IMPACT OF GENDER ROLES ON WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN FUNCTIONAL ADULT LITERACY IN ETHIOPIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Currently in Ethiopia the incumbent government is working towards boosting the involvement of women in various development programs. In this regard, in its effort to enhance their involvement, the government and its stakeholders are confronting with deep rooted and unhealthy stereotypes towards women that have been there with the community for centuries. The purpose of this work is then intended to provide a review on the impact of gender roles on women involvement in Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) in Ethiopia by bringing national and international studies as background information. Specifically, the purposes of the paper are to enhance understanding on the status of women involvement in FAL, point out the major factors that hinder their participation and suggest possible intervention mechanism in Ethiopia. This paper attempted to critically review contemporary views on issues that entangled women’s participation and argues that there are lots of assignments that all concerned bodies are supposed to accomplish. This paper contended women who grew up having the same gender role expectations and behaviours as men are confident and develop positive self-concept about themselves than those who grew up having roles and behaviours different from that of men. It was also argued that the gender roles of women have implication for their participation in education in general and in functional adult literacy in particular. As many educators underlined the gender role of women and how they were socialized towards these make them think that they are appropriate only at home and hence reluctant to be enrolled in the school, less expectant of success and choose those subjects which either provide them the opportunity to fulfil or are consistent with their self-image. From the arguments among educators, it can be concluded that governmental and non-governmental, national and international groups, should rethink on these socio-cultural factors which result in limited role of women and boost their efforts on how to eliminate the negative perceptions held among people. Hence, to lift the government’s attempts and accomplish remaining tasks, organized and painstaking efforts are needed to promote women’s all rounded participation in social,
economic and political areas. In so doing, parents, schools and teachers, community elders, religious leaders, government and non-government leaders should work hard to help the society change the existing negative perceptions and myths of women to create gender fair society.

**Key words:** Gender Roles, Women Involvement, Functional Adult Literacy, Socialization

1. **GENDER AND CULTURAL ROLES OF WOMEN**

Since the establishment of federalism in 1995 and the formulation of the new constitution in Ethiopia, women rights have become a hot agenda that has got greater attention and focus from government and non-government organizations. Among a number of fundamental rights conferred upon women, the Constitution of Ethiopia (1995) ensures this right as Ethiopia is also a signatory to various international laws of human rights. Therefore, both under national as well as international human rights law, the state is obliged to uphold and ensure whether all women are getting equal access and right to involve in development of their country. The constitutions in its article 89 (7) ensured women’s right states “government shall ensure the participation of women in equality with men in all economic and social development endeavors.” In addition, these commitment and will of the government is explained by its policy documents and in the policy documents promoting gender equality is seen as a priority in order to enhance women’ involvement and reduce poverty.

Particularly, since then, women have got to equally exercise in many aspect of development in the country. For instance, inclusion of women has become a vital criterion in the assignment of higher positions like ministers and ambassadors by the government. In addition, beginning from primary to higher education institution, affirmative action was introduced to help women participate in various sectors. In this regard, the incumbent government has shown strong political change and will that has been exhibited to help women involve fully in all development areas.

However, despite the efforts exerted there are still various problems that need serious intervention. In this regard, contemporary literature shows that a number of researches are being conducted on women education focusing on barriers to their attendance and success in their education. But among these researches we came across, we need to emphasize on the women cultural roles and how these in turn affect their participation in education general and Functional Adult (FAL) Literacy programs in particular. Our justification to critically review these issues is that in Ethiopia, as it is true in other developing countries, there is a need on the part of the government to achieve the Millennium Development Goals where achieving basic education is becoming a prior concern and mandatory this time. The government of Ethiopia is paying great attention to adult literacy campaigns to realize these demands. However, it apparently seems difficult to realize these intentions in very short period of time because of the cultural ties which are becoming bottle necks particularly to the education of adult women.

It is widely accepted that culture is a means through which guidelines for appropriate behaviors, social norms including those related to gender are reflected. It is through one’s culture that gender relation within the society and activities carried out by men and women are determined. That is, it plays a significant role in the construction of gender. Researches indicate that there is close relationship between culture and gender. According to Sweetman (1995), for example, "culture and gender are entwined, interdependent and mutually defining to a certain extent." For Coplan (1996), culture and gender are not only related but they have a
strong relationship that gender is a "cultural construct."

Culture determines what women and men should do; the resources women and men should get including education. Culture plays a significant role in the construction of gender inequality in such a ways that men have dominating position in different spheres (Kalkidan, 2007). In Ethiopia, culturally, men are expected to be courageous, competent, domineering and to show qualities of leadership while women to be submissive, conservative, self-spoken and shy. Cultural assumptions in most societies expect men to seek achievement and dominance and women to be compliant and supportive. The differential perceptions and expectations of behaviors and roles of the society based on sex is what we call gender.

Gender refers to the socially and culturally determined relationships between men and women. These relationships differ according to different societies. It should be distinguished from sex which is connected with the biological make-up of men and women. Gender differences are not determined by nature but by society, e.g. "women can cook food", while sex differences (which are biological) are natural, e.g. "only women breast-feed". In other words, gender is a "culturally constructed" meaning attached to sexes (Coplan, 1996). It is the extension of biological sexuality into products of human activity. It is the means through which an individual is viewed as masculine or feminine. Based on sex, there are behaviors and roles expected from an individual called gender roles. Gender role is a set of perceived behavioral norms associated with males and females (Sweetman, 1995). Gender roles are not determined biologically rather they are constructed socially. People, beginning from their childhood, learn what is regarded in their cultural context as appropriate for their sex.

