The Propensity of Church Leaders on Political Participation in South-western Ethiopia: A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract: Leadership moves and changes the world, including the state politics & the church. Leadership ensures democratization and modernization under political participation of all citizens whereas the status of church leaders' participation in politics was not well known in many countries, including Ethiopia. Therefore, the current study aimed to determine the propensity of church leaders on political participation in Ethiopia. A descriptive study with quantitative data analysis of 376 study subjects was conducted from August 1-15, 2020. A semi-structured, validated and pretested questionnaire was served to collect the data by trained data collectors. The quantitative data were coded, entered into Epinfo computer software and transported to SPSS version 23.0 for analysis. During the process of data management, frequencies & percentages were calculated and described the data in tables & figures. The study has included participants of calculated mean age of 32.9 (SD±8.3) years. More than 62% of the participants have indicated the importance of political participation with the conventional form of political participation being the most practiced followed by unconventional form as reported by 64.9% & 27.4% of participants respectively. The current study has determined that the propensity of church leaders toward political participation was dissimilar and generally frail across the studied churches because of believed different source of power in church and state politics.

Keywords: Church, Leaders, Leadership, Propensity, Political Participation

1. Introduction

Leadership moves the world, and the experiences from church helps to think critically, communicate effectively and anticipate changes. Following the thought, the leaders step into organizational success & life after lesson with deeper knowledge about leading change, working through divine power, and continuously improving processes, relationships, and operations. Political participation takes different forms of definition but simply means that a person is participating in the political process by making his or her opinions and beliefs known in lawful or unlawful way [1]. In the social sciences, the term is often used to describe an action taken by a citizen to influence the outcome of the political issues or systems [2, 3]. It is a voluntary act of an individual applied in various ways ranging from apathy on account of political stimuli to holding the office [3]. Regardless of the definition given, the political participation took different levels based on degree of involvement in an activity or relates to how much power or influence participants actually have. Some people act being at the center of the activity and the decision making whilst others take a back seat role [4]. It refers to normative and operational conceptualizing politics, and it varies from the wide to the narrow citizen political participation [5] with the given assumption relate d to the democratization process as well as to the processes of modernization or development processes [6]. Political participation is not one- dimensional and cumulative, but

fragmented and specialized. Most citizens tend to specialize in a particular form of political engagement and stick to it: they are either party campaigners, or involved in community affairs, or they contact public officials, or they are protest activists [7].

Generally, the level of political participation is modeled into five constricts each having particular variables. The first participation form named conventional political participation in the last 12 months reflecting activities of good citizens, and is non-felon. The people of conventional group strongly committed to politics and are more likely to participate on a regular basis towards the political activities that includes voting, volunteering for a political campaign, making a donation (money, time) for political organization, contacting political & government officials to expressing opinions to leaders, belonging to activist groups, being interested in politics and discussing politics [8]. Conversely, unconventional Participation takes another form of political participation in which individuals or groups are engaged in legal but often considered inappropriate (protest) activities in the previous twelve months. This form is not institutionalized but demeanors main political activities by signing petitions, supporting boycotts, purposely buying products, and staging demonstrations and protests. Young people, students, and those with grave concerns about a regime's policies are most likely to engage in unconventional form of political participation [8, 9]. Thirdly, people act in politics being a voluntary association of politics where in this type participants act being a membership of, charming participation in, giving money to and running voluntary work for the associations [10]. Fourthly, people participate informally in politics by social engagement and report of the frequency with which they do so. Lastly, people can participate in politics through informal helping behavior; they actively provide help for others and report or declare their help [10, 11].

The dynamics of church and state relationship is influenced by the existing cultural context [12] and the relationship help the church to be more effective in its evangelical voice, speaking to those who guide citizens through political power [5, 13] To this end the best of Christian wisdom discerns these deep and universal patterns to human life and community [14]. Therefore, under having a unique source of life the church cannot be explained in organizational terms alone and must guard against approaches to leadership that merely accommodate to the broader culture including politics, [14, 15] which is, nowadays considered, the heart of modern democracy [16] and its manifold importance [17].

