Daycare Centers as a means towards Women Empowerment in Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia: Exploring Practices, Roles, and Challenges

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Relevance to Development Studies

This research has a paramount implication to the field of development studies in general and Governance and Development Policies in particular. The research question is directly posed to how government policies are being implemented, empowering/disempowering women in the context of higher education in Ethiopia. This will also contribute to the discourses on contemporary developmental practices and challenges that specifically linked to one of the 17 development goals " women empowerment and gender equality". Thus, the main aims of the field of development studies are also focus on understanding, analyzing, and examining the social, economic, political, and environmental contexts of human society and contribute to the betterment of human life. Overall, this research will have direct implications for this field.

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, daycare center at workplace is taken as one of the interventions for women empowerment, child development, and institutional effectiveness. Similarly, Ethiopian government is committed to empower working mothers through different policy directions and initiatives. From various policy interventions, establishing daycare centers at all federal government institutions was taken as one of intervention aiming to create a women friendly institution to improve women participation in labour force and securing the wellbeing of children. Therefore, this research was aimed to explore the practices, roles, and challenges of daycare centers in two selected public universities in Ethiopia. To this end, a qualitative approach with a case study research design was employed. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants and study sites. Thus, daycare centers at Bahir Dar University and University of Gondar with a total of 14 participants were selected. Data was collected through semi structured interviews and document reviews with parents, caregivers, management bodies and gender professionals from University of Gondar, Bahir Dar University and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. Thematic data analysis technique was also used to analyze and interpret the data. The findings show that daycare services were started five years ago at selected universities. The basic services were caring for children through feeding, playing, sleeping to keep the social, cognitive, and physical development of children when parents are at workplace. These centers were also playing a paramount role in empowering working mothers economically, socially, educationally and leadership participation. Despite these positive contributions, there were some challenges that affected the implementation of its basic services from care providers, mothers, and management bodies. These challenges were associated with facilities, materials, human resources, workplace ethics, monitoring and evaluation, and commitment related. In conclusion, establishing daycare centers at workplace is a promising strategy that aimed to contribute for women empowerment, child development, women friendly institutions and gender equality at large. To improve the overall qualities and capacities of the centers, it needs certain interventions from all stakeholder's such as federal government, Universities, parents, and caregivers.

Key Words: Ethiopia, Daycare, Childcare, Women Empowerment, Working mothers, University.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context/Background

Childcare could be conceptualized from various perspectives, including its role as a service to parents, its impact on children's development, the government's regulatory role, and the perspectives of childcare providers and staff (Huntsman, 2008, p.1). Childcare focuses on the supervision, care, and nurturing of children, typically ranging in age from infants to pre-teens, by individuals or organizations (p.3). Childcare may take place in various settings, such as a childcare center, a family childcare home, or in-home care provided by a babysitter or nanny. (Bryson, Brewer, Sibieta &Butt, 2008, P. 5.). Quality childcare can also contribute to a child's physical, social, and cognitive development (Hanafi, 2015, p.3). Informal care, predominantly provided by grandparents, especially grandmothers, constitutes a significant type of non-parental childcare.

In the African context more generally, achieving a balance between work and family responsibilities is a significant challenge for women, unlike men. This is because women often have to juggle paid employment with domestic duties, including childcare (Okonkwo, 2012). In Ethiopia, women play crucial roles in the country's socio-economic development, as is the case with women worldwide (UN Women, 2014). Childcare responsibilities exhibit a strong gender bias, with distinct gender roles assigned to men and women (Teshager et al, p.1). Thus, women in most societies are supposed to take care of their children compared to men together with other domestic roles such as cooking, caring elders, cleaning the house and others. (Mengistu, 2012. Furthermore, women are also engaging in paid works and other community activities. Therefore, women are engaged in triple roles(Ayferam, 2015, p.5). Even though, it varies from place-to-place culture to culture and time to time, women's share of average working her per day is greater than men (Kassa, 2015, p.2).

The disproportionate role creates a challenging situation for working mothers as they face the dual burden of fulfilling their professional obligations while shouldering most caregiving responsibilities (Tadesse, 2014, p.3). These challenges have therefore an implication to women participation in higher education. As mentioned by Ayferam (2015, p.9), women participations in higher education including leadership positions such as department chairs, deans, and presidents was low. For instance, the representation of women in leadership was recorded at 11.2% in 2017/18, 15.4% in 2018/19, and further rose to 19.1% in 2019/20 (Adamu, 2022, p.43). Similarly, there is still a huge gap in academic ranks and representation within academic

staff in all universities which is not more than only 15.9 percent. This statistic is also high at bachelor rank compared to PhD level ((Ibid, p.43). Considering these challenges and other factors, Ethiopia has been taking different interventions to empower women and made significant progress in gender equality and women's empowerment in general and in the education sector in particular through adopting different policy and constitutional provisions such as establishing daycare cenetrs at workplace (Bekana, 2020, p.318). Consequently, family friendly policies such as establishing daycare centers at workplace are supposed to be a solution.

Globally, there is an increasing demand for formal childcare due to various factors that include but not limited "decreasing parental contribution rate, an increasing supply of childcare, the growth in female labor force participation and a change in preferences towards the use of formal childcare" (Voltman, 201, p.13). It plays a significant role in women's labor force participation. Thus, access to reliable and affordable childcare services has a direct impact on a woman's ability to enter and remain in the workforce (Halim, 2023, p.1). It also promotes children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, setting a solid foundation for their future growth and vital for caregivers themselves (Brudevold et al, 2022, p.1). Similarly, its reported that by offering quality childcare services, government sectors in Ethiopia also promoted employee's productivity and are more likely to remain committed to their careers (Teshager et al, 2019, p.23). The provision of public childcare services (government subsidized daycare centers) lessens the burden of care on families. The issues of gender roles and triple roles of women should be also taken in to consider during nay planned action by different sectors to meet their needs and to achieve sustainable development (Moser, 2012).

In response to the demands of formal childcare to empower working mothers, Ministry of Women and Social Affairs has introduced a childcare regulation in July 2018 to establish daycare canters in all federal institutions. It is a part of the national efforts in ensuring gender equality and women empowerment and broader agenda of sustainable development goals through provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate (Moussié, 2016, P.2). There are around 45 public universities which are run by the Ministry of Education. It is crucial to highlight that according to the regulation, those federal institutions, including universities, must establish their own childcare facilities to advance gender mainstreaming, empower women, and foster a more inclusive environment for women within these institutions.

1.2. Problem Statement

Working mothers in higher education are responsible for managing different roles simultaneously such as being a wife, a mother, researchers, teacher, and community servants(Teshager, 2019, p. 190). This can create conflicting demands and challenges for women as they try to balance these different responsibilities (Melese,2019, p.3). They often face obstacles, difficulty managing household chores, economic concerns, heavy workloads, and limited access to nearby childcare facilities. All these factors can make it difficult for working mothers to achieve a satisfactory balance between their family and work responsibilities (Frihwot,2019, p.2). Different research findings are also founded that working mothers faced various challenges to access quality childcare services, including high costs, long waiting lists, and limited availability that would result in significant implications for their workplace performance, including absenteeism, lateness, and reduced productivity (Teshager eta al, 2019). This implies that the issue of childcare has its own implication to workplace performances and working conditions of working mothers. Despite the high demand of daycare centers, evidence shows that, there were no sufficient centers that responded the demand (Tefera &Yesus, 2015, p.1; (Ademe &Singh, 2015).). To mitigate such problems, women empowerment through various policy initiatives including daycare centers is seen as a promising strategy.

Ethiopian Ministry of Education in collaboration Ministry of Women and Social Affairs take steps to recognize the importance of women empowerment through various initiatives such as establishing family and women friendly policies. This intervention aimed to address strategic and practical gender needs of women in academia. As a result, establishing daycare centers within universities is one of an important policy intervention that is being implemented to solve some of the challenges that women employees in universities would face. Bahir Dar University and University of Gondar which are the case studies for this research have established this program. For instance, the University of Gondar established a daycare centre in 2018 at one of its campuses, initially accommodating up to 10 children. Currently, the centre has expanded to two campuses and provides services for approximately children. The second case involves Bahir Dar University, which established its own daycare centre in 2017. This centre currently has a capacity to accommodate 75 children. Even though the regulation of the ministry states that all working mothers who are employees of federal institutions including universities have the right to use the centers, mostly the centers prioritize academic staffs due to limited capacity.

However, little is known on how these daycare programs are being implemented, whether and how they are empowering working mothers, and what the challenges are of the working mothers, caregivers, and the institution to provide quality services. Hence, this study was conducted to fill this knowledge gap by addressing practices, roles and challenges of daycare programs based in selected public universities in Ethiopia, particularly in Bahir Dar university and Gondar university.

1.3.   Research Question

How is the childcare regulation of 2018 being implemented in higher educational institutions in Ethiopia, and is it perceived to be empowering for working women economically, socially, and academically?

1.3.1. Sub -Research Questions

1. How do the program practices align with the standards set out in the regulation?
2. How are day care programs in a sample of Ethiopian Universities empowering working women economically, socially, and academically?
3. What are the challenges encountered by working mothers while using the day care center, as well as by caregivers and institutions in terms of providing quality care in higher education?

1.4.   Relevance and Justification

Childcare is an important element of continuation of generation and plays a crucial role in providing children with the necessary support, education, and guidance they need to develop into healthy, happy, and productive adults. Access to high-quality and affordable childcare services is essential for parents, especially women, to participate in the workforce, which contributes to economic growth and stability. The availability of childcare also helps in reducing the gender gap in employment and wages, providing equal opportunities for both genders. Establishing daycare centers in public settings/workplace as a subsidy childcare is also considered a promising strategy to support working women and promote child development. Therefore, examining how this policy measure in practice contributes to women's empowerment in government institutions particularly in higher education is relevant to further improve the strategy and its implementation.

Firstly, it can provide insights into how the provision of childcare services can impact the lives of working women and their families. Secondly, this research can identify the challenges and gaps in the current daycare center practices and policies, which can inform the development of

strategies to address them. This can contribute to improving the quality of childcare services and promoting child development in Ethiopia. Finally, this research will be useful as a starting point for further researchers to investigate the case more deeply using mixed method approaches. Therefore, conducting research on daycare centres in Ethiopia has both practical and theoretical significances and can provide valuable insights into how the provision of childcare services can contribute to promoting women's empowerment, which is crucial for achieving sustainable development in the country.

Chapter Two: Literature Review on Childcare and Women Empowerment

2.1. Introduction

This section is dedicated to reviewing existing literature which is related to the topic under investigation. It highlights the concept and practices of childcare and its implication for women empowerment, and reviews previous related research works. It also provides a theoretical and conceptual framework.

2.2. Concept and Practices of Childcare

The concept of childcare could be defined in many ways by many scholars. One thing to remember is that there is no single definition given to this word. The term 'childcare' refers to different arrangements made for the care of children that fall outside of maternal or parental care. These arrangements include daycare services offered in centers, childcare provided in the child's own home or a caregiver's home, and occasionally, care provided by relatives or friends (Huntsman, 2008, p.1). Different authors highlight various perspectives on childcare, including its role as a service to parents, its impact on children's development, the government's regulatory role, and the perspectives of childcare providers and staff. Understanding these diverse perspectives contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of childcare (ibid, p.1).