Different researchers in Ethiopia claim that culture influences the education of women that it result in gender division of labor where women are denied of important opportunities like educational access and burdened by heavy works which is hardly acknowledged (Emebet, 1998; Kalkidan, 2007). In most societies, women education is considered as of no value that they prefer men education. Regarding this, Ballara (1992) stressing the cultural patterns and customs as one of the obstacles to women literacy, said, "Parents believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in girl's education; instead they invest time and money to educate boys." In showing in which members of the society this negative attitude towards women is prevalent, Ballara wrote that husbands, fathers and men in general have such attitudes towards women education mainly because they are afraid that it may reverse the traditional women roles by providing them with new roles.

However, many studies have demonstrated the benefits of women literacy and education for a country's overall advancement (Sullerot, 1974; Ballara, 1992). For instance, Sullerot (1974) wrote, "Without female education progress can be transmitted to each generation either not at all or very slowly, since it cannot be passed on in the home." Asserting the importance of women education in predicting the educated generation of the future, Bown (1990) said, "Women bear and raise the children, so women prepare the future, how can a future be good if women are ignored?" Similarly, Ballara (1992) indicated the importance of educating women for wellbeing of the family since they play a significant role as educators of future generation, fulfill economic functions and are vital for the survival of the family. According to him, women education, moreover, has fundamental importance in enhancing their role and active participation in environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources. Ballara (1992) adds that women education is also vital for their personal development as acquiring it enable women to increase their self-esteem, improve their income earning capabilities and to play active role in the family and community decision-making.
Culture refers to the social heritage of a people—those learned patterns for thinking, feeling, and acting that are transmitted from one generation to the next, including the embodiment of these patterns in material items. It includes both nonmaterial culture—abstract creations like values, beliefs, symbols, norms, customs, and institutional arrangements—and material culture—physical artifacts or objects like stone axes, computers, loincloths, tuxedos, automobiles, paintings, hammocks, and domed stadiums. Culture refers to learned behavior rather than to genetically inherited behavior. But not all human behavior is learned. Behaviors such as sneezing and breathing are not learned. But, once one moves above the biological level and looks at human social life, there is very little, if any, behavior that does not involve learning. In addition to being learned, culture also is shared. By this, we mean that culture is a quality of a group rather than of an individual. In this sense, no one person knows the entire culture, because it would be impossible for a single person to acquire the total experience and knowledge of the entire group or society. Culture is learned and shared by people as a result of belonging to various groups. Culture provides the fabric that enables human beings to interpret their experiences and guide their actions, whereas society represents the networks of social relations that arise among a people (Schaefer, 2003).

Culture, among other factors, plays a vital role in shaping the lives of men and women. Cultural values, beliefs, and traditions significantly affect family life. Children from their childhood are brought up by their families according to the culture and customs in the area (Terera, 1994). Our country, Ethiopia, is a culture-oriented country that fathers and mothers are responsible in passing on what is appropriate to their children. Accordingly, as to Tefera, girls learn cultural roles from their mothers and boys do from their fathers. Particularly, after age nine or ten, more attention is paid to training the daughters in not only domestic arts but also the art of womanhood. These gender cultural divisions of labor at home make the girl or later a woman overburdened by routine house works which leave them little time for other tasks outside the house and force them to believe that other tasks are inappropriate for them that they will refrain from participating in such activities including education. In supporting this idea and in expressing the dual effect culture has on women education, Measor and Sikes (1992) said that since women, culturally, are given a subordinate position; they lose their self-confidence to participate in academic areas and hence retreat into marriage and domesticity.

Educating women is assumed not only inappropriate but is also worthless. With regard to this, different researchers cited in Karlekar reported that sending women to school which doesn’t have any visible benefits, is often regarded as a waste of time for culturally, they are viewed as ‘natural care givers’ (Amin, Bhatt, Dumra, Khan, King and Hill and Sinha in Karlekar, 2000:90). In some societies, as to the other researchers, these cultural-social norms and traditions create “almost insuperable obstacles to women participation in education” (Evans and King, 1991).

So far, it was indicated that, women, traditionally, have distinct roles to play in contrast to their sex counters, which most of the time are called gender roles. As nothing is without cause, now let us discuss agents which socialize women towards their gender roles.

2. Major Socialization Agents for Women Gender Roles

From a social perspective, one’s social identity is fully the result of interaction with the others. In this regard, as women’s involve in various social situations including the family, the possibility of collecting impressions of themselves and others, and judging themselves form a sense of who they are has critical
importance and needs serious examination. These social interactions have a major importance in socializing women. Socialization is the way in which culture becomes a part of the individual. It is the process by which individuals internalize many of the socially approved values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior patterns of their culture. Through socialization, the individual acquires a social self-an awareness of personal or social identity. Through socialization, the individual also acquires personality-an organization of attitudes, beliefs, habits, and behavior. As a new-born infant is socialized by others, he or she is transformed from a biological organism concerned with eating, sleeping, and crying into a social being with a complex network of attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms. The human personality and self, in other words, are developed as the individual grows, interacts, and learns from others (Schaefer, 2003). In addition to its importance in the development of a social self and personality, socialization is significant because it is the process by which human culture is transmitted from one generation to the next. It is the process by which the young are fitted into an organized society. It involves the learning of a variety of social roles, which are to be played on a social stage, and the learning of the skills that are and necessary to ensure survival and the satisfaction of needs (Schaefer, 2003).

