

Exploring Orthodox Christian Religious leader's attitude on Productive Roles of Women: The Case of Gondar City administration

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ABSTRACT

Religion play a tremendous role in shaping and determining women's status both directly through religious scriptures interpretations and preaching and another way influencing in laws from its development up to the implementation and on the governance system. Productive role of women carried out with the responsibilities of domestic work and child bearing and other community roles. In this research, the researcher explored the attitude of Ethiopian Orthodox Christian religious leaders towards the productive role of women in Gondar city. Qualitative approach used and the researcher used case study research design. The participants selected by using non-probability sampling technique specifically purposive sampling. Interview and focus group discussion was used as data collection methods. The data collected from the participants analyzed by thematic data analysis technique. The research revealed that, Orthodox Christian religious leaders' perception towards the productive role of women is positive though they also stated how the double burden of women makes them busy and that restrict them to take part in productive activities. They also affirmed that the classification of tasks based on sex isn't supported by the orthodox Christian church. Finally the researcher recommends the expected body should work with religious leaders to creating awareness about women productive roles in City.

Keywords: Attitude, Gondar, Productive role, Religious leaders, Women

INTRODUCTION

The role of women varies from nation to nation but some culture allow women to be active participants in productive activities though some others forced women be stay at domestic sphere.

In addition to cultural influence the religion play a great role in shaping and determining women status through religious preaching and scriptures interpretations. Plus to these the cultural and religious factors influence in law designing up to the implementation (Alesian, et.al, 2011)

According to Byrne (2002) the status of women has been changing and their options become wide in every sector equally with their counterparts.

This averts the traditional role of women hindered at the domestic level, like home maker and mother. From this one can understand that the increasing of women in employment has been dynamic and will shift the life of women. Thus equality of equal pay conditions will achieve. The triple role of women as productive,

reproductive and community management role is common in most developing countries. Women productive roles are done with other chores responsibilities like child bearing and community roles.

Even though their roles are valuable the society perceived as soft work than recognizing (Birhanu, 2008; cited in Gashaw, 2015),

Gashaw (2015) conducted a research on Assessment of the Roles and Constraints of Women in Economic Development of Ethiopia.

The finding revealed that women have been playing a tremendous role in social, political and community lives but their contribution has not been recognized as a real work due to the political system, discriminatory law and social rules and norms in the society.

Most of the researcher conducted research on the role of women and related gender issues rather than exploring the attitude of the Orthodox Christian religious leaders (OCRL). Thus, the researcher triggered on exploring the

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attitude of orthodox Christian religious leaders on productive role of women. As much as the researcher knowledge is concerned research were not conducted on the attitude of Ethiopian orthodox Christian religious leaders towards the productive role of women in the in Gondar City as well as in the country level.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to explore the attitude of Orthodox Christian religious leaders towards productive role of women

Specific objectives

- To explore the attitude of orthodox Christian religious leaders on the role of women in entrepreneurship
- To explore the attitude of orthodox Christian religious leaders towards the participation of women in political activities
- To explore the attitude of orthodox Christian religious leaders towards the role of women in agriculture

RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIALS

This research relied on a qualitative approach. The very nature of this research requires more of qualitative one to identify EOCRLs' perceptions. The researcher used case study research design as the participants are selected as a single group of individuals called orthodox Christian religious leaders in Gondar city.

The researcher selected 14 participants using purposive sampling for interview in the city and one FGD having 6 participants. In addition to the interview one focus group discussion was undertaken. The data collection instruments were in-depth interview and focus group discussion. The collected data was analyzed by thematic data analysis techniques by following its own scientific procedure. The transcription process was followed by making coding. In this stage, the pre-coded stories, statements, ideas, and experiences during the interview and FGD were converted into meaningful codes. This was where translation into English language. While translating, and coding the researcher used back and forth technique to ensure that participants' meanings and intentions while the interview were considered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings are presented in this Chapter. The data gathered through in-depth

interviews and focus group discussion. Overall this chapter presented the perception of the orthodox Christian leaders towards the triple role of women; productive, reproductive and community management roles in the study area.

The Role of Women in Trade and Entrepreneurship

Trade is the one in which it has great contribution to the development of the country. In this research petty trade and large scale was discussed with Religious leaders in Gondar (RLG). The religious leaders are highly supporting the involvement of women in trade activities.

They perceived that, women are more talented and active than men in the system and communication with the customers in trade. RLG affirmed that women have listing and explaining how the prominent women were doing trade in the history of Ethiopia. When we come to the petty trade, the participants have high recognition and prestige in their endeavor to supply the daily consumption of the family. This trade takes place in urban centers.

The religious leaders have said about this as, women are striving in different economic activities but some of the poorest women are highly involved in petty trade like; street bender, baking bread, preparing Tela (Traditional alcoholic drink).

In similar way RLGs also have said many things about large scale trading, the participation of women in this business area is empowering. They said the role has been playing through exchange of goods and services in trade have historical legacies. In regard to large scale trading the RLG10 stated as:

When we see Ethiopian history of trade, women are also active and skillful participants of trade in exchange of goods in the domestic and international level. Queen Shabaha of Ethiopia exchanged goods with the wise emperor of Israel during ancient time by sending her eunuch. So that, this shows how women are qualified and were participants in trade though the then transportation was traditional. Therefore I am the supporter of the involvement of women in trade.