Berlinski and Schady (2015) also define daycare services, also known as daycare, are services that provide childcare for young children outside of their own homes, especially for those who are not yet old enough to attend formal schooling (p.92). They also put as daycare having two primary objectives such as enabling mothers to work and improving child development. Childcare may take place in various settings, such as a childcare center, a family childcare home, or in-home care provided by a babysitter or nanny. Childcare can include a wide range of activities, such as feeding, bathing, dressing, playing with, and educating children. Quality childcare can also contribute to a child's physical, social, and cognitive development (Hanafi, 2015, p.3). The history of childcare dates back centuries, with evidence of informal childcare arrangements existing as far back as ancient civilizations. In many societies, the responsibility of caring for children fell primarily to women, who provided care within their homes or through extended family networks. As more women entered the workforce, the need for formal childcare arrangements grew.

According to McNeil's (2000), formal daycare centers were established as a response to the increasing need for reliable and structured care for children, particularly due to changes in societal dynamics and the rise of working parents. Childcare is often considered a women's role because of cultural and societal expectations that place the responsibility of caring for children on women. This expectation is rooted in traditional gender roles, which define women as nurturers and caregivers, while men are expected to be providers and protectors (Saaka et al, 2023, p.772). These gender roles have been reinforced by cultural norms and values that perpetuate. In the African context, achieving a balance between work and family responsibilities is a significant challenge for women, unlike men. This is because women often have to juggle paid employment with domestic duties, including childcare (Okonkwo, 2012).

2.3.   Concepts of Women Empowerment and the Roles of Daycare Centre

Defining empowerment in general and women empowerment in particular is not an easy way. Different scholars and institutions define it differently either broadly or narrowly. Scholars such as Singh & Gupta (2013), for instance defined the word empowerment as "the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them" (p.54). Coming to the focus of this paper, the concept of women empowerment is also defined in different ways. For example, the term Women empowerment can be defined as "the process of creating conditions that enable women to have control over their own lives and make their own choices, whether that is in their personal or professional lives" (Mandal, 2013 p.18). Longwe, a consultant on gender and development based in Lusaka Zambia and developer of women empowerment framework defined women's empowerment as "enabling women to take an equal place with men, and to participate equally in the development process to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men" (cited in March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p.92). Kabeer (1999) also defined women empowerment as "access to resources (preconditions), agency(process) and (achievements (outcomes) (p.437). Women empowerment has become a global agenda in recent years, with an increasing focus on promoting gender equality and women's rights (Bayeh,2016, p.2).
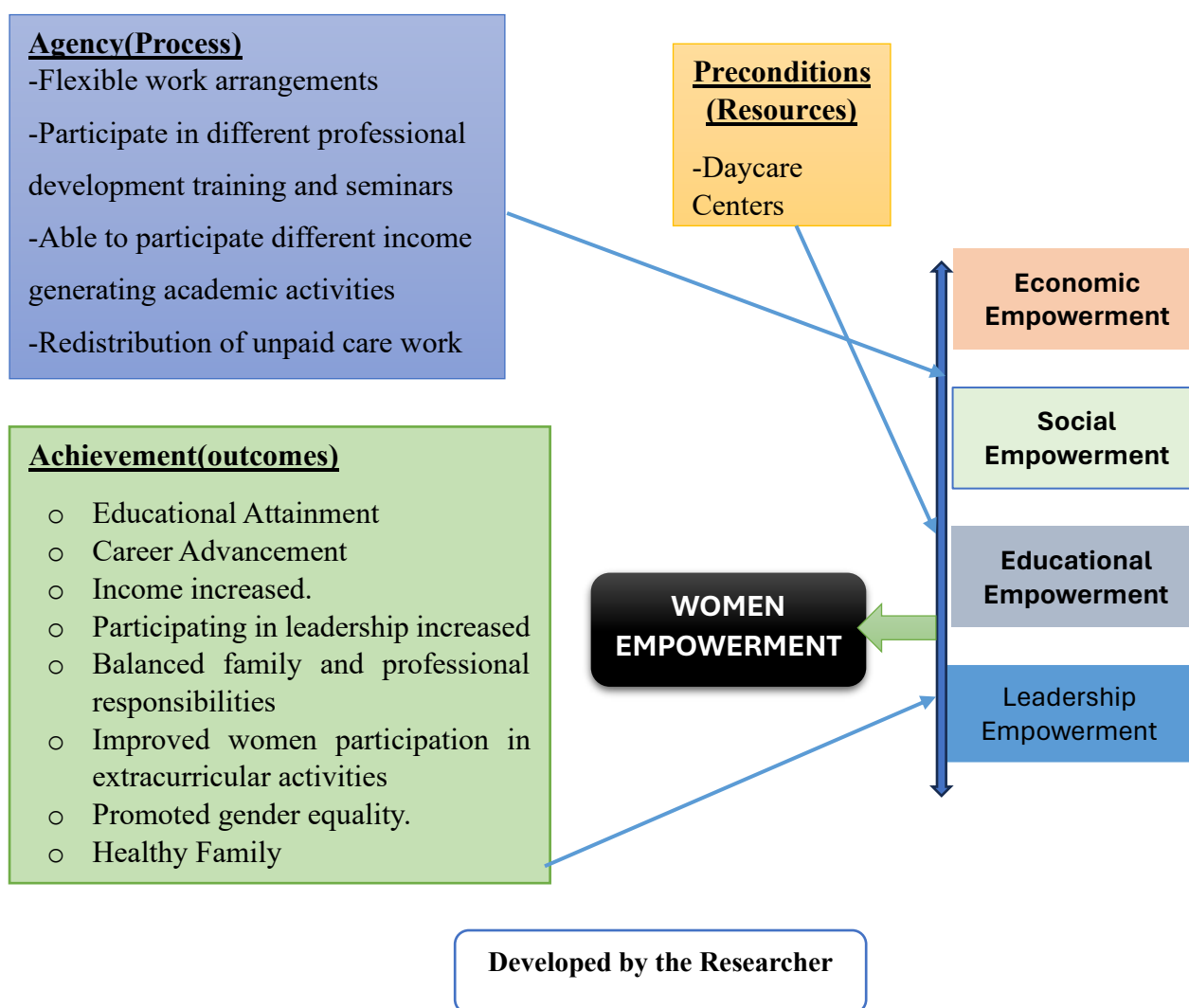
From the above various understandings, it can be understood that it's a multi-dimensional and complicated concept and not easy to directly measure. Women empowerment can be also categorized into different types such as social, economic, political, and psychological aspects (Mandal, 2013, p.18). Among other initiatives, family-friendly policies such as childcare

measures and arrangements have a positive impact on workers' abilities to reconcile work and family responsibilities and advance the development and well-being of children and caregivers (Moussié et al,2021). Research on OCED countries reported that childcare subsidy impacts women's participation in the labor force. One of the main benefits of a subsidy is that it provides financial support for families, which can help reduce the cost of childcare. This, in turn, can make it easier for women to work outside the home without worrying about the expense of childcare (Jaumotte, 2003, p.10).

Nowadays, daycare centers either government or private, are becoming increasingly popular in Ethiopia as more women enter the workforce even though the exact numbers are not known (Beyene, 2015). These centers provide a safe and stimulating environment for young children while their parents are at work. Daycare centers can play a vital role in both women's empowerment and child development. The availability of reliable and affordable daycare services could be a significant tool for reducing gender disparities, enhancing overall health and socioeconomic status, and promoting the empowerment of women. By providing mothers with access to daycare, it could potentially remove obstacles to their participation in the workforce, leading to the creation of economic opportunities. This could serve as a foundational element for empowering women (Nandi et al, 2016, Pp.3-2).

Daycare centers can provide job opportunities for women, including roles such as caregivers, teachers, and administrators (Brudevold et al, 2022, p.1). This can help to increase women's economic empowerment and promote gender equality in the workforce. By providing affordable and high-quality childcare, daycare centers can help women balance their work and family responsibilities, enabling them to participate more fully in the workforce and pursue their career goals. Daycare centers provide children with opportunities to interact with other children, which can help to develop their social skills and emotional intelligence (Blasberg et al, 2019, p.8). Taking to consider various definition of women empowerment, the researcher tried to operationalize with the context of working mothers in higher education. Every academic staff who are hired in public universities in Ethiopia are supposed to engage in three core pillars of their institutions which including teaching, research, and community engagement. By taking these three different roles of women academic staffs, I linked with the roles of daycare centers to empower them economically, socially, educationally and leadership either as an input, process, or outcome level.

Diagram 1: **Conceptual Framework on Empowerment**

Agency(Process)
-Flexible work arrangements

-Participate in different professional
development training and seminars

-Able to participate different income
generating academic activities

-Redistribution of unpaid care work

**Preconditions
(Resources)**

-Daycare
Centers

**Economic
Empowerment**

**Social
Empowerment**

Achievement(outcomes)

o   Educational Attainment
o   Career Advancement
o   Income increased.
o   Participating in leadership increased
o   Balanced family and professional
    responsibilities
o   Improved women participation in
    extracurricular activities
o   Promoted gender equality.
o   Healthy Family

**WOMEN
EMPOWERMENT**

**Educational
Empowerment**

Leadership
Empowerment

Developed by the Researcher

2.4.   Policy Approaches and Practices on Women Empowerment in Ethiopia

In this section, I tried to look at some important policy and constitutional provisions to advance
women empowerment and gender equality including international core human right
instruments ratified by Ethiopia as a part of domestic laws. Nevertheless, I didn't deeply
address all specific or sectorial approaches to women empowerment including in the areas of
education. Instead, I gave priority to general approaches of the country that shows its
commitment to gender equality and women empowerment in different spheres. To begin with
the international basis, Ethiopia has ratified various international conventions and declarations
to promote and protect the human rights of its citizens. Ethiopia has given due attention to the
protection of women's human rights, women empowerment and gender equality through
various laws and policies. The main international human rights instruments include the
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the
Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW), the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Ethiopia also has many national legal instruments that are used to protect and promote women's human rights and achieve gender equality that include the FDRE Constitution, the Penal Code, the Civil Code, and the Family Code.

More importantly, the issue of women empowerment and gender equality are directly or indirectly incorporated in national policies and laws. The first and important step Ethiopia ensured is enacting the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Constitution 19995. This constitution is the supreme law of the country(FDRE,1995, article 9 sub 1). In this Constitution, exceptional emphasis has been given to women rights and gender equality. In this regard, Article 35 of this constitution emphasized gender equality and women's rights. It has nine sub articles that address affirmative action(Art. 35/3). The aim of these measures is to give special attention to women to enable them to participate in political, social, and economic life, as well as in public and private institutions, based on equality with men. It also assures the right to maternity leave with full both pre- and post-natal pay(Art. 35/5a& 5b), right to be fully consulted in the formulation of national development policies and in the planning and implementation of projects, especially those that affect women's interests (Art. 35/6), women right to acquire, manage, control, use and transfer property(Art. 35/7), to prevent harm from pregnancy and childbirth and to protect their health, women have the right to access education, information, and capacity for family planning (Art. 35/9). All these provisions show the extent to which the Constitution of the FDRE. 1995 gives emphasis to women's rights.