In Ethiopia, literacy levels, enrollment rates and level of schooling completed are relatively low with marked gender gap i.e. the literacy rates for males exceed that for females (Genet, 1991). According to some researchers (Kasente, 2000; Teshome, 2002), the reasons behind this disparity are attributable to problems of family, schools and culture among other factors.

In most cultures, how men and women behave and think and what they look like is different. As said by Measor and Sikes (1992), for this difference, there are four- biological, biologically, psychoanalytic and sociological explanations. According to these scholars, the sociological aspect indicates, aptitude and behavior difference observed in men and women are shaped by socialization from first few years of age onwards. As the focus of this review is the women cultural roles and these cultural roles are mainly transferred from generation to generation through socialization, sociological aspect would be our area of concern.

The society wants its children to act and behave in some way desirable according to the common values and norms reflected in its culture. The society, under the umbrella of its culture, passes on whatever behavior, norm and values to be respected and protected to the next generation by teaching children from early years of age. The means through which each generation transmits essential cultural elements to the next generation is called socialization. It is a process through which a person acquires or constructs a personal and social identity as part of the social group in which he/she belongs. For Weinreich (1997), it is concerned with the transmission of behavior, roles, attributes and beliefs to the next generation (cited in Liz and Sue, 2002:41).

Regarding when socialization starts and ends, different scholars put different period. For some, it starts when children are born and ends when one die, others say that it commences in early years after birth and don’t know when it ends and still some others argue that it starts in early years and end in adolescence. For Ballantine (1997) there are definite start and end dates for the socialization process. According to him, “the socialization process begins the day we are born and ends the day we die.” Taking the middle position, Measor and Sikes argue that it starts in the early years of age and ends or there hardly is any socialization after adolescence (1992). On the other hand, for Alfaro (2000), socialization starts right from age three afterwards. Socialization, as a means of transmitting the basic identity of one’s culture and way of life, can be used as a way of acquainting children with different issues acceptable in that society of which gender socialization is one.
Gender socialization is the way one, as a boy or a girl, learns sex-appropriate patterns of thought and behavior considered acceptable in one’s society (Measor and Sikes, 1992). Similarly, Tizita said what men and/or women are expected to carry out, which is originally determined by the existing culture is acquired through the socialization process (2003). In doing so, the society teaches its children the appropriate roles of men and women, gender socialization. For Lindsey gender socialization is the process by which the individuals learn the cultural behavior of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ that is associated with the biological sex of the female or male (2005). Boys and girls, based on their sex, have distinct tasks and behaviors appropriate to them and hence have different socialization experiences from birth (Ballantine, 1997).

During the process of socialization, the society passes on what behaviors are appropriate for males and females. In this process, boys are brought up being superior and more favored than girls through the system of patriarchy. Patriarchy, according to Alfaro, is a power or mode of domination for men (2000). As to him, in this system, men are given the power and hence have the right to subordinate women. It is the bases for most societies to consider men as the head of the family and women as ‘nurturers’ giving social, economic and political power to men. What is reflected in this system is taken for granted that the society passes it on to the next generation as appropriate through the process of socialization thereby causing inequality and division of roles between men and women.

Although the timing of socialization process is different for different scholars, the agents of socialization are found to be similar across researches. Alfaro, stressing the socialization process starts from age three, listed family, peer group, mass media, school, religion and social institutions as agents of socialization (2000). For other scholars, women and men differentiation starts in early infancy in first days of life when hospitals give dissimilar colors of bracelet to each sex and continue through the family, peers and schools (Lever, Keating, Fagot and Lawson cited in Levine and Havighurst, 1992:420). To Ballantine (1997), the most important agents of socialization are schools, parents, siblings and television. Concerning the formation of women cultural roles and most significant agents for these, Ballara (1992) said more than others, religion plays a significant role in socializing women towards some cultural roles. Other researchers like Measor and Sikes, on the other hand, argue home, community and mass media are mainly responsible for the construction of women roles (1992).

Here under, we will briefly discuss some of the agents of socialization that have both positive and negative contributions to women self-images and to their cultural roles.

**2.1 Role of family in gender role socialization**

According to sociologists, the family as an institution that has a chief role in socializing women. The family is responsible for the reproduction, socialization, and maintenance of children, the enhancement of social solidarity and consensus and the transmission of the cultural heritage from one generation to the next (Schaefer, 2003).

With regard to gender difference, the family in fact, unlike other groups, is characterized by a specific way of living and constructing gender differences through a process that is both biological and social. The family is key social place in which difference, in particular sexual difference, is believed to be fundamental and at the same time constructed and in the family the gender characterization reflects the individualities of the parents (Donati, 1998 & Saraceno, 1988 in Crespi, n.d.). Hence, it is one of the strongest influential institutions on a person’s perceived gender role is his or her parents. Parents are the first teachers not only of such basic skills as talking and walking, but also of attitudes and behavior. Some parents still
hold traditional definitions of maleness and femaleness and what kinds of activities are appropriate for each. Parents start early in treating their baby boys and baby girls differently. According to Fagot, in most families their parents treat boys and girls differently from their early days of life (cited in Levine and Havighurst, 1992:420). To the contrary, Lytton and Romney (1991), from the analysis of 172 studies, reported that on the whole, differences on the way parents socialize boys and girls are 'not large' (cited in Berk, 2003:531).

