Women’s involvement as an effective management tool in decision-making in Oromia region’s public organizations

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Women are the fuel that runs the engine of the organization and it is believed that their low involvement in the decision-making process creates tensions between management and staff. Therefore, the purpose of this study was aimed to determine the impact of women low involvement as a management tool in decision-making and its implementation in Oromia region public organizations by determining the causes of low women involvement in decision-making and the consequences of such action on implementation of decisions. In the study, cross-sectional, descriptive and inferential designs were used. As findings of the study; eventhough, the involvement of women in decision-making are increasing, until know there is low acceptability of their decision-making process by all communities. As per the chi-square test made (p<0.001, Phi= .207), there is statistically significant difference between men and women believe as the involvement of women in decision-making lead acceptable by all people. The serious consequences of low women involvement are, job dissatisfaction, low productivity and employee turnover and reduce various benefits of organizations. Implications: Hence, in order to reduce such problem the governemet and every organization should consider specifically the above factors.

Keywords: Women involvement, decision making, causes of low women involvement, consequences of low women involvement

INTRODUCTION

The trends of women’s participation in world are showing a positive even better advancement of women in different sectors. During 1996-2000, the increase for male worker was only 1.2 percent whereas the increase for female worker was 14.4 percent which shows that the rate of increase of the female workforce is higher than that of the male workforce of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD, 2000).During the past decade, increasing research attention has been paid to women participation and challenges faced in their workplace. Women can prove to be a valuable resource and an asset for the country with the abilities like handling multiple tasks simultaneously, which might not be that easy for male employee (Standing, 2004). Though, there are some cultural and religious challenges addressed by the researcher which hinder the participation of women in decision-making, organization is one of the critical factors which can play important role for ensuring women’s participation in organization (Chen et al., 2008).

Women basically work more hours per day than men irrespective of income class which often leave heavy work burden on them and have a definite impact on women’s mental health, and block their prospect in line of work (Ogiwara et al., 2008). Workplace harassment of women is increasingly becoming a common phenomenon. Women in the workforce, especially those in professional and management positions, are doubly burdened by social traditions that expect workers to meet masculine standards at the office while maintaining their feminine role of nurturer at home. A survey conducted by Democracy Watch on harassment of middle class women in offices and found that harassment rate is very high among educated middle class women.

According to International Labor Organization (ILO s) the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 2002 (No. 111), all human beings,
irrespective of race or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity. Despite the recognition and governmental and non-governmental efforts, comparing to men (23.4%), only 6.7% women were occupying managerial positions (Labour force Survey, 05-06) which is far beyond the satisfaction. As a result, women have less control over income and assets, have a smaller share of opportunities for human development, have a subordinate social position and poorly represented in policy and decision-making (Huq and Parveen, 2006).

Furthermore, where in the agriculture and production sector the participation of women was 72.1% in 2000 and 84.3% in 2006 while in administrative, managerial and technical sector the participation of women is very low (4.9% in 2000 and 4.6% in 2006) which is not satisfactory. According to Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) of Human Development Index, Bangladesh ranks 81 out of 93 countries in economic and political gender inequalities between men and women (HDR, 2008). The participation of women in the policy formulation and decision-making level is still very low. In fact, women's active participation in decision-making is not only important for ensuring equality, but also for establishing their right addressing their problem and challenges they faced in their workplace as well as social life which help as effective management tool in decision-making. In the same way, active involvement of the women staff body in decision making could be detrimental to every organization's welfare and the growth, sustainability and survival of the organizations.

In similar fashion, women in Africa experience greater challenges in accessing decent jobs than men. Women's share of employment in the formal sector is still lower relative to men and their pay is on average lower than men's pay for the same work. The difference between female and male employment-to-population ratios was 22.7 percentage points in 2007 as well as in 1997 (ILO, 2008 cited in the six African Development Forum (ADFVI, 2008).-21 No

Additionally, as past research finding shows that even though the local government's (Ethiopia) effort in incorporating gender perspective into economic empowerment programmes is a relative improvement is exhibited, until quite low (Muluneh, 2010). Furthermore, as per preliminary investigation made by the student researcher, although in Ethiopian public organization over the last decades women's employment has increased, compared to men still there is low women's participation in decision making (Chalchissa, 2011). Besides this, women's participation in decision-making is not satisfactory which directly affect effectiveness of management.

However, as organizations are grappling with the problem of involvement of women in effective decision-making, against this background, the topic under consideration was seek to research and identify the main causes and effects of low or nonparticipation of women in effective decision-making and recommend appropriate measures to address them. Hence, this research was located to investigate the women's involvement as an effective management tool in decision making in Oromia region's public organizations.

The broad objective of this research was to study women's involvement as an effective management tool in decision-making in selected public organizations in Oromia region.

Specifically:

i. To determine the consequences of low women involvement in decision-making on the implementation of management decisions.

ii. To identify ways of involving women in decision-making.

iii. To assess the organizational benefits from women involvement in decision-making.

