensurate authority and duties. Thus, it is difficult to ask about rights and complain with no one to fight for the rights and benefits of women. Let alone struggling for the rights of women, the office itself is not yet empowered, she further explained. Another interviewee (SELAM) was also asked to explain a bit further about the office, and elaborated that, “The office does not have a budget like other directorates or offices in the university. It devotes much of its time on other issues of the university and government agenda such as 1 to 5 grouping, KAIZEN and other bureaucratic engagements”. Therefore, based on the data obtained through interviews, Gender Office has nothing meaningful roles to ensure women’s rights and benefits successfully. Besides, it is possible to understand that the office is not empowered and busy of other duties albeit further in-depth investigations are required to obtain more rigorous truth.

On top of this, even though the university is showing progress in all aspects of development, the attentions given to disable students are below expectations, as explained by interviewees and participants of focus-group discussions. They further described that with no context-based policies, rules and regulations accompanied by practical actions that enable respond and address to the questions and demands of disable people in the university, it becomes vain to talk of equity and issues of social justice. EYOB also explained that, “Other than the rights indicated in the constitution and other federal policy issues, the university has developed and implemented nothing special that favors academic staff members with disabilities”. Academic staffs with disabilities are treated equally like other staffs in all responsibilities of the university. For instance, when research funds are granted, people with visual impairments are also given the same budget with no considerations of additional expenses such as fees for assistants involved in guiding, reading, administering questionnaires and other expenses for research activities. Besides, when there are competitions for leadership posts, scholarships, special trainings and other promotion related issues, the university does not have any special or homemade policies, rules or regulations that benefit us (i.e., people with disabilities) unless they are competent enough and excel other contestants.

Moreover, It was mentioned that offices and classrooms for teaching are not comfortable for disables and they are similar to all others, and as a result, “disables are suffering a lot and nobody pays attention for this till now.” With regard to the supports and empowerment activities for disable people, students get better support than academic staffs according to the views of interviewees and focus group participants. They also pointed out that supports that disable students obtain from the university include battery, cassette, walkman (tape recorder), ‘ken’(white stick), brail papers and monthly 200 birr pocket money. However, most equipment supports are given once up until they finish university education. According to their explanations, these equipments are given once assuming that they last all years of learning. Thus, the support is not enough because no substitution is given if some of them get damaged. They also believe that the government allocates budget to universities

based on number of students including disables. But the budget is used to buy projectors, chalk, white board, marker...etc which are not used and equally important for disables particularly visually impaired students. Nevertheless, costs of these materials are included in cost sharing just like other students, which means students are going to pay for it after graduation. This is unfair or injustice according to the views of participants.

Furthermore, because of absence of clear directions on how to treat students with disabilities, the support disables get from teachers and other staffs depend on the personality and willingness of these groups. EMBET and other participants also agreed that sometimes personal willingness or kindness of leaders and others are reflected while providing supports and exercise the rights of women and disables. Besides, among issues that lack clear university direction include examination and pedagogical aspects. In this regard, SOLOMON argued that visually impaired students are taught Braille courses by normal (visually non-impaired) teachers whose examples and illustrations don't match, and PowerPoint slide presentations are not inclusive. On top of this, visually impaired students are also given similar exam types with 'normal' students and always forced to take examinations in a noisy places, seating outside the classroom. The time usually allotted for exams is also similar to 'normal' students which is unfair and injustice because visually impaired students entirely depend on the readers' (or students who read for them) ability and speed to read exams for blind students; whereas, students with no sight problems or 'normal' students usually maintain their pace based on the exam time allotted. In addition, the kind of teaching methodology most teachers use in the class is majority based, which means 'normal' benefit more than disable students especially visually impaired. The best example is when teachers use different diagrams to illustrate the lesson; students other than visually impaired ones benefit a lot.

Another major challenge for disable students was found to be the physical environment of the university. Though the physical environment of the university is beautiful and more convenient for most students, it is not suitable for students with disabilities, especially visually impaired.