Parents, in treating boys and girls differently, are also more likely to allow boys to try new things and activities such as learning to walk and explore than they do in girls. This can be illustrated from the materials given to the children to play with. For example, toys, provided by parents to the children, play a major role in sex socialization. This seems why Ballantine said, "parents are generally very conscious of buying sex-appropriate toys for children" (1997). On what kinds of toys parents buy for boys and girls, Lawson (cited in Levine and Havighurst, 1992:420) and Spender (1979) wrote that when girls are allowed to play with nurture dolls which show cleaning and grooming; boys, on the other hand, are playing with adventurous and action toys and war games. Berk (2003) also said toys that emphasize nurturance, cooperation, and physical attractiveness are given to females and those stressing at action and competition such as trucks and cars are to males. Moreover, Richmond-Abbott reported materials like chemistry sets, doctor kits, and microscopes are considered as 'boy's toys' and when compared to girl's toys, they encourage manipulation of environment and are career oriented than that of girl's (cited in Ballantine, 1997:87).

In relation to the behaviors reinforced by parents, cited by Levine and Havighurst, Constantina Safilios, summarizing studies about what behaviors are expected from children by the family, said that mothers expect girls to be dependent and obedient while boys are connoted with independence, intellectual curiosity and are rewarded for aggressive behavior (1992:421). Similarly Leaper (1994), affirming that children, in their early ages, are influenced by the experience provided from parents said that parents encourage assertiveness, exploration, and engagement with physical world in boys and promote imitation, reliance on others and emotional sensitivity in girls (cited in Berk, 2003:532). Ballantine (1997) also said that their fathers and mothers reinforce male and female children for different types of behaviors. The writer added, fathers typically discourage 'feminine' behaviors in boys and expect them to show tenacity, aggressiveness and curiosity while expecting behaviors such as kindness, obedience, and cheerfulness from girls.

Moreover things like, naming and clothing by the families are bases of socialization and are indicators of roles expected from boys and girls in their later life (Ballantine, 1997). As to Spender (1979), while boys are given names, which are short and hard-hitting, the fussy and 'pert' ones are given to girls. In relation to clothing, too, the above writer assumed boys are provided with clothes that allow them to easily and freely move and play while those which do not encourage activity and freedom of movement for girls. In addition, children look for their parents for examples and role models. If a girl sees her mother taking part in physical activities, for example, she will grow up with the idea that it's okay for girls to play sports. If a boy sees his father helping to take care of the new baby, he will integrate this image of "daddy as care giver" into his developing definition of masculinity. So, Ballantine argues, the family plays a great role in socializing its children towards sex.
Roles of women expected in the larger society influence the parental attitude toward the importance of girl's education. In our culture, girls are expected to stay at home and help their mothers in all tasks rather than pursuing education. Even it is not taken by the family that educating women is worthwhile as her appropriate place is thought to be in the house.

2.2 Peers as agents of socialization

Peers as agents of socialization have also a significant contribution in shaping the self-image of women and identifying their roles in society. That is, the influence of peers is another factor that reinforces a culture's traditional gender roles. By the help of the family, children, before coming to school, are socialized to their sex-role. Research by feminists, as to Liewellyn, 1980; Measor and Woods, 1984; Lee, 1986; Nilan, 1991 proved that peer pressure acts as an important agent of gender socialization (cited in Measor and Sikes, 1992:93). Although family plays greater part, each other socialization of peers has also a part to play in the pre-school socialization process (Spender, 1979; Measor and Sikes, 1992).

Children learn the appropriate roles they should play from their age groups they play with in the neighborhood. A girl who does not fit the traditional gender roles of that society will be ridiculed and even excluded from the group as peers react more positively to girls who fit traditional gender roles. Regarding girls socialization, Measor and Sikes (1992: 94) said that peers play an important role in "communicating messages about what it means to be appropriate girl and enforcing that code". In later ages one, as a woman, has to behave in accordance with the culture and norm of the society she lives in or she will not be respected and even considered as a member of that society. In confirming peer pressure significance in later ages, in addition to that of children, Khera (2007), said peer pressure affects not only children and teenagers but also is prevalent in adults. Peer pressure across age, hence, is the other reason behind women cultural roles.

2.3 Contribution of Schools and Teachers in gender role socialization

Schools and teachers as they are nearest to children in schools next to the family they play a major role in socialization. It is because gender related socialization of children beginning in the home, family and neighborhood extends to the school. Most schools perpetuate traditional gender roles. There is huge evidence that, as to Measor and Sikes, schools are involved in reproducing traditional gender roles (1992). In relation to the school socialization of girls, Karlekar (2000) reported, "the number of schools concentrated on hidden agenda of appropriate socialization for girls is not few." The schools, either directly or indirectly, reflects gender roles in such a way that while some tasks are given to and expected from girls, the others are from boys. Among the three curricula that the students learn at school, Best affirmed that the one that teaches children the traditional role behavior for their sex is one (cited in Levine and Havighurst, 1992:425).