In a similar way, the other participants see the role of women in a good way. Having this woman is also playing roles in entrepreneurship. They said that, women entrepreneurs become increase from time to time as the environment

become comfortable and in some extent parents become empower their daughters when they try to do a new business idea. The focus group discussants are also assured that women had been a role in trade during the ancient time as well. Similarly, RLG 6 said that "women are active in trade. They have unique qualities of easily communicating with the customer."

Women contribute to international trade as producers, entrepreneurs, employees and consumers. One of the most important ways they contribute is as owners and managers of women-owned businesses.

The body of evidence on women's participation in the global economy is limited, but it is known that their participation differs significantly across countries. There is growing consensus that their participation results in significant benefits to the economy (International Trade Centre, 2015).

Women dominate the MSE sector in Ethiopia and their participation in the private sector is comparable to other African countries. Women entrepreneurs play an important role in the economy. Their products and services contribute to GDP growth. Women entrepreneurs also generate income and employment for many (Desta, 2010).

The religious leaders were also confirmed that, the contribution of women trade is tremendous and significant for the best livelihood of the family.

From a kind of productive role, trading and being entrepreneur is the one in which it has great contribution to the development of the country. The religious leaders are highly supporting the involvement of women in trade activities. They perceived that, women are more talented and active than men in the system and communication with the customers in trade.

Because women have a unique qualities/ nature in communicating in the sphere of trade that helps them to be beneficial from the work.

In the area of entrepreneurship, women are becoming part of it and they are also active participants. As their counterpart men, they create new business ideas and also, they produce new products to the markets. With regard to this one of the participant (RLG 7) add his idea as: Women have been organizing in different entrepreneur organization with men and create the entrepreneur associations that help them to

increase their capacity and strength in the game of business. I have also information about "women trade organization" that works to increase the involvement of women trade; that women will become entrepreneur in trade and other areas. Some individuals may not accept the successful walk of women in creating new thing but the reality is not the way they think rather women have unique qualities in creating new things.

The Participation of Women in Political Leadership

On the perceptions of RLG, women play a role in political leadership. This shows how women were contributing in leading and playing in the arenas of politics. Despite their numbers are less, according to the participants, women's qualities are by far better than men in their charging of responsibilities and they are more accountable than their counterparts.

Now a day's women have a chance to being a leader in spite of some cultural challenges. Up on this, the participants criticize the backward thinking of the society that hinders women to come to the public. With no difference of RLG 10, RLG6 Stated his perception by listing some legacies of women as:

Different queens had been leading Ethiopia from different parts of the country. For example, we can take queen Shaba; she was a leader in Ethiopia. She had been a trade and diplomatic relation with Israel. And also, we can summon the recent empress; empress Zewditu, Empress Tsehaytu Butul, and others were contributed a lot to Ethiopia in different ways.

The Attitude of RLG towards the Role of Women in Agriculture

The RLG perceived in ways that in rural areas of Ethiopia women are the active participant in agricultural activities. The RL understand that the role of women in Agriculture helps the sector as the backbone and contribute to the incensement of GDP for Ethiopia.

It is obvious that men and women do not have equal resources access in agricultural areas of Ethiopia though not in urban.

According to Ahmed (2004) although men across different social categories tend to have greater power and control over resources than women, their gendered identities are also being challenged and re-negotiated.

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While it is important that when we look at gender as a social construct we consider both men and women, gender analysis tends to focus on women, as they have been largely ignored by the mainstream and their access to resources, endowments and opportunities is still restricted compared to men.

The participants have also see how the role of women have been playing in Ethiopia and to other countries have differences in spite of both are caring much responsibilities than men. When we see the case of Ethiopia, women have a role in agriculture and also, they have roles at the household.

The RL have ideas regarding the Handling both household and agricultural roles of women; women become busy and suffered a lot in entertain this two tasks.

So, in compiled of the interviewee and discussants we can understand that the attitude of the orthodox Christian religious leaders towards the role women have been playing is benevolent and will give energy to women.

Conclusion

Women have been playing a role in different sectors of the government; like in education, agriculture, health and others. According to the participants, participating in these sectors makes women beneficial and they also contributed for the development of the sectors.

As to all other participants, as a citizen woman have a responsibility to take part in playing roles in governmental and non-governmental organization.

Except being having the appellation of status from deacon up to patriarch, women do not restrict to take the responsibilities and being accountable to what they did. According to the participants, women have gained free and fair rights from super natural God.

And also the participants perceived the role of women in governmental and non-governmental as valuable and will pave the way to the oppressed women to have a chance being benefited from the fruits of the country.

The religious leaders are highly supporting the involvement of women in trade activities. They perceived that, women are more talented and active than men in the system and communication with the customers.

As it is mentioned, in addition to productive role women have been participating and contributing. And their contributions also had been helped the past generation and have been helping and will also help the generation in contributing as citizen.

Thus, the attitude of Ethiopian orthodox Christian religious leaders in the study area towards the Productive is positive.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, possible recommendations are outlined as follows:

- Gondar city administration should pave an opportunity for women to participates in trade activities and give awareness to be self reliant about the abilities and qualities of women in trade to the society
- On the role of women in leadership position, the religious leaders should teach the people about women negligence was not originated from the orthodox Christian church teachings rather it was individuals misinterpretation and understanding.
- The household labor and social role of women should be recognized and shared among the household rather than leaving all responsibilities to women.

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