In relation to this, interviewees explained that, "Take the registrar; there are ducts around, which may create further disability". Focus group participants also angrily explained that classroom buildings, toilets, shower rooms, and dining halls are not suitable for disable students, especially for visually impaired and students with physical disabilities. These people are coping such difficulties with the help of other helpful students. Thus, from their explanations, we have learnt that reconsiderations are required for infrastructure improvements and constructions in the study context in order to make sure social justice among students and other university community members with disabilities.

On top of this, the interviewees have put their general evaluations and judgments with regard to the supports and encouragements given by the university as moderate for students and totally poor for academic staffs with disabilities. They also further stated that this is not the issue of discrimination but negligence, ill-will and ignorance about the problems that disable people frequently face in the university. Besides, this is also the reflection of problems related to economic, political and socio-cultural developments of the country at large. In this regard, one of the interviewees (EYOB) however was optimistic and pointed out that, "I hope the situation will get better when we have better developments at national level". Yet, the university is not in a position to develop policy, rules and regulations that support and encourage disables, particularly academic staffs, and by large, the issue of social justice leadership in the university is "not known and not pronounced much", as it was told by interviewees of both students and academic staffs.

Above all, as participants argued, people with disabilities view social justice and social justice leadership not more than simple lip services though it is difficult to arrive at full-fledged judgments about the issues by interviewing few disables in the university.

Conclusions and Implications

It is true that the central theme of social justice and social justice leadership is creating equal and fair opportunities for human beings to lead a happy and better life regardless of who they are or conditions they are in. Therefore, leaders responsible to ensure justice or social justice

leaders are expected to set and apply policies and strategies that respond to the demands of all people regardless of their differences. Besides, historically marginalized people need to be given positions of authority to protect their rights and welfare of others under segregations.

The data obtained through interviews and focus group discussions showed that despite commendable efforts made by the university, there are still long ways to go in order to bring social justice and social justice leadership culture that provide fair and equitable services to all students and staff. Consequently, everybody in the university should feel comfortable, belonging, and should have equitable opportunities; and injustice deeds should be challenged. As pointed out by research participants, women and disables experience various types of unjust and discriminatory practices in their day-to-day lives. Some of these include: undesirable community views towards women and disables which are not of friendly and supportive; absence of tailored policies and strategies that respond to the needs of these groups; inadequate physical and material resources arranged in favor of people with disabilities; undesirable attitudes of some staff including leaders toward women and disables which are not of supportive and inclusive. Moreover, the policies and strategies used to treat both women and disables were found to be unfair and injustice. In this regard, compared to women, disables are given fewer attentions. For instance, with minimal GPAs, women are selected to be graduate assistants in universities; whereas this policy doesn't work for disable graduates, even for those with better GPAs.

To counter these injustices and malpractices, there are lots of efforts being made and policy issues formulated as well as used so as to empower and benefit women not only in universities but also in all government and non-governmental sectors from national to local levels. However, this does not work and/or is negligible when it comes to people with disabilities. And yet, public and non-public media are highly engaged in and busy of propagating life challenges of women and how to cope these challenges as well as practical actions to be taken. But none of these speak about and consider people with disabilities, as indicated in the data obtained from participants. Above all, data showed that both

women and disables share many life challenges in common albeit the severity of the problem to people with disabilities in the study context is a bit complex. Hence, with such discriminatory practices and injustices exhibited on reasonable portions of the population (women & disables) in the country in general and in the study context in particular, it would be impractical to respond to the demands of both women and disables in line to global and domestic legal frameworks as well as ensure holistic national development endeavors. This is because unsatisfactory or little attention given to issues of social justice and social justice leadership in academic environment will undoubtedly exacerbate segregations and discriminatory practice existed since long in the day-to-day practices of the larger society. Ultimately, this may lead to persevered social injustices and inequality which are antagonistic to global agenda of the day.

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