As one of the role models of the children in the school, teachers play a significant role in shaping students towards gender roles. According to Berk (2003), teachers maintain and even extend gender roles children are taught at home As to Levine and Havighurst (1992), teachers also help students understand how traditional concepts and practices regarding gender limit opportunities available to girls and women. Furthermore, as said by the above scholars, the ways teachers deal with boys and girls is different that they train boys to be assertive while leave the girls to be passive by
interacting more with boys than with girls in the classroom which in turn has a direct bearing on the performance and further enrollment of women in educational systems. Moreover, difference in attitude and expectation of the teachers to their male and female students can be observed in schools. Teachers, both male and female, believe that boys are academically better than girls and this influences the capacity and further efforts to be made by female students. According to Good and Bruphy (1996), they encourage girls in grooming and manners but boys in academic striking and accomplishment (cited in Woldu, 1999:17). Regarding the source of this teacher’s attitude and differential treatment, Genet (1991) said that they are the reflections of the broader societal bases about the role of women in the society.

Hence, female students, starting from early childhood learn and internalize these and act accordingly which affects their academic performance and their motivation to try further education. Schools, through teachers and other workers in them, play a significant role in creating and perpetuating gender roles and educational disparities between boys and girls and women underachievement for education is considered as not valuable for girls (Measor and Sikes, 1992). In addition to the above indicated effects, experiences in the schools, bringing about gender role, make women to be funneled into traditionally female occupations after school. In the schools, Berk (2003) said, children learn gender roles and statuses by observing that women most of the time are elementary teachers and secretaries whereas men hold higher positions like head teachers, unit leaders and administrative positions. Ballantine (1997) also said that teachers and schools provide information on sex appropriate behavior that children learn by observing and imitating adult roles of teachers and administrators they often see in the school.

2.4 Media as agent of socialization

Despite the number of channels are few in Ethiopia, media has a greater impact on socialization of gender roles of women in society. For example, Lavie (2004) said that children, as they get older, are influenced in their choice of toys by television. As to this writer, while remote-controlled vehicles, although they can be equally enjoyed by males or females, are generally targeted at boys by advertisers and boys also are connoted with action figures in media, girls are the advertising targets of the manufacturers of dolls, craft kits, and so on. Again and again, one can see toys and toy advertisement reinforcing the traditional gender roles: boys are active and adventurous, while girls are passive and mothering. Regarding the behaviors of girls and women usually transmitted in TV programs, Berk said that the women gender roles revealed through TV are negative as they are pictured as passive and dependent (2003).

The societal attitude and what is transmitted in the media support each other. Although the position men and women hold and interaction among them in the media is in line with what is defined culturally by the society, media can also influence the attitude of the society towards gender roles. Media can make the society believe what is appropriate for men and women in such a way that they play a crucial role in confirming what the society already thinks appropriate for men and women. According to Opoku-Mensah (2004), the pervasive natures of media have a far-reaching effect in sustaining or undermining women’s status in the society.

On the other hand, media perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes because it reflects dominant social values. In reflecting them media also reinforces them, presenting the domination of men over women as
'natural'. Regarding the reproduction of gender and patriarchal values of media, Imam (1980) said that media reflect stereotypes and underrepresented women that they present dominantly negative image of women sanctioning women's control and subordination (cited in Opoku-Mensah, 2004:105). As one might expect in a society still dominated by men, men dominate TV production and, influenced by these stereotypes, unconsciously reproduce a traditional ‘masculine’ perspective, perpetuating dominant gender stereotypes. As to Lavie (2004), in newsrooms the position women and men hold and interaction among them is shaped by the society and culturally defined roles that men dominate and are almost always in positions of authority as editors, managers, specialists and staff reporters.

Moreover, according to Lavie (2004), the issues male and female journalists cover in the media is different than what is presented by women journalists reflect the traditional roles of women in the society.

Furthermore, because of patriarchal ideology and the position they are grown up with in the society, men most of the time despise triumphant women working with them. In relation to this, Levie (2004) said, in the media, women even if successful are not respected but rather ignored by their men colleagues as it is not considered as their ‘place’. This writer continued, men journalists reflect oppressive attitudes towards their sex counter colleagues which undermine the self-confidence of the latter. And many narratives on TV are still implicitly designed and interpreted from a masculine perspective. Since most of the time it is men who work in the media and there are hardly any women, Lavie (2004), for example, said that girls (aged 8-12) themselves may tend to find a male newsreader more believable than a woman newsreader, whereas the newsreader's sex does not seem to influence boys' ideas of their believability. Girls may grow used to being presented with male on TV in general as more powerful and knowledgeable.

2.5 Religion as agent of socialization

Among the various institutions which have an effect (positive or negative) on socialization of children religion has an influence on the current and future of roles of women in society. It is because religion is a significant means through which women roles and statuses in the society are perpetuated. According to Carroll (1983), however, when the roles and status of women are discussed, the issue of "religion and its impact on women traditional position is typically sidestepped." In almost all religions in the world although the degree varies as one goes from one to the other, women and men are not considered as equal and accordingly given different roles (Carroll, 1983). Similar to the case of culture and tradition, women in most religions have a subordinate position (Emebet, 1998). In explaining the subordinate status of women across religion and their strong influence on the attitude of the society, Alemmay said that in major religions; Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., women have secondary roles which the society takes it as if it is from God and "is afraid to violate it"(2003). Religion is an influential agent of socialization as people think that whatever passed on to them through religious institutions as 'words of God' and hence respect it more than others.