The concept of political participation has become a very common in everyday public discourse [18]. In globalized world, political participation was ascribed the heart of modern democracy that further enhances balanced socio-economic growth and human development [16]. On the other hand, the rapidly changing and increasingly complex world, political participation and level of experience in church leads to variation in socioeconomic differences among citizens [19,

20]. In a similar way, political participation subsidizes the quality of democracy, the individuals' feeling of self-determination and political freedom in European countries [2] and arranges the degree of power the citizen holds [4]. In different countries, the governance effectiveness in terms of the government effectiveness, control of corruption and, especially, the political management of developing and transforming countries shows suboptimal political participation [21]. Furthermore, many leaders display constructive as well as destructive behaviors, indicating that leadership is not either constructive or destructive [22]. Where science and technology can be vital in evangelism and discipleship, leadership development and in social concerns some leaders overlook the deployment of science & technologies [22]. The church has suffered greatly from the integrity crisis of the church leaders in Africa where they further lost credibility because of the scandals of their leaders. The church has lost its prophetic role in the community. It is also common that Church centralization is a very huge problem that power is centered in one man and political exclusion [23] making the power to be either charismatic or community organization than political [24]. Conversely, protestant churches in Ethiopia dearth studies both on political participation and its related effects wherefore this study aimed to address them concurrently so that leaderships in the church will advance with country's system.

Leadership expectations of pastors and elders are often unrealistic and not centered on what leadership is really about becoming worldwide crisis [25]. A study conducted in America identified three Churches to suffer from leadership crisis & lack of space for youth programs participation [26]. The church in South Africa reported to remain silent in the new political dispensation [27]. Catholic and protestant churches were reported to demonstrate different level of political participation skills [19]. In Britain from study conducted in 2016, the unconventional form of political participation reported to receive the majority of youth respondents [28]. Protestant church in Ethiopia reported from study conducted in – to have unstable relation with the state [29] or weak participation from Christian side [6] while others declare inexistence of state without church and vice versa [12, 30] Based on this several scholar edify the existence of the one due to the survival of the other [31].

2. Methodology and Materials

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in Jimma town, one of the towns in Oromia National Regional State from August 1-30, 2020. Jimma town has a latitude and longitude of 7°40′N 36°50′E, and 17 kebeles within which 35 Christian churches were distributed. The total population of the Jimma town is estimated to be 120,960 with 32192 households; of these total 20.6% population & 16.6% households were accounted by people of different protestant church attendants. Using a quantitative descriptive study design the researchers have included participants from six

randomly selected protestant churches. The sample size was determined using the single population proportion formula in online epinfo, taking the following assumptions; since there is no previous study in the area the researcher estimated prevalence of level of leaders participation in Ethiopian politics as 50%, with confidence of 95%, margin of error 5%, and non-response rate of 10%. Finally, a total of 376 study subjects' response were included and analyzed for the results. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to the select an individual study subjects. The number of participants from each church were determined & allocated by population proportionate rate. After allocation of proportionate to size, the study subjects were selected by simple random sampling. During the selection process, being legally a member of the church, residing in the area for at least 12 months, representative/head of the family, having clergy title in the church and being in the independent age group were used as inclusion criteria of the study.

Data were collected for different variables including Socio-demographic, faith based, leadership and political participation characteristics. Particularly, seven activities related to conventional form of political participation such as voting, volunteering for a political campaign, making a donation (money, time) for political organization, contacting political & government officials to expressing opinions to leaders, belonging to activist groups, being interested in politics and discussing politics were addressed. Similarly, four activities or elements of unconventional form of political participation such as lawful demonstrations (protest), signing a petition, boycotting products, and deliberately buying certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons were included. For voluntary associations' form of political participation status of being membership, participation, giving money and voluntary work for associations were enlisted. For both informal social participation and informal helping behavior forms of political participations social engagement and the frequency of the engagement were included.