The family, which is the natural foundation of society, should be protected by society and the state, and one of the means of protection is to regulate and control family relations by law (FDRE Family Code, 2000). Therefore, Ethiopia has enacted family codes to ensure women rights and gender equality in all affairs of family including equality in marriage, property management and children wellbeing. Another legal instruments that Ethiopia must ensure the rights of women and gender equality is having penalizing gender related violence and violence against women through enacting penal code in 2004. This code has contributed to gender equality and women's human rights by criminalizing gender -related issues. This code addresses many issues related to crimes against women, such as. Article 561 on endangering the life of pregnant women and children by harmful traditional practices, Article 562 Physical injury to pregnant women and children by harmful traditional practices, Article 564 Violence against a spouse or a person living in an irregular community, Article 565 Female circumcision.

Ethiopia has also different policy approaches to promote the issues of women empowerment. Most importantly, Ethiopia has enacted the National Policy for Ethiopian Women (1993). It aims to institutionalize women's political, economic, and social rights by creating appropriate structures in government agencies and institutions so that public policies and interventions are gender sensitive and equal. The first objective was to create the conditions for greater gender equality so that women could participate on an equal footing with men in the political, social, and economic life of their country. The second focus is creating the necessary conditions for rural women to access basic social services and ways to reduce their workload. The third focus of the intervention was on gradually eliminating prejudices and habitual and other practices based on the idea of male supremacy and empowering women to hold public office and participate in decision-making processes at all levels (Unterhalter et al, 2015). Parallel to this policy initiative, the government has established institutional structures which are responsible to implement, monitor and support the policies. In this regard, the former women, children, and youth minster(the current women and social affairs ministry) is mandated to these responsibilities. Moreover, there are structures from the federal to district level that facilitate these policy interventions.

Federal Civil Servants Proclamation NO.1064/2017 also another machinery that promotes women rights that include equal payment for equal work (Art. 8), prohibit discrimination because of their ethnic origin, sex, religion, political outlook, disability, HIV/AIDS, or any other ground (Art. 13/2), Maternity Leave (Art.42) and Affirmative Action (Art.48). Ethiopia has also National Social Protection Policy of Ethiopia that focus on the most vulnerable segment of the society including women to solve different economic and social problems through various initiatives. Thus, this policy is also helping to empower women economically and socially(Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2012).

2.5. Review of Empirical Evidence

Despite encountering difficulties in finding directly relevant empirical evidence and research works, the study made efforts to analyze a few related studies that focused on childcare and its associated practices in Ethiopia. Tefera & Yesus (2015) studied "Childcare services in the Emerging Daycare Centers of Addis Ababa". This paper highlighted some positive practices that include creating partnerships with relevant stakeholders including governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide quality services. This paper investigated how the current practices of childcare looks likes in emerging daycare centers in the capital city of Ethiopia .

The study addressed private daycare centers not government sectors. The paper reported that the demand was high compared to the supply side while the quality was not similar in all centers. The study also highlighted that there was a lack of standardized regulations to govern it. The study also added that there was a lack of facilities and trained human resources. To sum up, this paper focused on reminding the need for a couple of interventions to improve the quality and availability of centers in the city.

Teshager et al (2019) also focused on "Challenges of Ethiopian Working Mothers towards Childcare and Its Implications on Workplace Performance in the case of selected Higher Education Institutions". This paper aimed to explore how the existing centers are being practiced and empowering working mothers. The paper also explored the challenges faced by working mothers in accessing quality childcare at workplace and its implication to work performance. Thus, the paper reported that working mothers encountered accessing affordable and reliable childcare services forced to rely on informal arrangements, such as relatives or neighbours, which may not always be reliable or adequate resulted poor performances.

Another study was also conducted by Mekuriya (2022) focusing on examining "The Practices and Challenges of Baby Day Care Services Within Public Institutions". The paper aimed to understand the current practices and identify the challenges faced in providing daycare services. The study revealed that there was limited availability and accessibility of baby daycare services within government public offices in the region. It also added that facilities and human resources were not adequate to address the need of working mothers. This paper also examined challenges from the perspectives of the government that includes include limited budget allocations, lack of awareness about the importance of daycare services, and insufficient policies and guidelines to support the establishment and operation of daycare centers. In addition to this study, Kabtimer(2014) also conducted research on "An Assessment of Quality Service Provision by Child Day Care Centers in Nifas Silk Lafto SubCity of Addis Ababa". This paper evaluated the status of service provisions condominium house site. It revealed that the services were basically focused on custodial care for toddlers. Despite its services, this study also showed that caregivers often lack proper training, and there is a lack of recognition for the need to have trained caregivers, large group sizes, inadequate physical settings, low wages, and poor work environments for the caregivers. These factors significantly compromise the quality of childcare service provision. The study also pointed out that there was absence of government regulations and follow up system to ensure the quality of the service.

The above research works have tried to explore the practices and demands of childcare services at different centers. Considering all these efforts, I tried to look at what has been done and what has been missed in the context of the present research questions and cases. Accordingly, some gaps were identified to be addressed by the current study. Thus, the previous studies were not focused on daycare cenetrs that have been established in the public sectors such as higher education. They also didn't clearly describe its roles for working mother's empowerment. Therefore, it has both conceptual and geographical gaps that motivated the present study to fill such gaps. The target group of the studies were not academic staff of universities. Methodologically, most of the target groups of the study were not women academic staffs who have been using daycare centers in universities except Teshager et al (2019). Even though Teshager et al (2019) focused on working mothers in universities, the focus was to what extent they faced challenges to access childcare inside and outside universities. So, they did not study the existing daycare centers practices, roles, and challenges in relation to women empowerment.

CHAPTER THREE: METHDOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was employed to achieve the research objectives outlined in chapter one. This includes a comprehensive description of the research design, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations adopted for the study.

3.2. Research Approach and Design

In this paper, I used a qualitative research approach with case study design. The cases for this study were two daycare centers which are established and have been providing childcare services in Bahir Dar and Gondar Universities. I explored the experiences and views of participants with their own voices and realities qualitatively. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998) cited in O'Day& Killeen,2002, p.1), This approach uses to for understand complex social phenomena and exploring the perspectives, experiences, and meanings of individuals and groups. Kothari(2004) also added that applying appropriate and specific research design can help the researchers to collect all relevant data and to use time, money, and energy properly . Thus, I used case study research design among other designs in qualitative research approach. To support this merit, Yin(2003) also described that case study design helps to a single or multiple cases using multiple sources of information and get deeper understanding. Likewise, the objectives of this paper demanded detailed investigation of experiences, meanings and views of parents, care givers, management bodies and professionals on how daycare services are being provided, empowering working mothers, helping for child development and challenges that hinder to provide quality and affordable services. Considering the merits of this research design, I have chosen two selected daycare centers which are found and being managed by two Universities includes Bahir Dar and Gondar.

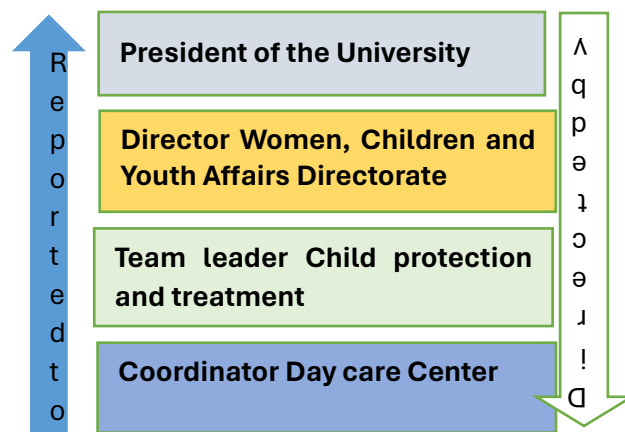## 3.3. Selection of Study Sites and Participants

Figure 2: Organogram of the Centers Developed by the Researcher

As indicated in the above diagram, the arow indicates the hierarchy of governances of daycare centers. Each day care centers have coordinator at the bottom and coordinate the overall activities and report to the team leader of child protection and treatment under the directorate of Women, Children and Youth Affairs of the University. The directorate of women, children and youth affairs are directly accountable to the president of the University. I have purposely chosen the above cases due to my previous experiences and other reasons as a student and employee. This familiarity helped me to collect relevant information for my research. My previous research experiences as a master's student and academic staff member at Bahir Dar University and the University of Gondar have provided me with valuable insights. Four years ago, I wrote a thesis on the Working Conditions Female Security Guards the Case of Bahir Dar University.

Consequently, I discovered that female security guards at Bahir Dar University faced challenges due to the lack of daycare facilities and providing daycare services for them was one of the recommendations , I also conducted research at the University of Gondar focusing on "Gender Auditing," where participants also highlighted the importance of daycare programs to empower women employees and to achieve gender equality. Therefore, based on these experiences and motivations, I was keen to delve deeper into daycare centers and their practices at these universities. Moreover, these two universities are categorized as first generation and research universities by the Ministry of education. Therefore, I am interested in comparing the best practices of one another in line with the policy.

As explained by Creswell (2009), a purposive sampling technique is widely used in qualitative research for identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon. It involves the use of the researcher's knowledge of the population in terms of research goals (Dattalo, 2008). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who have specific characteristics or experiences that are of interest to the research question (Rai &Thapa,2015, p.11). Therefore, I have selected participants purposively to identify experienced and knowledgeable participants. I used some inclusion and exclusion criteria to select participants. The first inclusion criteria were the number of years that parents used the center. To this end, those mothers who have child/children and enrolled in the center for at least one year were included, if those with a longer experience of using the center would have more useful information to share. Other criteria were also

considered to select other informants such as management bodies, professionals, and care givers. Accordingly, holding position was used as criteria. So, participants were selected purposively for the power and role they had. Hence, gender experts, care givers, management bodies (from the Universities and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Affairs) were selected purposively. Accordingly, a total of 16 participants were involved for interviews from the two sites (see table 2).

As described below in table 2, the socio demographic backgrounds of the participants are presented. This information was collected and presented just to give some highlighted information to the reader about the informants of this findings. Hence, sex, place of work/institution, level of education, work experience, current positions, and experiences in relation to the day care center either using or serving are described. As it indicated below, informants were from university of Gondar, Bahir Dar University and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. Furthermore, participants were mothers who are working and using day care centers, care providers who are providing childcare services in the two daycare centers, management bodies from Women, Children, and Youth Directorates of the two Universities, management bodies from Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and gender experts who are currently working as lecturer or researcher in the areas of gender and women empowerment. Therefore, except one, all participants were fortunately women. When we see the educational level of the participants, they ranged from 10+3(certificate) to PhD level. Coming to their work experience, they had between 4 to 12 years. Coming to the experiences specified to daycare centers, they had a minimum of one year and maximum of 4.6.