Regarding the reason behind the subordination of women in most religions of the world, Carroll said, in Christianity for example, it is assumed that women have an inferior status as she was created from Adam's rib after him, not made as a whole entity by God (1983). This writer, further noted, the reason behind the subordination of women in Muslims. Citing the saying of Mohammed from Koran, 'men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other' he wrote that Mohammed's practice of polygamy as indication
of the low esteem he has for women (p.194). Similarly, as to Brijbhushan (1980) there is distinction between men and women in all matters, including education.

Religious institutions are taken as one of the reasons for under representation of women in education. To Emebet, in our country, the most influential factors as barriers of women education are religious institutions (1998). Although they are pioneers of education in the country's history, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Mosques are criticized for favoring men and neglecting women in their provision of education (Seyoum, 1986). According to this writer, since the purpose of education in religious institution is to produce servants (Priest, Imams, etc) and believers and women are forbidden from 'higher' services of the Church and Mosque, they were not made to participate in educational programs of the church. Likewise, Coasts (1994) notes that since women were not allowed to assume responsibilities in the church as well as in the mosque, the education of those days has apparently ignored girls. As to Brijbhushan, to the contrary, exceptional to other things, Koran makes it clear that women and men to be equal in education. However, as this writer said, in Muslim society, the girl is expected to be submissive and homemaker that education is not for her as it results in 'undesirable' behavior. And even if women are allowed to learn, they are restricted to reading lest they would write love letter that spoil their own virtue and the honor of the family (1980).

According to Carroll, the direct and indirect subordinate position women have in the eyes of religion not only deprived them of 'enough' education but result in the differentiation of courses they are taught (1983). As to him, while boys learn "potentially rewarding" and useful subjects in the vocational mechanical and scientific spheres, girls are taught domesticity and are forbidden from higher level of services in the church. Similarly, Emebet (1998) said, religious institutions are responsible for gender division of labor as boys are taught to read, write and do arithmetic while girls are given instruction in cooking and cleaning.

3. WOMEN PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR GENDER ROLES IN SOCIETY

"Typically, women have globally less economic opportunities to improve their lives. They are often restricted in terms of education, the ownership of wealth, monetary return for their work, financial opportunities, and opportunities to influence the decision making at the level of the family and the society" (Mikkola, 2005:3).

Accordingly, previous studies showed consistency in gender stereotyping in past decades, but realization of the possible negative consequences of stereotyping needs seriously deliberation and reflection in a reduction of stereotyped gender roles. Hence, under this section attempt was made to see women's perceptions of their gender roles in society as it has significant impact in their involvement in education.

In most societies, in contrast to boys, girls are expected to be submissive, shy and self-spoken which by and by the girls accept as true and act accordingly. The 'appropriate' behavior the girls have to show is told to her from childhood onwards through diverse means bringing about difference in the behavior and performance of both boys and themselves. Such differences strengthened, Hoffman and Fagot said, as the child meets the expectation of parent, teachers and peers and as these expectations become internalized (cited in Levine and Havighurst, 1992:420).

Since children from their early years are brought up having in mind what is culturally believed as normal for boys and girls, they tend to act the way they are expected to.
Accordingly, women are more confident to do what is expected from them as women and are less confident to try others, which are considered as only men's. As to Measor and Sikes (1992), girls, taking the message that women are restricted to home based role from home, schools, mass media, etc., refrain from participating in other works outside the house.

They grow up thinking that tasks outside the home, like education is not meant for them but for men. In any areas, outside the house, girls are found to be less confident and have low self-esteem as whatever knowledge they may have, they rely on what is witnessed by the boys. Measor and Sikes said that these feelings of women emanate from the internalization of their position as subordinate to boys (1992). Hence, they, most of the time, are not 'good performers' in tasks that are considered to be men's. In schools, they do not perform well like their sex counters as they enter half-heartedly and with low self-esteem. Hence, as to Carroll (1983), when a female enters a situation having internalized the belief that "most people" expect more competent performances from men even if she doesn't personally endorse the stereotypic belief she may still leave the situation with a lower assessment of her ability and come to personally believe that boys are better than girls.

In the case of the feelings of women in the world of work, evidences show that they prefer to be bossed by men than to be a boss, as they are not used to it since childhood. With regard to this, Berk (2003) said, from early years, men are given leadership post because they are conceptualized as powerful authority figures and women, to the contrary, as physically weak and not fit to leadership. Because of this and other reasons, women "doubt their ability, aptitude and suitability for senior posts" (Measor and Sikes, 1992). Hence, according to these researchers, in relation to initiation for work promotion, women were found to be less confident and persistent to apply for senior posts than men.

Girls, later women, influenced by the societal outlooks, are afraid to participate in social, economic and political affairs outside the house. Feminists, as to Measor and Sikes, also agree with the difference in self-confidence and self-perception of men and women that they owe the criticism to socialization difference in boys and girls (1992).