Literature review

Women involvement

The term women involvement is often used interchangeably with women participation, but employee involvement practices tend to take place at individual or workgroup level, rather than at higher decision making levels (Greenberg, 1986 cited in Theodosia, 2010).

Women involvement is a process for empowering women to participate in managerial decision-making and improvement activities appropriate to their levels in the organization. Women involvement has been conceptualized as the process of developing 'a feeling of psychological ownership among organizational members' and has been implemented via the participation of women in information processing, decision-making and/or problem solving(Kearney, 1997 cited in Chalchissa, 2011)

One of the greatest underlying factors in the success or failure of any organization is the power of its people and how well that power is focused towards meeting organizational objectives. Organizations that can tap the strengths of their women as men will be stronger and more competitive that those that cannot (Apostolou, 2002 cited in Maksuda, 2010). Numerous studies, all point to the fact that employee involvement does influence organizational effectiveness; some of which includes lower absenteeism, (Marks et al,1986), enhanced work attitudes (steel and Lloyd, 1988); higher individual work performance (Bush and Spangler, 1990), lower employee turnover and increased returns on equity (Vandenberg et at, 1999), and improved organizational learning culture(Thompson, 2002, cited in Maksuda, 2010).
Women involvement is also expected to lead to increased product or service quality, greater innovation, stronger woman motivation, lower costs but a higher speed of production, and lower employee absenteeism and turnover (Lawler, 1996 cited in Chalchissa, 2011).

**Benefits of women involvement**

As literature on women involvement accumulated, a wide range of benefits was elaborated, and organizations were encouraged to adopt a variety of participation strategies, and to cultivate a culture of participation (Denison 1990). As per Markowitz (1996) also asserted that giving women decision-making power boosts their morale and commitment to the organization, which aids productivity; everybody benefits: businesses accrue higher profits and stability because they are more secure in their industry niche and workers are more fulfilled and attached to the companies because they have a voice in decision-making. A summary of expected benefits as listed by Lawler (1990) are: Improved, more innovative and efficient work methods and procedures (less resistance to new methods may result, and the problem-solving process may produce innovations); better communication between management and workers and across work units.

It could lead to attraction and retention of women employees (improvement results from increased satisfaction and involvement); reduced tardiness, turnover, and absenteeism; greater staffing flexibility (increased flexibility results from cross-training and teamwork); increased service and product quality (higher motivation and better methods increase the rate of output).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research design**

The research was conducted in Oromia region from June, 2011 to Octobr, 2012. The cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. Population in this research is the whole zones (18 zones) of Oromia region. From the given zones, three were taken as a representative samples.

**Sampling method and sampling size**

To select the sample of respondent’s probability sampling methods, stratified random sampling technique. Simple random was used to select three zones as samples representation of population (18 zones) and to select respondents from each stratum. Stratified random was used to categorize the respondents into two (men and women) based on gender. Eventhough, the women employees are less than men in number in different organizations, the researchers had taken for both stratum equal number i.e from total sample size of 386 (50% each i.e 50%x386=193 females and 193 males). All respondents from both stratum were chosen using simple random sampling method.

The sources of data used were both primary and secondary data.

**Primary data**

For the purposes of this research, survey, interview and focus group discussion were used to gather the necessary information.

**Secondary data**

These include all types of published and unpublished, public or private documents and other such types of information. Such as books, documents, Journals, articles, different past researches, reports of the company and online material (Internets).

**Data collection procedures**

A well-structured questionnaire for survey, individual interview and focus group discussion were used as tools of data collections.

**Data analysis procedure**

Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed. The processed data was analyzed by using Excel and statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) Version 16. Analysis of descriptive statistic and chi-square conducted to investigate statistically significant difference between men and women’s responses.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This part covers the analysis and the interpretation of the various data collected through the use of questionnaires, focus group discussion and interviews. Table 1.

As the below table 1 implies, 25.9% of male respondents hold Position in different organizations and 74.1% did not hold while 16.9% females respondents hold Position in different organizations and 78.5% of them did not holds. From this it is possible to conclude that even though the majority of position holders in
Oromian region public organizations are men, the number of women manager also become increased. 

As per the above table, 55.1% of women employees were involved in decision-making and 43.6% of them did not while 74.1% of men employees were involved in decision-making and 25.9% of them were not involved. This implies that mostly men employees were involved in decision-making. Furthermore, as per chi-square test made (p<0.05, Phi=.207) shows, there is statistically significant difference between men and women involvement in decision-making. To cross-check the case, focus group discussion was made with employees and most of them replied that there is low acceptability of women’s involvements in decision-making. Table 3.

As indicated in table 3, 28.8% of respondents replied as the impact of low women involvement in decision-making would lead to labor unrest, 70.5% replied it would lead to job dissatisfaction, 36.0% replied it would lead to low productivity and 31.2 % replied it would lead to tardiness while 24.5 % and 20.9% replied it would lead to employee turnover and absenteeism respectively. From this it is possible to conclude that mostly the low women involvement in decision-making brings job dissatisfaction of employees and low productivity of the organizations.