Table 2: Background Information of Participants

Participant	Sex	University/ Institution	Education level	Work Experience/ year	Position	Experience using the center/serving the center
1	F	UOG	MA	5	Lecturer	2
2	F	UOG	MA	4	Lecturer	1.5
3	F	UOG	MA	7	Lecturer	1
4	F	UOG	BSC in physics	4	caregiver	4
5	F	UOG	BSC in statistics	4.5	caregiver	4.5

6	F	UOG	MA	8	Director WCY directorate	3
7	M	MoWSA	BA	7	Management bodies	-
8	F	UOG	MA	5	Gender Professional	-
9	F	BDU	PhD student	7	Lecturer	3
10	F	BDU	MA	9	Assistant professor	1.5
11	F	BDU	PhD	8	Management bodies	2
12	F	BDU	PhD	12	Management bodies	-
13	F	BDU	PhD	12	Gender Professional	-
14	F	BDU	10+3	4	Caregiver	2

Note:7 from University of Gondar, 6 from Bahir Dar University, and 1 from Ministry of Women and Social Affairs were participated.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

3.4.1. Interviews

For this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted by two assistant researchers and the researcher himself to collect relevant data on the overall practices of the centers including the qualities of services and governances' systems, short histories, human resources(size and profile), budget, roles of this center-based day care to empower the mothers academically, economically, and socially and leadership positions. The researcher also explored the challenges while using this service. In this method, the researcher prepared a set of core questions or topics to be covered during the interview, but also allowed for follow-up questions and probes based on the responses of the participant (Taherdoost, 2021, p.17). Thus, an appropriate place and time was arranged with the consent of the interviewees. In the process, both note taking and audio recording were used to secure the whole data they provided.

Among the 14 interviews, 13 participants volunteered to record the interview via voice recorder while one interview was not recorded because the interviewee didn't give consent. Consequently, all data were transcribed by the assistant researchers using local language(Amharic language). As a result, they sent me both transcription and recorded data through different channels of communication. To give some background information about the research assistants,

I assigned Metadel Eslezia Mehari, academic staff of College of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Gondar, to collect the data from day care center at the University of Gondar. I was also assigned Yemsirach Agegnehu, lecturer of Department of gender and development studies, Bahir dar University to collect data from day care center at Bahir Dar university. These two assistant researchers are holder of master's degree and had experiences of qualitative research since research work is one of the mandates of higher education institution in Ethiopia. Before data collection started, I sent my full research proposal with interview guides to both to make familiar about the overall objectives and methodologies . After a week, I briefed them through direct call to each of them. They had an opportunity to raise their questions and got clarification from me. They have collected all relevant data with strong commitment though the situation was not challenging to get internet, to go to workplace, to meet participants and so on. They have tried a lot of ways to reach out to potential participants including going to their homes, due to the outbreak of conflict.

3.4.2. Document Review

In addition to interviews, I also used document review to obtain data from policy documents and reports. Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation, i.e. the combination of methods in the study of the same phenomenon (Bowen, 2009, p.28). It can be used to provide insights into historical trends and patterns, as well as current practices and policies. By this technique, I reviewed three important documents, Daycare regulation set by Ministry of Women and Social Affairs 2018, the daycare standards of 2022, and an assessment research report conducted by the same ministry in May 2022. These documents helped me to understand the context and triangulate the data, especially to compare the practices and the policy itself.

The first document (regulation set by Ministry of Women and Social Affairs 2018) was written in Amharic language(working language of the country). This document is about 19 pages and aims to establish and facilitate daycare centers in all federal government institutions including public universities in the country. This regulation highlighted the purpose of the guide, Scope of the directive, General Provisions, the organization of the nursery, Manpower and ethics required for childcare, About the type of services provided by childcare centers and the conditions of delivery and Different situations. The second document was daycare service standards 2022. This document was also prepared   by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and consists of 23 pages. This document includes Definition of words, general purpose,

importance, basic principles, and basic service requirements. This document contains more detailed standards for each, and every activity compared to the general regulation. Thirdly, I reviewed a document that focuses the results of a survey conducted by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs in collaboration with the Partnership for Change and the Ethiopian Women's Health Association to evaluate the performance of day care and childcare at the federal level. This assessment was conducted in May 2022 and consists of 21 pages. Therefore, this document was essential to compare the data obtained through interview, from the regulation and the standards set by the Ministry. Moreover, I tried to get a budget flow/transaction made for the daycare centers at both universities. However, neither my research assistants nor I could get this information. The reason we got from the management bodies was that there was no separate budget for the centers.

3.5.   Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic data analysis is a commonly used technique in qualitative research for analyzing data collected through methods such as interviews and focus groups. I used steps suggested by Kiger and Varpio(2020, p. 3354). The first step was being familiarized with the raw data. Accordingly, I have read and listened to the recorded data multiple times to be familiar with it and generate initial themes. To this end, I have transcribed all recorded interviews and read carefully. The second step was generating initial codes manually. Accordingly, I tried to identify and label concepts, ideas, and patterns. Thirdly, I generated themes that involve grouping of codes into a general theme. To this end, I used the already predetermined general themes such as practices, roles, and challenges. Next to this, I identified other subthemes to each category based on similarities of ideas with their underlying meanings. Fourthly, I reviewed the already identified themes and refined them. Finally, I have written the analysis based on the above steps. This involves summarizing the themes and presenting the findings in a clear and concise manner. The findings are organized according to the research questions and presented with supporting evidence from the data.

3.6.   Ethical Considerations

As described by Gajjar (2013), ethical considerations are a key aspect of any social sciences research because social scientists often work with human subjects and their work can have significant implications for people's lives. Hence, I used different mechanisms to ensure the ethics of this study. The first point was that my research assistant got their informed consent before they were included in the study. They were fully informed about the purposes and

procedures of the study. Secondly, I used confidentiality as a strategy to ensure that the identities and personal information of participants are kept confidential and that their privacy is protected throughout the study. I believed that my research assistants also treated them with high dignity and respect to establish a relationship of trust and rapport with participants to ensure that they feel comfortable and are willing to share their experiences. Finally, I provided participants with informed debriefing after the study was completed.

3.7. Limitation and Challenges

The researcher experienced a lot of challenges during field work. Initially, three-day care centers at three universities such as daycare centers University of Gondar, Bahir Dar University and Debre Markos University were proposed. Unfortunate, there was an outbreak of conflict between the federal government and armed groups in Northern Ethiopia particularly in Amhara region in xx month/year where all case studies were found. Consequently, the federal government declared a state of emergency in these conflict zones (on xx date) where a lot of people lost their lives from both parties. These unexpected occurrences have affected the plan of data collection. As a result, the researcher was forced to reduce the study site from three to two. This implies that a daycare center found in Debre Markos University was excluded due to this conflict. Similarly, the researcher was unable to conduct a focus group discussion even though it was indicated in the proposal as one of data collection tool.

I assigned two assistant researchers to two universities. These assistants were part of the academic staff of the university who knew the contexts well and had all necessary networks to get research participants. To this end, they were able to get participants to come to their own home and other relatively safe places. In addition, I conducted online interviews with some of the participants who were found in a place where internet access was available. Finally, I managed to access some documents which are helpful to the research and reviewed them.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS ON CHILDCARE AND EMPOWERMENT

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected through interview, focus group discussion and document reviews on the practices, roles, and challenges of daycare centers in public sectors such as universities in Ethiopia.

4.2. Practices of Daycare Centers

This section is dedicated to the first objective aimed to assess the practices of daycare services in two selected universities compared to daycare center regulation 2018 set by the federal government particularly by Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. Accordingly, issues such as staff profile and number of children, facilities, basic services being provided, governances, financial and motivations of working mothers to use the center were described. As presented below, this specific theme is organized with five subthemes to answer the first sub-research question of this paper, i.e. 'How do the program practices align with the standards set out in the regulation?'

4.2.1. General Overview of the Centers

4.2.1.1. Bahir Dar University

Daycare center at Peda campus(the oldest campus of Bahir Dar University) was initiated by one women academician in 2013 from health science college called sister Eden with small number of children and less facilities. The data shows that the founder of this center has presented a proposal about the need for and importance of the center to the top management. An interviewee from the management body(interviewee 11) said that "*She was working in Peda for a while and proposed day care center for female academician. But it's not only initiation from the women academician rather it's also due to the high commitment of the president of the university, different managing directors and other concerned bodies*". As presented by the participants the top management commitment was high and accepted the proposal. Accordingly, it was started 2013 but with very few people. Peda, Poly and Selam campuses were the first daycare centers but after while other campuses also demanded daycare services. Within a very short time others such as Zenzelima, Gish Abay and Health science campuses have started daycare services due to high demand from the staff. An interviewee(11) also added that "*Currently, the university under its six campuses, has more than 75 children and 10 care providers excluding cleaner and nurse*". When I compared to the regulation and standards,

there is a bit disproportion size of children and staffs because the regulation has recommended that one care provider should have not more than five children(1to 5) to take care of them.

4.2.1.2. University of Gondar

When we saw the establishment of the center, the first directive was issued by the Ministry of Women and Children at the federal level, which means that all government institutions should open childcare centers for their female employees in 2010 E.C(2018). The data obtained from the interviewee(6) also pointed out that "*Following this, our university, especially female teachers, proposed the opening of a childcare center and shared experiences from other universities and government sectors. They took them from different places and opened the center through women and children or gender office. It was opened in 2011 E.C(2019)*". As the data shows, at the start was seven to eight contract workers for a trial period, but soon it started with 17 babysitters and 4 cleaners. The current women and children in charge at that time was the Gender and HIV AIDS Office. The center was opened at two campuses of the university such as Fasil and Tewodros Campuses. However, the University has three campuses that still need their own daycare centers.

The very premises of its establishment was that women, in terms of the economy, they are disadvantaged and unable to hire house maid in addition to this it's not easy to find out house maid. As a result, most female workers are forced to leave their jobs to take care of their children. To make the women effective in their work through leadership, community service and research through different things, just so that the women can be effective in their work that is the main purpose of the childcare center and the reason why it was opened.

When I come to the regulation set by ministry of women and social affairs, the number of children and the size of the institution, the number of manpower will be determined by the number of children that the daycare will handle, and it should be organized with sufficient manpower to provide complete services(Article 11/2). Moreover, the regulation sets minimum personnel that every daycare center is supposed to have. As it's indicated in Article 11/2a, *A female childcare worker who has completed 10+3 in technical and vocational training in childcare and care, who has received childcare training, who has received the necessary training in first aid, and who is blessed in her character, demeanor and work; (b) As the children served at the daycare center, a female cleaning worker who is admirable in her behavior, and work, and is willing to follow the cleaning of the center so that the children do*

not face any problems due to their various activities. (c) If the centers accommodate a large number of children, there should be one nurse.

Regarding the exact proportion of care providers and children to be cared for, this regulation also suggested that one baby should be cared for by more than 5 children. So, the suggested proportion is one to five.