4. IMPACT OF WOMEN GENDER ROLES ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN FUNCTIONAL ADULT LITERACY

Contemporary literature shows that adult literacy is a key tool to address global challenges in area such as democracy, peace and human right; preservation of diversity, education for all, learning for sustainability, HIV and AIDS, conflict resolution and work force development among others. Yet, to achieve these intents of adult literacy and FAL in particular the role of women is essential similar to other areas of education.

There are a number of international commitments and benchmarks that emphasize the role of adult literacy in achieving education for all and development. Such initiatives include the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) Education for All Goals, United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). Specifically the fourth goal of Education For All (EFA) calls on countries to “achieve a 50 % improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all”. In this regard, there are improvements when compared women’s involvement in education in general globally. In line with this, Mikkola, 2005:8) sated:
Over the past decades there have been large and successful investments globally to extend primary education to all children including girls. In the countries that the UNDP classifies as countries with low human development, female literacy rate ranges between 10-85% with a typical gender gap (the % of literate men – the % of literate women) being around 20%. Globally, this gap has reduced by more than 5% from 1970 till 1998, with the reduction being more in the low income countries.

Despite these developments, past research has yielded a consistent picture of stereotyped gender roles because of cultural variations in societies globally. For instance, representations of adult women involvement in the education of their country have been limited and women were significantly isolated from many areas of societal issues as one can learn from history.

Women’s literacy has gained greater prominence on political agendas over the past decade, ever since the world Education forum, in Dakar, at which governments set the goal of halving the number of illiterates by 2015. The United Nation (UN) Literacy Decade running from 2003 to 2012 has given further impetus to reducing, illiteracy (Ki-Moon, 2010 in Oyitso and Olomukoro, 2012).

Research has shown a direct relationship between literacy among women and well-being of society and experience around the world show that literacy education has been found to have positive impacts on self-development and economic status – which education has been consistently shown to be a major determinant of individual income, alongside professional experience as reported by EFA Global Report (UNESCO, 2006). The empowering potential of literacy can translate into political participation and thus contribute to the quality of public policies and to democracy. The relationship between education and political participation is well established (Oyitso and Olomukoro, 2012).

Being part of education, adult education is a means through which social as well as economic development can be achieved. It plays a vital role in the full dimension of development of a country. The National Adult Education Strategy of Ethiopia considers adult education, as a means of accelerating development and ending poverty thereby contributing to Ethiopia’s Program for Accelerated Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) by enhancing human resource capacity (MoE, 2006). In this strategy, it was also noted that particularly in developing countries like Ethiopia, adult education helps people to alleviate poverty by encouraging lower fertility, better health and nutrition and by increasing their productivity through technology and other methods of production.

Functional Adult Literacy, an aspect of adult education, is also considered as a tool of Ethiopia’s PASDEP. The National Strategy of Adult Education of Ethiopia (2006) identified two meanings of Functional Adult Literacy: FAL as either "practice of reading and writing put to some use" or "the acquisition and use of reading and writing to learn practical knowledge and skills useful for other aspects of life."(p.iii) As indicated in the National Strategy, adult education in general, Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) in particular can contribute to the overall development of the country by helping people to have modern attitudes and skills which assist them in getting employment opportunity and employing themselves which in turn result in improving one’s family income (MoE, 2006).

To bring about all the desired changes indicated above which can contribute to the overall development of a country, the participation of both sex in the program is vital. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in its report of human development entitled Human Development to Eradicate Poverty, recognizing education as a pertinent tool for eradication of poverty, emphasized gender equality in education as an elementary part of poverty reduction and hence sustainable
development (King and Mason, 1987 in Tamale, 2004:43). Beyond this, as reported by Son (1994) if the development process is to gain momentum, education of women and girls must be prioritized. To some researchers, education of women plays a vital role in the overall development of the county, as social returns to investment in female education are high and exceeds the returns to male education (Teshome, 2002; Son, 1994: 114). Son said, “Literate women are not enriched as individuals, but are also enabled to make an enhanced contribution to the welfare of their families and to have an impact on the society as a whole”. That is, literacy among girls and women leads to a rise in their age at marriage, a reduction in infant mortality and prenatal death rates, strong desire for family planning and female employment, reduces the number of unwanted births and promote the education of succeeding children.

Every society has its own cultural behavior patterns which the males and females in the society are expected to follow which in turn influence the behavioral and personality development of individuals from early years of life. What we call culture affect women in various ways, one of which is their education. In the case of the situation of Ethiopia, Feleke (1999) said, gender inequality in general and gender inequality in education in particular, are mostly the result of the norms and values with which our society defines the roles and responsibilities of women and men. Although the importance of giving priority for educating girls than boys is stressed by different researchers (King and Hill, 1993; Sweetman, 1995), in most societies, customarily, educating boys is assumed more beneficial than educating the girls and hence girls should stay at home and help their mothers rather than going to school. Based on what is appropriate for men and women, the latter is expected to stay at home and carry out their ‘natural’ roles. Since this assumption of the larger society is taken by women as true, it affects their confidence to participate in tasks outside the house, of which education is no exception. In education, too, even if they participate, because of their achievement and subject choices one can tell that they are in line with their cultural roles. In general, cultural influences on education of women are manifold that it has an effect on their enrollment, classroom participation, achievement and career choice.