When women are not involved, there is no complete sense of appreciation of issues and accountability which will in the end make the organization suffer when goals and set objectives are not met. Respondents also said non involvement restricts and restrains them from taking decisions that would lead to effective and efficient service delivery. Frustrations set in making it difficult for progress in innovation and value added activities.

As per the table 79.5% of respondents replied as women empowered with the authority fulfilled their role within the organization while 20.5% replied as they do not. There is statistically weak significant difference between men and women (P=.047, Phi=.111) responses’. It is consistence with Apostolou (2000) that found as women involvement and empowerment is a long term commitment, a new way of doing business, a fundamental change in culture. As well as women who have been trained, empowered and recognized for their achievements see their jobs and their companies from a
The women were of the view that involvement through the communication of information about the organization is very important as indicated by 66.3% of respondents. 17.2% responded that it is a somewhat important as decision making tool and 6.1% of the respondents responded as extremely important and 6.1% brought up the suggestion that communication of information about the organization might be important.

The study also revealed that self-managed teams, another decision making tool would be welcomes by women employees as a way of involvement. 52.8% of respondents replied as it is very important as a decision-making tool whilst 17.2% replied as it is extremely important. 12.9% of respondents suggested that involvement through self-managed teams somehow important whilst 15.3% were might be important.

Respondents exhibited different views when they were asked to indicated their opinion whether involvement in product development (increases productivity of their organizations) is important in decision-making. 62% replies it is very important whilst 16.6% replied as it is extremely important. They attributed it to the fact that women will be able to use that avenue to air their opinions and that of customers to meet their expectation and delight.5.5% of respondents indicated that it might be important, 9.8% responded as it is somewhat important and another 6% did not respond.

62% of respondents were of the view that having feedback on actions taken is very important and 9.8% responded as it is somewhat important and another 5.5% of respondents replied as having feedback on actions taken were might be important whilst 4.9% were indifferent. Table 5.

Responding to what kind of benefits would organizations enjoy from women involvement in decision making, 66.7% of respondents indicated that commitment to organizational goals is one of the benefits an organization achieves. 33 percent of respondents were indifferent. Increased productivity is attainable was the response of 60.9% of respondents whilst 39.1% were indifferent.

Improved performance and job satisfaction were also mentioned as benefits. 62.2% of respondents indicated that improved performance and 67.9% were for job satisfaction.37.8% and 32.1% respectively did not respond.

According to the data collected, when women are satisfied on the job it automatically translates into improved performance because the feeling of satisfaction creates room for the employee to work very well even under extreme conditions to achieve a target without grumbling.

In response to better communication as a benefit of employee involvement in decision making, 63.5% of respondents indicated that it was beneficial whilst 36.5% where not in favour. As the difference margin between the two opinions shows, better communication leads to efficiency because women employees can equally make informed decisions in their daily operations.

However, when employees were asked whether low
turnover is one of the benefits an organization will gain when women are involved in decision making, 51.9 % as it is whilst 48.1% did not select it.

CONCLUSION

The involvement of women in decision-making and its implementation is very crucial to the fortune of any organization as it is through the successful implementation of policy decisions that the goals and objectives of an organization can be achieved to improve organizational performance and the implementation of the short or long plans. Eventhough, women were increasingly involved in decision-making, until now majority of people did not believe that as an involvement of women in the decision-making process it would lead acceptance of their decisions by all community. It is because of the low acceptability of women’s involvements in decision-making. The employees felt that the consequences of low women involvement are serious for any organization as it could lead to low productivity, job dissatisfaction and even employee turnover though this may not be on the high side but some very good employees can be lost as a result of this. When this happens, an organization tends to spend a lot of money on recruitment and training. Eventhough, there is some statistically significant difference between men and women responses’ women empowered with the authority can fulfill their role within the organization.

Methods of getting women involved are many and varied and these include suggestion systems such as communication of information about the organization, self-managed teams, involving of women in product development is one tool of participating women, view that having feedback on actions taken is very important tool of participating women in decision making. Organization can encourages involvement of women in decision making through different strategies. Majority of organizations have encouraged women’s participation by different system. When women are satisfied on the job it automatically translates into improved performance because the feeling of satisfaction creates room for the employee to work very well even under extreme conditions to achieve a target without grumbling. As the difference margin between the two opinions shows, better communication leads to efficiency because women employees can equally make informed decisions in their daily operations.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the finding of the study the following recommendations were forwarded to different organizations:

When women are not involved, eventhough, job dissatisfaction is the most effect, there is low productivity and even employee turnover which will in the end make the organization suffer when goals and set objectives are not met. As well as low involvement of women restricts and restrains them from taking decisions that would lead to effective and efficient service delivery. Hence, every organization should involve women equally in decision-making with males.

Majority of organizations have encouraged women’s participation by different system. In order to further maximize the participation of women in decision-making, further exploration using rigorous standard setting and item analysis procedures should be carried out. Production of separate report for different methods will help to maximize the benefits of the assessment.

A wide range of benefits of participation of women was elaborated, and organizations were encouraged to adopt a variety of participation strategies. Hence, in order to earn such benefits every organization should more encourage their participation.

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