4.2.2. Motivation of Working Mothers to use Daycare Centers

The first question that was asked for working mothers was what motivated them to use the available daycare centers. They have provided different reasons. the first and most participants have mentioned was that they couldn't find house maid. The others also mentioned that safety related issues were the reason that motivated them to look institutional daycare at their workplaces. According to their view, financial capacity was also the other motivating factor to use these daycare centers. They pointed out that to hire a house maid, they were supposed to pay a minimum of 1500 birr(approximately 20USD) per month. Compared to their monthly salary, such payment was expensive. interviewee 9 narrated her experiences as follows.

> *The initiation to enroll my children was because I don't have a domestic servant or other person who help me with my child caring role. Maids are not available and even if there is maid at home the safety of the children is very compromised. Thus, a daycare center is a better option to raise my children with safety while I am at work. The other advantage is I can breast feed and visit my children during break time because they are on the campus. It gives me a chance to concentrate on my work without worrying about their safety.*

Similar experience was also obtained from another working mother from University of Gondar(Interviewee 1). She described her view as follows.

> *I have been using this center for my three children, and I did not hire a house maid due to my financial capacity to pay. Our salary and what we pay for workers is not proportionate, and again, safety issue was also another problem to hire house maid in my house. But here the care providers are providing good services for our children.*

As we could understand from their narrations, using these daycare centers was due to various factors. Since such centers are established under the umbrella of bigger government institutions, they are responsible and accountable for their services. Thus, working mothers felt safe because their children are staying at the safest place. Another logic is also the issue of

financial subsidy. These centers provide services freely without charging the users. The reason is that the centers are subsidized by the government budget to cover expenses such as salaries, infrastructure and facility related costs, and other. In line with these findings, Teshager et al (2019) also reported that unavailability of daycare center at their workplace can be one factor that pushes working mothers to resign from their work and to stay at home to take care of their children and this in turn affects women's career development, family income, and affect their workplace performance(p.25).

4.2.3. Basic Services Provided by the Centers

Initially, the regulation has also sets its premises about the multiple purposes of its establishment. It basically trusted that the aim of daycare centers is aimed to contribute to child development, women empowerment, and institutional effectiveness. As indicated in article 14 of regulation July 2018, every daycare center in government institutions are supposed to provide the following main services (1) Provision and service of accommodation; (2) playground provision and service; (3) supply and service of cooking facilities; (4) provision and service of dining facilities; (5) provision and service of sanitation and toilet facilities for children; (6) care and close monitoring services; and (7) primary health care services

According to the participants' point of view, the daycare centers oversee providing basic services for children. The services are obviously to take care of their children. It means to take care of their children during working hours, always during working hours from 8:15am to 5:00 pm including lunchtime. As was described by the participants, the routine activities/service being provided is feeding children, helping them to play, sleep, cleaning, teachings songs, and other important needs of the children. In relation to this, interviewee 14 from Bahir Dar University (caregiver) described that:

> *The major services we provide are feeding the child, helping them to play and sleep, cleaning them whenever needed, teaching songs, and providing other care services. The service provision differs by the child's age. We have different kinds of care provision for babies 6 months up to 1, 1 year up to 2 and above 2. For the children above 2, we teach them different educational things.*

Another supplementary from university of Gondar, a care provider(interviwee4) also expressed her ideas as follows:

> *As soon as I arrive, we receive the children according to the program. There is a person in charge who is on duty at the door and welcomes them, then after everyone enters, they*

do some activities, they eat breakfast from 3:00 to 3:30(9:00-9:30 am). We clean themselves and then sleep. But mainly, the job is to take care of the children, we keep them clean, and we feed them, if the diapers need to be changed, I change the diaper, so that they don't touch the socket, don't fall, we see all these. It is our job to monitor everything they do.

Some previous research works such as Teshager et al (2019,p.23) also reported that even though the availability of daycare centers was low, the existing centers couldn't provide adequate services. The present findings also partly support such results. Another study also reported that feeding the children, encouraging them to play, receiving from and handing over ITs to parents, taking care of personal hygiene, diapering, toilet training, getting children sleep, protecting them from accidents, and providing TV services were some of the major services that have been provided by the daycare centers(Tefera & Yesus (2015, p.14).

4.2.4. Financing

Budgeting is a decisive element of any organization's financial planning. It allows for better decision-making and helps the organization to stay on track with its financial goals. By creating a budget, you can identify areas where you need to cut costs, as well as opportunities to invest in growth. Therefore, the issue of budgeting and its administration is really a key element for the daycare centers. What does the regulation say? Under this regulation, the issue of budget is clearly pointed out. According to Article 21/1 states that " *any government office shall allocate the necessary expenses for the provision of the materials and other expenses required for the day care by the government. Moreover, article 21/2 also states that "According to clause (5) sub-clause (3) of this guideline, the budget and human resources of the childcare centers established should be jointly covered.*

The data shows that each daycare center has no independent budget from the government or the university. Participants also informed that the budget is deducted from the budget of women, children, and youth directorate of the university itself. In line with this report, key personnel from university of Gondar(interviewee 6) states that:

In terms of budget, it is in the regular budget from the directorate. It means that the budget of the university is allocated to each directorate of the university, and we spend for the daycare center from the budget allocated to us for women and children.

Similarly, similar experience was also observed from Bahir Dar University from another interviewee 6 also added that.

The daycare doesn't have a separate budget for the day care centers to provide the necessary resource according to the need.

The above narrations show that the source of finance for these centers was the government. However, it doesn't have separate and defined budgets like other offices.

4.2.5. Governance Related issues

Describing the governance related issues of each daycare center was one of the key aspects while assessing the practices compared to regulations and standards set by the government bodies. The data obtained from the participants and the documents shows that each daycare center has their own administration systems that show the hierarchies and structure of governance's systems. This also indicates how reporting, supervision, monitoring and human resources would like to be. According to the regulation of 2018, Women, Children, and Youth directorate of each University has the responsibility to administer these centers 12/1). This directly states that **"***the responsibility for childcare shall be the Directorate of Women, Children and Youth Affairs established in the Government Office***(Article**"12/1). Under this article 12 sub 2 also clearly indicates the specific responsibilities of this directorate under the general supervision of the university president supervision.

Women, children and Youth directorate of each government institution, university in this context, are obliged to establish a childcare center, provide with the necessary materials and manpower for children care and provide necessary budget for monitoring and making initial proposals, ensure childcare centers to be safe and clean, and enter into necessary agreements and accept responsibilities on behalf of the childcare(Article 12/2). One of the informants from Ministry of Women and Social Affairs also confirmed that this ministry is also working to facilitate the implementation of this regulation in collaboration with Ministry of Education. As to him, the Ministry has not a direct hierarchy to monitor and evaluate the performances of each daycare center in government institutions directly because this is a ministerial level which has direct contact with other ministries. Accordingly, this Ministry must do the monitoring and evaluation and any support via ministry of education because all public universities are directly accountable to ministry of education. He complemented that:

Well. The Ministry of Education directly issues the directives from our institution and issues guidelines and monitors the universities. Sometimes, experts/delegates from our ministry may also have a direct follow up in addition to our regular reporting system from the ministry of education. As a responsible ministry, we usually prepare checklists to be filled in by each university in relation to daycare centers and their practices. We sent it to the Ministry of Education to collect this regular follow up question. Then after, we assess and evaluate each feedback and respond accordingly. From that feedback, we also understand that there are still gaps in implementing the regulation due to different factors(interviewee 7).

Coming to the context of these two centers, each university has women, children, and youth directorate. This directorate expanded its coordinating office to all campuses. This coordinating office is responsible to follow up and administer the center and reported to team leader of children treatment and support under the supervision of the director. The director also mandated to follow up and monitor the services. Hence, reports are prepared quarterly and annually to the president of the university. Sometimes, the directorate are also supposed to send reports to women, children, and youth directorate of ministry of education in which this directorate also communicate with ministry of education. In line with this another interviewee(6) from University of Gondar also added that:

The current Women and Children Youth affairs directorate, formerly Gender and HIVAIDS Directorate, is a responsible organ which oversees the overall activities and administration works in our university. We have two centers at two campuses called Tewodros and Fasil. To facilitate it and other gender issues, we have a coordinator at each campus.

From the above description, we can understand that the practices of governance issues are in line with the regulation. However, the regulation 2018 also put in place another system to be implemented seriously. Particularly, article 22 sub 1 states that "*childcare center service is a service that requires great care and strict supervision, the school's working environment and safety specialist will check the quality of the services provided by the center once a week, whether they are receiving the services on time, the cleanliness of the environment and the children, to prevent harm to children, children's health and other services provided by the center. Advocacy and continuous monitoring and control should be reported*". Under the same article sub 2 also gives a mandate to evaluate, monitor, and support the center's content, service

delivery, material supply, the safety and peace of the environment, and should visit the center at least once a month to monitor and supervise.

The practices are not in line with the regulations here. The reason is that the supervision, follow up and evaluation have been taken by only the directorate of women, children, and youth directorate of the university. While the regulation also indicates the role of specialists from occupational health or another department to work closely to follow up the service being provided.

4.3. Roles of Daycare Centers for Women Empowerment

The second sub-research question was to explore the roles/benefits of this daycare centers for working mother empowerment in selected universities: "How are day care programs in a sample of Ethiopian Universities empowering working women economically, socially, and academically?"

As it is described in previous chapters, women empowerment is both process and outcomes which is also multidimensional. Hence, this research tried to collect and analyze data in relation to the contribution of the government policy intervention such as establishing affordable and quality daycare centers in federal government institutions in empowering women employees from different perspectives. As it was described under the conceptual framework(See chapter two), I tried to identify four sub themes such as economic, social, educational and leadership roles. Nevertheless, these four themes are not exclusive each other because empowering women in one element/aspect may have implication to other types of empowerments. Moreover, the roles can be manifested at different levels of empowerment such as access to resources(preconditions) agency(process) and achievements. These themes are discussed below in detail with the verbal accounts of participants and reviewed documents.

4.3.1. Economic Roles

One of the major roles of using daycare services at the center for working mother is securing the economic benefits/opportunities. When we say economic empowerment, it's all about a process and outcome of giving women the ability to control resources and participating in paid workforces. Using these centers enables them to secure their job with salary and engage in different income generating academic activities. The first and all participants pointed out benefit is that this service enables them to keep their paid work at least the minimum responsibilities. It's obvious that childrearing is supposed/considered as a woman role in most

patriarchal societies like Ethiopia. Participants confirmed that once a woman academician give birth, she faces challenges to balance family and her professional responsibilities. Mostly, they prefer to take the roles of childcare at home and leaving their professional job due to work life imbalances. Liberal feminist particularly welfare type also emphasizes equal rights and opportunities for women in society, particularly in the areas of education and employment (Oxley, 2011, Pp. 261-263). Likewise, one of a working mother from University of Gondar(interviewee 1) shared that:

One of the advantages of having this care center is the economic implication. The first thing is would not hire other domestic servants to take care of my children at my home which requires more than 1,500 birr(up to 30 USD) per month. So, I save it because of using these services. The second and most important benefit is I could continue my professional job and get paid monthly.

Another working mother from Bahir Dar University(Interviewee 10) also supported this argument by sharing her experiences in relation to the roles of daycare services.