4.1 Admission and Dropout

The mentioned stereotypes and cultural influences have also effect on empowering women. Research shows that through adult literacy empowering women can be achieved effectively by designing and implementing well planned and organized literacy and non-formal education programs. Serious emphasis on women empowerment was made in the year 2010. International Literacy day titled; World Literacy Day: Empowering Women through Literacy empowers us All. To realize such initiations, developmental programs are designed to improve living conditions of women and to allow them participation in processes that will enhance their development at home, community and national levels (Oyatso and Olomukoro, 2012).

Studies focusing on developing countries have found girls education particularly important for the welfare of the family and the future development. Many empirical studies conclude that increased schooling of the mother is associated with larger effects on child’s health, schooling and adult productivity than increased schooling of the father (Schulz, 2001 in Mikkola, 2005). However, despite such importance of females’ education, the ways they are treated and brought up with males and the labels they receive from the society, color their conceptions and perceptions they have of themselves has been affecting these importance. In most societies, Frieze (1979) said, men are considered efficient, competent, and successful while women are perceived as inadequate, incompetent and inefficient in some situations. Accordingly, he believed, men tend to
overestimate their abilities, while females tend to underestimate their abilities (cited in Derlega and Janda, 1986:56). This tendency of being exactly what others expect one to be has been named by different researchers as self-fulfilling prophecy (Meighan, 1986; Berk, 2003). It, as to Berk, emanates from what others think of us which by and by affect the way we behave and lastly be what others expect us to be (2003). For example, most of the time people may tell us that we are good at something and we will be and at other time they may tell us that we are not good at others and still we conform to it. So, the way we are labeled by the society affects our behavior and efforts we make to performance that we become what we are expected to be.

In relation to women education, it is not, therefore, surprising to see that women influenced by others' expectation, conform to what the society thinks-education is not for them. As Boocock (1972) said, ‘...women end up where the society expects them to...’(cited in Meighan, 1986:304). This, as to Kenate (2005), can directly or indirectly affect educational process. Women, complying with what the society assumes, are not interested to go to school for school is thought to be for men thereby limiting their enrollment rate. Genet, based on her finding, reported that girls because of societal outlooks are less motivated to enroll in schools (1991). However, the enrollment is not a problem for others like Lind and Johnston (1990) as women enrollment rate exceeds that of men in some instances. But it takes longer for women to finish some courses than men, as there is high rate of drop out and absenteeism, which indirectly affects the further enrollment of women in education.

4.2 Academic performance and Participation

As repeatedly mentioned in our aforementioned discussion, though females come to school, women are not motivated to work hard and be high achievers as boys because of various cultural factors. In explaining the effects of culture on women schooling, Bown (1990) said that culture, which ascribes schooling to males, can have negative effects on efforts at women literacy.

With regard to the reason behind low achievement, different scholars give different explanations; Khera (2007), for instance, noted that fear of success can be one. As to him, if one is afraid that he/she may or may not be successful, this will result in tension and bring about failure. On the other hand, fear of success was also given as a reason for low achievement of girls in the school by Spender and Sarah (1980) (cited in Measor and Sikes, 1992:103), but different from the explanation given by Khera. According to them, based on the gender role perception of the society, women success is considered as abnormal. Hence, women judge academic success as being 'unfeminine'. So, women opt, either for popularity or achievement. On one hand, their achievement, they fear, bring about disapproval from the larger society and on the other hand, they face 'a lonely' and 'unattached existence', if they become a successful women. Similarly, cited by Measor and Sikes, again, the findings of Measor and woods (1984) witnessed that academically successful girls in their research were faced with difficulties that they were 'isolated' and had few friends (1992:103). Meighan (1986) also said, “Girls who deviate from the expectation risk acquiring deviant label of dominating, talkative, or intellectual, and an accompanying set of penalties.” Since, women most of the time, do not want to deviate from the norms and values of the society, as Measor and Sikes (1992) said, “girls may well find it more threatening to be unfeminine than to be successful…” they are afraid in case they become successful, fear of success. Therefore, the social values held towards women education are strong that it forces women to devote their education in favor of the social norms and values.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that women who grew up having the same cultural role
expectations and behaviors as men have confidence and positive self-concept about themselves and their involvement in FAL too is assumed to be positive from the aforementioned discussion than those who grew up having roles and behaviors different from that of men. Moreover, the cultural roles of women have a decisive role on women’s education and their developmental roles in society. As many educators underlined, the gender role of women and how they were socialized towards these make them think that they are appropriate only at home and hence reluctant to be enrolled in the school, less expectant of success and choose those subjects which either provide them the opportunity to fulfill or are consistent with their self-image.

Hence, from the arguments among educators it can be concluded that governmental and non-governmental agencies should work on these socio-cultural factors which result in limited role of women to bring equity. In this case, in Ethiopia as it is indicated in this review of the previous treated studies especially related to women equality there are gender stereotypes that affect women take part in decision making at all levels. Women gender roles together with their negative perceptions are strong factors that retard women all rounded participation in development programs such as FAL. So, it is necessary to enhance women involvement in all social, economic and political areas by empowering them through education. In doing this, all concerned bodies need to help the societies change the existing negative perceptions and myths of women to create gender fair society. Moreover, concerned bodies can use media and schools as instruments of changing the negative stereotypes of the society about women.

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