Data were coded & entered into Epinfo software and transported to SPSS version 23.0 software for analysis. During the analysis measures of central tendencies were used to report the final result for the descriptive statistics. The questionnaire was prepared initially in English, translated to local languages and retranslated to English by another person, who was blind to the original questionnaire, for consistency check. For validity and reliability of an instrument test was conducted using *Cronbach's Alpha test.* Further, pre-test of the questionnaire was made on 5% of each category at different church (out of the study churches, but share similar socio-demographic & religion characteristics with the study area) and take corrective actions accordingly by investigatory team. Following confirmed quality check of the questionnaire, orientation training was given by principal investigators for 6 data collectors and 2 supervisors. Completeness, accuracy, clarity and consistency of every filled questionnaire were checked by the supervisors on daily basis. Finally, data cleaning and exploration was conducted before the end data analysis using computer software.

Implementation of the study was carried out after getting approval from the ethical clearance committee of Grace Graduate School (Ref no GTC23/2020). An official letter of collaboration and permission request to each church was obtained from Department of Leadership. Every participant was provided full information including withdrawal possibility if indicated and finally a written consent was granted for those fixed participation.

3. Results

To determine the propensity of political participation among leaders, the study has enrolled 376 randomly selected participants making 98% response rate of the study. Then the results were organized sequentially from Socio-demographic characteristics through Affiliations and level of political participation.

3.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of 376 quantitative study participants to which male gender accounted 270 (71.8%), and the mean age was calculated 32.9 (SD±8.3) with 345 (91.8%) of them being urban residents. The majority or 307 (81.6%) of the respondents were married, and the Oromo Ethnic groups was reported the dominant group (172, 45.7%) in the area followed by Yemi ethnic group that accounted 53 (14.1%). Two hundred seventy-four (72.9%) of respondents were succeeded education above 12 with 51 (13.6%) and 13 (3.5%) respondents to be the owners of second cycle and Illiterate ties respectively. Regarding occupation, an employee group contributed 249 (66.2%) with 49 (13%) merchants, 37 (9.8%) daily laborer, 31 (8.2%) student and remaining few proportion composed of housewives and farmers. Eighty (21.3%) respondents were represented from Mulu wongel church, 77 (20.5%) from Mekane Yesus church, 72 (19.1%) from Meserete Kiristos church, 72 (19.1%) from Hiwot Berhan church, 41 (10.9%) from Amanuel and 34 (9.0%) from Gent churches from which a total of 238 (63.3%) having clergy title in church (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants

S. No	Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages	Remarks
1	Gender	Male	270	71.8	
		Female	106	28.2	
2	Residence	Urban	345	91.8	
		Rural	31	8.2	

S. No	Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages	Remarks
3	Age in years	18-19	20	5.3	
		20-24	47	12.5	
		25-34	141	37.5	
		35-44	146	38.8	
		45-54	20	5.3	
		55-64	2	0.5	
4	Marital stratus	Married	307	81.6	
		Unmarried	69	18.4	
5	Ethnic group	Oromo	172	45.7	
		Yemi	53	14.1	
		Dawuro	51	13.6	
		Amhara	40	10.6	
		Don't want to specify	27	7.2	
		Other*	33	8.8	
6	Level of education	Illiterate	13	3.5	
		Read & write only	15	4.0	
		First cycle (1-8)	23	6.1	
		Second cycle (9-12)	51	13.6	
		above 12	274	72.9	
7	Occupation	Government/NGO employee	249	66.2	
		Merchant	49	13	
		Daily laborer	37	9.8	
		Student	31	8.2	
		House wife	6	1.6	
		Farmer	4	1.2	
7	Participants' church	Mulu wongel	80	21.3	
		Mekane Yesus	77	20.5	
		Meserete Kiristos	72	19.1	
		Hiwot Berhan	72	19.1	
		Amanuel	41	10.9	
		Genet	34	9.0	
8	Clergy title in the church	Yes	238	63.3	
		No	138	36.7	
9	Monthly income	0-5000 ETB	214	56.9	
		5001-9999 ETB	118	31.4	
		10000-14999 ETB	19	5.1	
		≥ 15000 ETB	25	6.6	

*Hadiya, kaficho, Tigre.