This service is also helping me to solve financial constraints. You know, it's free of charge. I know that there are private daycare centers even though they are not organized as such and request you to pay more than 1000 birr per month.

While staying at workplaces, participants also identified that this daycare services also enabling them to participate in different income generating academic engagements such as research, projects, participating in conferences and other part time teachings at other colleges or universities. These all activities have their own economic benefits beyond their monthly salary. liberal feminists believe that men, employers, and other sectors of society can also benefit from more childcare alternative by increasing productivity, reducing poverty, and promoting economic growth (Ibid, p.52).In Ethiopian public universities, academic staffs are supposed to engage in three defined roles such as teaching, research, and community services. In the context of the selected universities, community services refers to "*any unremunerated professional service that is performed by academic staff or students of University with the knowledge of the responsible office; it is undertaken for the benefit of the public, its institutions, or for non-profit organizations in response to the social, economic, political, and other needs of the community in line with country's development priority*"(UOG,2021,P.3). Even though these roles are a mandatory to all staffs, women academician face challenges to discharge these all responsibilities and limited to only teaching parts. But these daycare services enable them to

participate in all these missions of the university and improve their economic and academic capacities. Accordingly, working mother from Bahir Dar University(Interviewee 9) shared her experiences as:

> *Apart from teaching if a woman wants to engage in research and community service activities, she can use the daytime for it. With the absence of the daycare service in the universities, she will not participate in any of these activities. Because with child caring role at home, it's very difficult for women to prepare even for teaching without engaging in research and other community service activities.*

Moreover, the other interviewee(3) from university of Gondar has also added that>

> *I can engage in other part time jobs at other colleges and get income. Time is everything. If I have time, I can write projects and research for grants, conferences, and other short training to update myself and get paid for these all. As you know, the University also has an extension program(weekend program) that gives a great opportunity for staff to teach and get extra payments since it's overtime. Imagine, I have childcare roles at my home, I can't participate in all this and others professional progress.*

The above direct narrations of participants tell us this daycare services are really empowering women academicians economically. They mentioned various sources of income where they were engaging due to having sufficient time. Starting from securing their monthly salary they also engaged in different research works that enabled them to make extra income despite its academic purposes. They also participated in different conferences and workshops that upgraded their academic capacities and parallelly brought income. They are also part time workers at some colleges to get overtime work through delivering courses and providing training.

The Federal government of Ethiopia via the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs also launched the daycare regulation 2018 in believing that establishing affordable and quality daycare services at workplace is the promising strategy to empower women participation at in the labour market and invest on the future generation of the country. Hence, Article 4 sub 1 and two of daycare regulation 2018(p.5) declares that "*the fact that female government employees do not give their full attention and ability to the work field in which they are engaged and assigned in the institution where they work away from their children, and frequently absent from work in relation to their children, has a negative impact on their own growth, capacity, efficiency, competence and self-confidence, as well as on the development of their own*

economic capacity and self-reliance activities. So, this regulation aims to establish affordable daycare centers at workplace to reduce their burden" and to ensure the wellbeing of children.

4.3.2. Social Roles

Working mothers were also benefited socially while of using the centers. Of course, each subtheme is not exclusive to each other. They are interrelated and overlapping sometimes. In this subtheme, I tried to explore how these services are enabling working mothers to engage in different extracurricular activities, community engagements, strengthen neighborhoods and strengthen marriage relationship and healthy sexual life. Participants shared that using daycare center is a great opportunity for working mothers to participate different community events and initiatives such as volunteer, attend local meetings, and participate in activities that contribute to the betterment of their neighborhoods. Thus, they got time to improve their civic participation either professionally or voluntary that includes in local governance contributing to the society. Welfare feminists believe that gender equality can be achieved through governmental interventions such as maternity leave, childcare subsidies, healthcare access, and other forms of social support One of the informants from Bahir Dar University working mother(interviewee 10) described her point of view in this regard.

In addition to the economic and educational benefits, having sufficient time also creates a good environment for us to participate in different community events , initiatives, governances and strengthen neighborhoods. These all can be taken as social responsibilities as a part of the community.

Another working mother from University of Gondar(interviewee 2) also supported these ideas as follows:

This daycare also helps me to improve my social life with my neighborhood, relatives, and communities in general. As a woman, I am also expected to participate social events such as funerals, weddings, holidays, associations, and others. These social networks are our assets as a community member. Therefore, after my professional work, I can go and contribute my own part to this community.

A gender expert from Bahir Dar University(13) also shared her view on the social roles of having daycare center's services to strengthen healthy family relationships. Her point of view is narrated below.

Daycare centers have also improved marriage relationship by sharing child caring burden that reduces they energy that the women spend in a daytime thus, she can give more attention for her husband and children at home. If a woman is in triple role, she will be tired and easily irritated with everything at home thus that will disturb the marriage relationship. Daycare will reduce conflict among them that will arise from household burden.

Working women have also financial freedom that would improve the status of women in the household. Lastly, daycare centers can also improve the sexual life of married couples. Without daycare, women would spend a lot of energy to provide care for children and in addition she would have responsibilities in her office that made make her tiered. That creates an absence of peace in marriage. Despite these roles, another argument was also raised by a participant that dictates the practices of daycare centers are indirectly reinforcing gender inequality by maintaining the traditional gender division of labour. As it was indicated, all caregivers were women, and such trends are an example to show how the center itself is not gender sensitive in human resources. Interviewee 13(gender expert) narrated as follows.

If a woman puts her children in to daycare centers, she can take care her responsibilities in the universities. It means she can have her own financial means. In this way, it can contribute to equality. Daycares are also reinforcing gender inequality in the universities. I have been looking different daycare centers in the universities that hire women care providers only. Traditionally care providing role is given for women. Likewise, the universities maintain traditional women role as care provider that can reinforce the existing gender inequality.

4.3.3. Educational Roles

The third major role that these daycares have been contributing for women academicians is to their educational advancement. It's obvious that pursuing higher education and advanced degrees needs more time to engage seriously. Once they are hired as a graduate assistant, lecturer, or assistant professor, they are supposed to attain higher degrees such as PhD and other professional development training since academics is not a onetime journey. By providing access to high-quality childcare services, women can work outside the home, pursue higher education, and participate fully in society. It challenges traditional gender roles that have placed the responsibility for childcare and domestic work on women. By providing access to high-quality childcare services, liberal feminists argue that women can challenge these traditional

gender roles and participate fully in society, regardless of their family responsibilities. Thus, using these daycare services enabled them to access these basic resources such as education. Kabeer(1999, p.437) in explaining the measurement of women empowerment asserted that access to resources/preconditions can be taken as the first dimension. In her explanation, resources could be both material and no material such as family, community, and market. Participants also affirmed that this service has been contributed for their academic effectiveness like their counter parts men. According to their experiences, access to daycare services allows women academics to pursue advanced degrees, research opportunities, and professional development, further enhancing their expertise and contributions to the academic field. An expert(Interviewee 7) form Ministry of Women and Social Affairs shared his ideas as follows:

Well, the first reason for its establishment is just to create a women friendly institutions and favorable working environment for women employees to increase women participation in higher education in terms of number, academic rank, and leadership position. This situation is also indicated in international labour organization(ILO). More specifically, we can take as an example of CEDAW and CRC. Therefore, establishing daycare centers under all federal institutions can be taken as one of the strategies for implementing these all-international agreements and conventions which are also in line with the supreme law of Ethiopia.

Another working mother from Bahir Dar University(Interviewee 9) also complimented these experiences as follows:

I was a PhD student while I gave birth to my 4th child. After 6 months I put my child in the daycare center. During working hours, I did my class and research without worrying about my child. Thus, it helped me to pursue my PhD.

Another working mother(Interviewee 1) from University of Gondar has also shared her experiences on the roles of the daycare services for her academic journey by mentioning the specific trainings she has attended.

Another importance is that I could attend a one-year higher diploma program in teaching methodologies. It was very helpful but also mandatory for academic staff. This was tough schedule for me, and I did it. imagine, I hadn't this daycare center for my child, I could not do it. Therefore, this center has also helped me to participate in professional development training like Higher Diploma in Pedagogy(HDP).

Participants have also pointed out that getting time at the workplace enables them to participate in different larger research and community services projects which are also a part of their job contract. These research and community services projects' participation is directly linked with career and knowledge advancements. They argued that both Bahir Dar and University of Gondar nowadays are categorized as a Research University by Ministry of education. This implies that building their knowledge, skills and experiences in these areas are stepstone for their overall job effectiveness. They also indicated that both universities have a research project experience called "mega research" which funded more than 50 million birr per year. This mega research projects are a system whereby different expertise from different academic fields come together and bring holistic and broad research ideas and write a proposal for funding. They brought their experiences as women participation in these initiatives were limited due to childcare roles and responsibilities in their families compared to their male colleagues. This problem was mainly observed where there were few female principal investigators. In relation to this, they affirmed that using this daycare services are an important burden holder to increase their participation. in this regard, a working mother from university of Gondar shared her experience as follows:

> *These daycare centers are helping me to participate in universities initiatives. For example, University Gondar has a system to improve academics participate to mega research and community services. These mega research and community services are a part of an academic journey, experiences, and sources of income. This mega research is also a good opportunity to learn and relearn from different well experienced researchers since mega research is a teamwork(Interviewee 2).*

The third interviewees who was working mothers also shared her experience in relation to the benefits she got because of using daycare center as follows *"Fortunately, I got my promotion from lecturer to assistant professor after I started to use this day care center. You see the process of promotion takes longer time. It's terrible to file all documents even if you fulfil the requirements. That is why getting sufficient time is a priceless resource.*

4.3.4. Leadership Roles

Access to on-campus daycare facilities allows women academics to balance their professional responsibilities with childcare. This, in turn, enables them to engage more actively in leadership roles without sacrificing their family duties, fostering a better work-life balance. This can increase their availability for career advancement opportunities, such as administrative

positions, committee memberships, and other leadership roles within the university. Liberal feminist also argues that if women get opportunities and support, they are capable enough to engage in any position they assigned for.

In the context of these selected Universities, there are different leadership roles which includes committee(standing and ad hoc), course chairs, coordinators, department heads, vice deans, deans. Directors, vice president and president level. These leadership structures are basically the wings of the academic while there are a lot of administrative structures from the supportive staff. Participants confirmed that after they started to use these day care centers, it contributed to their participation in leadership position. As indicated in chapter one, relatively speaking women share lower participation in leadership especially higher positions. It was also indicated that childcare roles and responsibilities in their families was one of the influencing factors for their low participation. An interviewee from Bahir Dar University shared her reflection as:

> *This service has a great role to bring women into leadership. Men are also become a leader because he has someone at the back to take care of him and the family. Likewise, if a woman gets someone to take care of the children, she can be a leader. But if the children are her responsibility, she will be afraid to take leadership responsibility. Because the women will always give a priority for her children. Thus, it's hard for women to bring into leadership(Interviewee 10).*

Another working mother(interviewee 9) from Bahir Dar University also shared her view as

> *It's helpful to bring women into leadership. With child responsibility it's hard to take care of leadership role. But if the daycare center shares her responsibility, it will ease her burden thus, women can come into leadership.*

An expert from Women and Social Affairs also supported this argument as follows:

> *Well, firstly, when it comes to women, now it has given women an incredible benefit in terms of securing their job security or keeping them at work. In addition to this, the government is working to increase women participation in leadership position. So, these daycare services are helping them to utilize their potential and contribute institutional transformation to more women friendly initiatives(Interviewee 7).*

Another interviewee(6) from University of Gondar who was working in Women, Children and Youth directorate also complimented this claim as follows:

It was raised just so that the women can participate in missions of the university such as research, teaching, community engagement and leadership and other activities.