The average monthly income of the recruited respondent was 4847.3 (SD±4538.2) ETB with more than half (56.9%) earning within the range of 0-5000 ETB and only 25 (6.6%) of participants getting above 15,000 ETB monthly as in table 1.

3.2. Affiliations of the Study Participants with the Church

The affiliations of the participants with their church were also covered in the study, and accordingly 233 (62.0%) participants were reported the method of their church plantation being community organization while 54 (14.4%) participants reported a charismatic method, and 89 (23.7%) not knowing the process. Similarly, 312 (83.0%) of the participants were reported the presence of youth program within the church unlike 64 (17.0%) participants who were imaged the absence of especial program for youth.

Within their church 303 (80.6%) of participants were accustomed payments that made to casher, Deacon, elder and other individual in the church by 195 (64.4%), 59 (19.5%), 21 (7.0%) and 28 (9.2%) respectively. From the payers, almost all 287 (94.7%) were receiving receipts except 16 (5.3%) respondents who reported that they were not getting the receipt for the payment they flattened. For the reasons to be a member of the respective church, several reason were rated with the first two majority to be because of their initial place to accept Jesus, 154 (41.0%) and physical accessibility of the church in 123 (32.7%) of respondents with 32 (8.5%) of an other reasons. In their particular church, about 206 (54.8%) recognized that their church leadership style follows Pentecostal while 93 (24.7%) participants said evangelical and the remaining 65 (17.3%) not knowing with 12 (3.2%) reported others.

Further, a total of 301 (80.1%) respondents were reported the existing leadership in their church to be satisfactory with the remaining proportion or 75 (19.1%) of respondents. From the general views of participants the most observed problems in the church were considered to be leadership deceit (27.9%), Leadership crisis (25.5%), Poor participatory decision making (18.4%), World & church system Fraternization (16.5%) and culture & tradition (11.7%) (detailed in table 2).

Table 2. The affiliations of the study participants in the church

S. No	Variable	Categories	n	%
		Community organization	233	62.0
1	Method of church plantation	Charismatically	54	14.4
		Don't know	89	23.7
2	Status of youth program in church	Present	312	83.0
		No	64	(17.0
3	Any form of payment for church	Yes	303	80.6
		No	73	19.4
		Casher	195	64.4
4	To whom Payment made	Deacon	59	19.5
		Elder	21	7.0
		Others*	28	9.2
5	Receive recipient for payment	Yes	287	94.7
		No	16	5.3
		Initial place to accept Jesus	154	41.0
		Physically nearby	123	32.7
		Fallowing family/relative	42	11.2
6	Reason for participant to be a member of the church	Good leadership	12	3.2
		Good link with government	6	1.6
		Good preach	4	1.1
		Presence of Good prophet	3	0.8
		Others**	32	8.5
		Pentecostal	206	54.8
7	Leadership style the church follows	Evangelical	93	24.7
		Don't know	65	17.3
		Others***	12	3.2
8	Satisfaction at leadership process	Satisfied	301	80.1
		Not satisfied	75	19.1
		Leadership crisis	105	27.9
		Leadership deceit	96	25.5
9	Most observed problems in the church	Poor participatory decision making	69	18.4
		World & church system Fraternization	62	16.5
		Culture and tradition	44	11.7

*Evangelist, Pastor; ** personal interest, good follow up, calling; *** Baptists, charismatic.

3.3. The Propensity of Respondents on Political Participation

Our measurement model has shown that the majority of the respondents were participating in the conventional form (64.9%) of politics as it can be summed from its variables in table 3. A total of 27.4% respondents were reported participation in the unconventional form with the remaining proportion of participants participating in voluntary association (30%), informal social engagement (15.5%) and informal helping behaviors (10.1%) as in Table 3.

About thirty three percent of participants were experienced mainly voting activities from conditional form of political participation while 20.5% of participants were participated in the lawful demonstration activities from unconventional form, and 15.3% were participated by working for voluntary association as inTable 3.