From argument, we can understand that childcare role was considered as one of the barriers for women participation to leadership position. Leadership as an institutional responsibility needs time, commitment and positive mind set for women leaders.

4.4. Challenges of Implementation of Daycare Centers

Despite its affirmative roles that played for women empowerment, there are challenges/ hindrances that affects the centers, working mothers and the institution in general to provide quality daycare services. To answer the third sub-question (What are the challenges encountered by working mothers while using the day care center, as well as by caregivers and institutions in terms of providing quality care in higher education?), the perspectives of care givers, users(working mothers), management bodies and gender experts were incorporated to share their own point of view.

4.4.1. Facilities and Material Provision Related Challenges

Under this sub theme a lot of ideas were raised by the informants. Especially, shortage of rooms, toys, transport services, location and appropriateness of buildings, capacity of the existing centers. in relation to these hindrances. A participant from Bahir Dar University (interviewee 11), especially from Peda Campus. She described how the center was very crowded due to limited spaces and the number of children. Despite its crowdedness, the existing building also has a problem of leakage which is not comfortable for quality care. A management body from Bahir Dar University(interviewee 12) narrated her experiences as:

Peda daycare center was very crowded because we had 70 children at one time. We had very limited space and the facilities were also not enough. The building has a leakage still now it was repaired frequently but still there is a complaint. Right now, the quality is very compromised.

Another supportive point was raised by expert from Ministry of Women and Social Affairs(Interviewee 7) shared as follows>

All daycare centers are supposed to be on the ground floor and more relaxed and clean buildings. Nevertheless, some services are being provided at ground plus buildings due to shortage of buildings. This type of building is not advisable for this kind of service due to different reasons. In addition, there is a possibility that there are some places where

different chemicals are around or even though there were no reported problems till now, there are some places that are a threat to safety. And we recommend that all institutions should give attention to this concern and arrange it in the best possible way for the safety of children.

Concerning the above narration, the daycare center service standard also granted that a) The place where the center will be established should not be swampy and not vulnerable to floods and storms. b) At least 50 meters or more away from things that pollute the environment, such as garbage, storage of chemicals and flammable materials, disturbing noise, smoke, and dust that pollute the air (from garages, mills, etc.) d) The center should be built on the ground (not above or below ground) where children can get sunlight(p.2)

Participants from the University of Gondar described that there was an imbalance between demand and supply in relation to these services. As it mentioned during interview, they affirmed that there are a lot of working mother including administrative staffs who have applied to the enroll their children. However, they are on waitlist due to the limited capacity of the center. Due to this huge demand from working mothers, they are forced to receive children beyond our capacity and even compromised the standards and regulation set by Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. For example, the proportion of care providers and children is supposed to be 1 to 5, but sometimes the practice goes beyond.

There is a lot of demand, but we are not satisfying half of it. The second challenge is lack of staff and space. According to the guidelines, one babysitter can take care of five children, so now, for example, at Teodoros campus, we have 9 babysitters, we can only take care of 45 children. But the number is more than that and compromised the guideline(Interviewee 6).

University of Gondar has more than 5 campuses such as Maraki, Atse Teodros, Ase Fasil, Teda, College of Medicine and Health Sciences and Referral Teaching Hospital. Even though there was a demand from many staff from all campuses to open daycare centers at each campus, there are only 2 centers at campuses such as Atse Teodros and Ase Fasil. Therefore, working mother with children suffer a lot to get the services. Even though they got the opportunity to use it, the location of the center is far from their workplaces/campuses. This consumes their time and exposes them to losing extra energy and affects their work schedule. Working mother from university of Gondar(Interviewee 1) also strengthened their experiences. *She said "One of the major problems is that there is no center in Maraki, Teda and CMHS campuses. There*

are only Teodoros and Fasil's campuses and I am in trouble because it is not located near to my workplace area.

The same problem happened at Bahir Dar University. One of the informants shared that "*The first challenge is there is high demand and low supply in the daycare center. There are a lot of people who want to use daycare services(Interviewee 13). But we have criteria to provide these services. The priority to use daycare services are given for women academician, women administrators, and other staff members respectively. The university daycare center can't absorb the demand. We have limited place and capability; thus, we provide service according to our resource.*

Another related challenge is shortage of hygiene and sanitation materials supply. Informants confirmed that parents are supposed to provide sanitation materials in addition to university itself such as soaps, soap, gloves, diapers, and others. These materials are needed to keep children clean and safe. One of the care givers informed that " lack of *an adequate supply of sanitation materials. We usually receive soap, gloves, soap, and tissues from our parents. So, you will face shortages due to problems with parents. Because sometimes economically poor people face it(Interviewee 5).* Moreover, enabling children to play for educational and entertainment purposes. To this end, the availability of toys for example was not sufficient. A working mother from University of Gondar who was a part of interview narrated as. "*The other challenge is lack of toys for children to play with. For example, my son came in after he was two years old that was the time when he really wanted to play (Interviewee 3)*"

Previous studies also found that some offices are located in a rental building and require the mandatory approval of the landlord to organize rooms necessary for childcare, most of the offices are upstairs and there is no space to organize an outdoor play area for children, ffailure to provide sleeping, dining, playing, toilet and other basic services for children;and forced to provide services to all children in the same classes without dividing children by age due to small class size(MoWSA,2023,p.9).

4.4.2. Budget

Budget is a machinery to all planned actions. Adequate funding ensures that these establishments can hire skilled and well-trained staff, maintain safe and stimulating environments, and offer enriching educational programs. By investing in quality daycare, we not only contribute to the early education of children but also empower working mothers, particularly mothers, to participate in the workforce without compromising the well-being of

their children. This improves economic productivity and reduces societal disparities. The issue of getting an independent budget for daycare centers is the question of all management bodies. An expert from MoWSA(Interviewee 7) shared his experiences, efforts, and challenges to make it real. He narrated that:

> *One of the major challenges that affects the working conditions of all daycare centers is budget constraints. To tell you frankly, we as a mandated ministry, are always struggling to the ministry of finances and economic development to allocate specific budget for these services directly. However, there is still no specific budget code.*

In addition to this, different concerned bodies from the university management also shared these challenges seriously. They explained that budget is directly related to the quality and capacity of services being provided. As mentioned earlier, there were a lot of demands from staff to use these services. Hence, the women, children and youth directorate of the university has also a plan to expand their plan and address the question of all staffs. But budget is the major constraint to realize their plan. Similarly, a management body(interviewee 12) from Bahir Dar university also confirmed that "*In addition to that there is a budget shortage because it doesn't have a separate budget for the day care centers to provide the necessary resources according to the need*".

This constraint was already mentioned by all participants from both Universities. Management member from Women, Children and Youth Directorate of University of Gondar(Interviewee 6) also gave her reflection as follows:

> *We could not expand because of the budget. There is no sufficient budget and no recruitment of staff. We are not saying that toys are enough. Even though women and children are always the responsibility of the president and I always ask him, it's not easy to get sufficient budget to fulfill all materials and equipment's for the centers.*

Participants like care givers also gave their experiences in relation to budget constraint from their own perspectives. They claimed that they are not well-paid workers even though childcare is a big responsibility and needs sensitive treatments. They indicate that due to budget shortage they don't get benefit packages and sufficient salary. They also affirmed that due to budget shortage, some necessary materials and equipment's are not fulfilled, which directly affects their working conditions. A caregiver from University of Gondar(Interviewee 5) shared her experiences as follows:

Personally speaking, our salary is so low. You know the living cost of today! Everything goes high. Sometimes, I am also looking for other opportunities to get better jobs with better returns. I know and am passionate about childcare. Staying with children by itself gives love and relief. Investing in them can be taken as a great job. But it lacks enough attention from the University and improves some benefit packages.

From the above narrations we can understand that budget constraint is the common challenge that both centers face to deliver quality and affordable services. It was also mentioned that there was noy no clear system that indicates independent budget code for daycare center from ministry of finance and economic development. the Women, Children and Youth directorate, a responsible body to administer daycare centers, is struggling to allocate budget from their regular budget. In addition to this, Ministry of Women and Social Affairs is also working to establish a system to allocate independent budget. Budget as a major constraint is also affecting the center to fulfill all necessary materials and equipment including securing sufficient and clean spaces. Moreover, it's also linked with quality of services that affect the behaviour and commitments of caregivers.

Consistent to these findings, the previous research conducted by the ministry also confirmed that about 30 institutions also indicated that there is no clear budget for childcare in their institutions. Recruited babysitters frequently leave their jobs after training at a cost of time, labor and expense due to the low salary allowed by the civil service and the lack of other benefits. The lack of a clearly defined budget to build a nursery, to renovate the rooms to make them comfortable for children and to equip them with appropriate materials; It is difficult to find play materials for childcare and they are very expensive; failure to obtain receipts for the purchase of children's toys, making it difficult for the government procurement system(MoWSA,2023,p.6)

4.4.3. Human Resources Related Challenges

The other challenges identified by the research participants were human resources. As was indicated by the informants, the qualities and quantities of the required staff were insufficient. As the demand of childcare was high and the supply side was too low, there was a disproportionate number of caregivers compared to the number of children. This problem was linked with different associated factors such as lack of sufficient infrastructure and budget constraints. An expert from MoWSA(Interviewee 7) noted that.

The other challenge we could observe from the feedback was that there was a disproportionate size of care providers and children. This directly implies that there are more demands from parents to these services while there is also a shortage of human resources from the supply side that even have implication to the existing infrastructure we have, and the amount of budget allocated for these services.

In connection to this, a management body from women, Children and Youth Directorate from University of Gondar has also added that recruiting and hiring well trained staff in early childhood acre and related departments is not an easy-going task. She noted that there were not trained staffs in this filed. Even though the human resource management and development department is working closely with them, they couldn't hire well-trained and professionally experienced caregivers. She expressed her experience as follows."

When I came to the process of staff recruitment, we passed some sort of procedures. Principally, staff should be hired if they are well trained in early childhood and related departments. However, due to various reasons nationally, we couldn't get those staff. What we do is recruit staff who have at least a diploma or degree in other fields and have work experience in different sectors(Interviewee 7).

When care givers were asked about the qualifications and experiences of their profession, they also reported that they were not trained in childcare and related departments. Instead, they have other degrees and diplomas and got a few days training after they joined the profession. A care giver from the University of Gondar reported that.

I hold a degree in statistics. When I didn't have a job at the time, I competed here when it was advertised. I passed and when I entered, it was not too difficult for me. Before that, I did not have any training or anything in this profession, but because of my experience, I was a rural woman and I used to play with children, so it was not too difficult for me. Because there are teachers who work like us, they gave us the training(interviewee 4).

The management body form the university of Gondar(interviewee 6) also added that they didn't give sufficient training due to various reasons. She said " *We give training once per year. We didn't do it after that because things didn't work out for us. When we plan, we always want to expand so that everyone can be on the campus, but as it is said, we could not succeed due to various reasons, including budget problems, but we always ask, we always plan.* Despite the qualities of the staff, the number of staff is not enough to take care of them. Caregivers affirmed that the problem is occasionally serious. Interview 4 from UOG(Caregiver) noted "*In rare cases, all care givers may not be available at the workplace due to some personal family*

problems. In this case, there will be a problem of disproportionality of size. I mean the number of children and caregivers are not proportional and that ultimately affects our working conditions. So, I suggest increasing care givers in considering all these troubles.

A gender expert from University of Gondar (interviewee 8)also reminded that hiring nonprofessional for childcare means being careless about the future generation. She pointed out that serious procedures must be applied during staff recruitment and give much attention to their engagement in keeping the social, physical and cognitive development of children. She said "*Another thing is that hiring non-professionals means that taking care of a child is not like taking care of anyone, it requires patience. It is a lot to say that everything should be done carefully, if there is an emergency case, if there is anything, everyone needs to be careful.*" The same reflection was also recorded from a management member of women, children, and youth directorate of Bahir Dar University(Interviewee 11). She reported some care providers are not working professionally and received complain from working mothers(user) as their children were abused and maltreated. She reported that:

> *The second challenge is sometimes caring providers may not work as we expected and as the need of the children due to less experience and carelessness. Care providers are less skills who treats children very badly. Due to this they insult, disrespect, and mistreat children in the daycare centers. In most cases care providers are not professional, rather they grow from janitor or guard position.*

The present findings are also supported by the assessment reports made by MoWSA(2023). The research found that only 26 (42%) of the department heads/experts in charge of childcare centers have received training in childcare management and leadership, while the remaining 36 (58%) have not received any training. In some institutions, in addition to caring nannies to a certain extent, other professionals (nurses, assistant caregivers, cleaners, coordinators, psychologists) are employed to ensure that children receive complete services when they are in day care, but this situation is not consistently applied in all federal institutions; These are the main issues raised by most institutions in connection with the recruitment of employees. Absence of professional staff who can provide appropriate support and care for children with special needs also reported (MoWSA, 2023). Another study also found that due to poor quality of childcare and the inability to meet the special needs of children and ineffectuality of childcare services with mothers' schedule makes it difficult for mothers to use the available childcare facilities that they could possibly get(. These findings shared the findings of the

present study how the qualities and capacities of human resources are also taken as a challenge to provide quality services (Teshager et al, 2019,p.25).

4.4.4. Governance Related Challenges

This section also presents challenges in relation to administering, monitoring, supervising and evaluation problems of the centers. As it's indicated in the methodology part, each daycare center has its own governance structures or hierarchies. The childcare regulation 2018 set by MoWSA also put in place some structures that indicate the specific administrative organ which oversees roles and responsibilities. When we come to its practices, there are gaps. Even the management bodies also affirmed that they do evaluation twice per year and but not give much attention to follow up. A management body from Women, Children and Youth Directorate(interviewee 6) shared that "*We evaluate the performance twice a year . If there is an opportunity to do it quickly and for various reasons, we quickly evaluate what the nannies are doing and how they are doing. And the feedback we get is that they are very happy, and they don't give us any problems.*

Similarly, anther interviewees(12) from Bahir Dar University also reported that they didn't prepare specifically customized guidelines of monitoring and evaluation. She described her reflection as "*There is no specific policy that guides the daycare services monitoring and evaluation rather there is gender policy that says something about daycare services. From the leadership side they all believe in the importance of daycare services but the attention and commitment they give to the center is very limited((interviewee 12).*

Similarly, a gender expert from Bahir Dar University(Interviewee 13) also shared serious reflection about the gaps and the real importance of regular follow up and supervision by the specialists and management bodies. She also added that working mothers(users) should be also a part of monitoring and evaluation to ensure the quality of services. She shared as."

> *The committee to supervise the quality of the daycare services should be among the women academicians, in this way they can keep the quality of the service. Women academicians who use daycare can search partnership with other concerned bodies to make the daycare better. The management of the daycare service should be under the women academician(Interviewee 1).*

Previous studies by MoWSA(2023) also supported these finds. The research also argued that providing sub-standard units as if they were established by senior management and not providing close monitoring and support to ensure that they are completed with appropriate

materials, budget, and manpower. Those who are responsible for monitoring, supporting, and managing childcare centers lack awareness/knowledge about childcare and management.

4.4.5. Commitment Related challenges from Mothers Side

Another challenge was in relation to mothers' commitment to obey the rules and regulation of the daycare centers. Beyond respecting the rules, they are also supposed to respect their care givers as care givers are helping them to take care of their children. Some car givers and management bodies reported that there are some working mothers who are not responsible and respectful for both the rules and the caregivers. A caregiver from University of Gondar(interviewee 4) described her experiences as follows:

Occasionally, some mothers bring children while he/she is sick, but never realized/report to us. They say their child was not sick. So, there is a problem in terms of not taking responsibility for what happened here. It's not me just because they want their children to leave them here. Besides, there are those who get angry when something goes wrong(interviewee 2)

From Bahir Dar University, the same experience was obtained. A care provider in one of the centers noted that some parents are not respectful and do not understand the behaviour of childcare. She pointed out that "*Another problem is the lack of understanding of staff. There are some who bring in very difficult children (interviewee 14).* Similarly, some parents violate the rules of the center. For instance, they bring children who are sick while at home. A care giver from Bahir Dar University also demonstrated that some parents are not even responsible to bring diapers and well-cooked food with their children. She raised that "*It's okay to put them to sleep and keep them clean, but sometimes parents don't bring you diapers. There are times when we lose the glove itself and exchange with our bare hands. And it's not good for the well-being of either of us(interviewee 14).* Thus, the management body also reported that maltreatment from parents has a backfire on the treatment of children from the care providers. She said "*From the family side some of the families don't have a respect for the care providers and the feeling may backfire on the children treatment after the parents left)interviewee 11).*

The findings of previous research work by MoWSA(2023) also reported that challenges were emanated from different actors/stakeholders including the parents. The research found that Some parents are overly concerned when their children are in care, not using the service, bringing their children only when they want, not bringing well-cooked food, not bringing enough food, not bringing enough clothes and diapers, repeatedly asking male parents to bring

their children and use the service. Some parents are also not keeping to the rules and regulations of the daycare center. Thus, the present study also found similar findings.

4.4.6. Rigid Time Schedule

This challenge is basically raised by the user(working mothers). They mentioned that sometimes the working time of the centers are not accommodating the interests of working mothers. They presented that most morning classes are begin from 8:00 am while the centers are open at 8:30 am. according to them, some women academics faced time inconsistency with their classes. A working mother from University of Gondar described that:

Another challenge is that we are supposed to bring our child/children to the centers at 2:30-3:00 local time (8:30-9:00). So, they are not flexible at some moments. We are also supposed to take our children between 9: 00 to10:00 local time(3:00 to 4:00pm). If it's a little past three clock, there is a rule posted, they won't tolerate us. We are also offering the service for our children under 3 years but urge you to extend it to up to four years. UOG(Interviwee1)

Other women also the same University also added that working mothers face challenge to reconcile time disparity between their working hours and the centers work schedule. She said that:

I may have class at 8:00 am but the daycare center opens from 8:15 to 8:30, which means I am supposed to delay some minutes from class and wait for the daycare. And what do I do? I extended my class to two and a half hours, but I didn't arrive on time. Therefore, there is a mismatch between my workplace schedule and the daycare center's working hours(interviewee 2).

Working mothers have concerns about the timeline of daycare centers. The opening and closing times may not be like the working hours of classes. From Bahir Dar University, a mother who is using one of the centers also agreed that time variation is sometimes a trouble for her. She directly said that "*the other challenge was during holyday time they may close the services even before the eve time and after holyday. In this case we may suffer for a while(Interviewee 10)*

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDTAION

5.1.   Conclusion

Evidence shows that there is an association between women empowerment and childcare policy/intervention**.** Welfare/egalitarian type of liberal feminist theories also argue that the state can be taken as a positive actor in addressing different structural inequalities and practical needs of men and women through supportive policies**.** This paper explored how the practices of daycare centers looks like and how does it empower working mothers compared to the day care regulation 2018 of Ethiopia. When we see the practices, this service was initiated and started even before the official regulation has been released. It started with a few staff and children with limited infrastructure. After the regulation came into place, it was expanded to different campuses of the two universities and there was a huge demand. The Women, Children and Youth Directorate of each Universities oversees establishing, administering, expanding and other responsibilities in collaboration with the university top management, Ministry of education and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs.

Compared to the regulation, there were some gaps in terms of human resources, care provider vs children proportion, infrastructure, follow up and evaluation practices. Despite such gaps, these centers are benefiting working mothers from different perspectives.

As the data shows, these centers have a positive implication for women academic staffs economically, educationally, socially and leadership roles. These centers are sharing the unpaid and less valued domestic roles which is obviously fallen under the shoulder of women. As a result of sharing this burden, women get sufficient time to engage in teaching, research and community services which are the three pillars of the university. These engagements enable them to meet their strategic and practical gender needs such as economic capacity, career advancements, educational level, and their leadership participation. It was also indicated that these centers are also contributing to build a health family and improving women status and gender equality. Despite these positive contributions, there were also some challenges for caregivers , working mothers and the institution itself to provide/get quality and affordable services.

Among the major challenges identified in this pare are material and facilities related challenges, human resource related challenges such as disproportionate size of caregivers and children, low qualities/profile of caregivers, lack of capacity building training at workplace that aimed to improve the ethics and skills of staffs, lack of strong monitoring and evaluation system. It

was also pointed out that budget was the major constraint to build centers which could accommodate the huge demands of staffs. It was also indicated that some parents/working mothers/users lack commitment to obey the rules and regulations of the centers and give low respects to the roles of daycare givers who were providing the services. To sum up, establishing daycare centers at workplace could be taken as a good initiative that aimed to contribute for women empowerment, child development, women friendly institutions and gender equality at large. However, these initiatives can't be taken as centers without challenges/problems. Instead, it needs several intervention/commitments from different actors to improve the overall status.

5.2. Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- ✓ The Federal Government should devise a system to allocate independent budget and devise strong monitoring and evaluation system that works closely with university management.
- ✓ The University management should give priority and be committed to strengthen the centers to provide quality and affordable services for all working mothers including administrative and technical staffs.
- ✓ Both working mothers(users) and care givers should respect and be committed to the rules and regulations to offer/receive quality services for children who are future generation
- ✓ The Women, Children and Youth Directorate should work closely with the general University management to hire trained professional and provide frequent workplace trainings for care givers.
- ✓ This service should give priority for the lower-class mothers such as administrative and supportive staffs than lecturer and other privileged groups.

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