Table 3. The propensity of respondents in political participation

S. No	Variable	Categories	n	%	Remarks
1	Conventional political participation				
		Voted in last election	125	33.3	
		Joining activists	14	14.0	
		Discussed politics	30	8.0	
		Contacted politicians	29	7.7	
		Donated	25	6.6	
		Interested in politics	14	3.7	
		Volunteered political campaign	7	1.9	
		No participation	132	35.1	
2	Unconventional political participation				
		Lawful demonstration	77	20.5	
		Boycotting products	16	4.3	
		Signing petition	5	1.5	
		buying products	5	1.3	
		No participation	273	72.6	
3	Political participation through Voluntary association by				

S. No	Variable	Categories	n	%	Remarks
		Working for	57	15.3	
		Participation in	27	7.2	
		Being a member	15	4.0	
		Give money to	13	3.5	
		No participation	261	70.0	
4	Political participation through Informal social engagements				
		Not engaged or not participate	317	84.3	
		Engaged	59	15.7	
5	Political participation through Informal helping behavior				
		Not declared or not participate	338	89.9	
		Declared	38	10.1	

4. Discussion

The current study has explored quantitative evidences collected through survey from church leaders to recognize the propensity of local political participation. To do that, participants of different socio-demographic characteristics and different affiliations with their church were randomly assessed for the articulated results. Accordingly, the overall political participation activities in the area were modest and substandard. Further, the existing extent was confined more to the conventional form of political participation with a particular focus on voting activity. The unconditional participation ranked 2nd followed by the voluntary association while the 4th and 5th were respectively acknowledged by informal social engagement & Informal helping behavior. People found to lawfully demonstrate or work for voluntary association if they were in concern of political participation. The propensity of political participation was notably varying across the studied church, and the level of participation doesn't either look uniform.

This result share similarities with the study conducted in America and South Africa, where people remain silent in the new political dispensation [26, 27], and with the study report in united states that reports catholic and protestant churches to demonstrate different level of political participation [19]. It also agrees with the study report done in Britain, where unconventional form of political participation reported to receive fewer respondents from church [28]. The dissimilar level of political participation across the church also acknowledge the study result that indicated weak political participation and inconstant relation of protestant churches with the state politics in Ethiopia [6, 7, 29, 32]. To the knowledge of our review, there is no protestant church having strong participation in politics for several reasons, including source of power though literatures recommend inseparable religion and the state [12, 30]. The mains reason for poor political participation could be the opinion of people on sources of power that varies between the two realms. In the church many trust in power of God's love for their defense at with no geographic boundaries demanding no violence for protection. Further, the only Christian nation is the church of Jesus Christ, made up of people from every tribe and nation called to witness to God's glory. In contrast to the church, governing authorities of the world have been instituted by God for maintaining order in societies. Such governments and other human institutions as servants of God are called to act justly and provide order. But as a human & citizen a person can act in both spheres at the same time making the possibility of bringing the situation to the closest possible [30] for better though people defend by verses (1 Pet. 2:17) that their fear belongs to God alone. Paul tells where the place of Christian in the society, first and foremost Christian shouldn't heartbeat alone rather motivate to action as in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2. To this end we can conclude that church rely on Holy Spirit guidance, whereas the state depends largely on its philosophical and political knowledge for its survival. It is therefore arguable wish, now that the church also exists within an unredeemed world and is consequentially imperfect; conferring the existence of the community to be political [31].

5. Limitations

Social desirability bias, limited literatures on the area and instability of the country's political situation during the study periods could affect extent of participants' involvement.

6. Conclusions

The current study has enrolled participants of different socio-demographic characteristics and variable level of the political propensities and contemplations. More than half of these participants were rejoined the importance of political participation though there was opposing idea from few participants. For the group who responded political participation being important, our measurement model showed the most majority of the leaders to exhibit the conventional forms of political participation. It also identified that the unconventional form of political participation being the second commonest form of political participation in which the leaders showed propensity to participate. Lastly, even though the proportions of the participants involved in were infrequent, there were participation in politics through voluntary association, informal social engagements and informal helping behavior among the studied leaders. Generally, the propensities of church leaders in political participation, and forms of political participation in the area were inconsistent among the church leaders. Because of this variation and believed different source of power in church and state, frail political participation was acknowledged in the study area.

Conflicts of Interest

Acknowledgements

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