

Voices of Tigray Women on the 2020 Election: The Freedom to Vote

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Abstract

Between 1974 to 1991 the Tigray women played a remarkable role in the country's history. Realizing the unfair gender relations and its implication for socio-economic and political development they joined the armed struggle which led to the inclusion of women in national/regional politics. Subsequently, a normative question of gender norms was clearly defined; political and other public positions that disregarded women slowly diminished.

There are still positive questions raised due to the mis-implementation of laws and policies, but Tigray women hoped that the gap can be narrowed as democracy progresses, and when they are able to elect their representatives. While expecting more in the six-round national and regional election of Ethiopia, which was supposed to be in April 2020, the Tigray women had been told due to COVID-19 the sixth-round election has been postponed/canceled for an unlimited period.

Tigray women challenged this action, firstly; the decision was without public participation, and secondly; the time when COVID-19 will become harmless was unknown. An informant articulated the danger of the current Ethiopian government; omissions threatened to breach or breached the constitutional order. Consequently, Tigray women resisted the decision saying, "**Tigray will vote**" following the regional laws as the constitution grants.

This paper presents why Tigray women were in favor of having an election unlike a decision made at the federal, which was explained using the warm glow theory. To conduct this study primary and secondary data were collected using snowball sampling that was analyzed by applying qualitative (thematic) analysis. The findings revealed that Tigray women preferred to have an election than canceling, as they deemed it help them to maximize their expected

utility and granted them with warm glow pay-off.

Keywords: Election 2020 in Ethiopia, COVID19, Tigray women, and Freedom of Election

1. Tigray and The Freedom to Vote

1.1 Introduction

In Ethiopia, the election was supposed to be held once every five years, not because it's a trend but it warrants legitimacy as the contractual agreement between the people and the elected government becomes legal and accepted only if the government is elected by the people (Getachew Reda, A spokesman to the Tigray government 2020).

Pre 1991, Ethiopia was in a civil war that forced the young people of Tigray to establish a front called Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF); which picked up arms against Ethiopia's central government, and its elites alleged rampant ethnic oppression and discrimination. During this difficult struggle, TPLF female soldiers constituted 33%, recorded remarkable achievements, and made history by fully participating and performing equally with males (Young, 1997; Lavers, 2014). Unlike what happened in Uganda during the Lord's Resistance Army, where females were abducted and forced into a position of sexual slavery within the rebel community, Tigrayan women have historically been involved in active combat and were highly regarded and respected for performing as strong as men (Veale, 2003). Subsequently, social attitudes and political perceptions underwent considerable changes and society learned the values of gender equality and realized the necessity of including women in the decision-making process.

After 17 years of struggle, (1974-1991) energy and creativity in Tigray are not synonymous with masculinity anymore, Tigray women proved they are equal with men, which led to the inclusion of gender-related provisions as its clearly prescribed in the Ethiopian constitution:

“women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this Constitution, have equal rights with men. Women have the right to the full consultation in the formulation of national development policies, the designing and execution of projects, and particularly in the case of projects affecting the interests of women” (FDRE Constitution 1995, Art. 35(3).”

Gender equality enshrined in Ethiopia's constitution since 1994 and has been defended by the ruling coalition called the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which had a lifespan of 28 years (1991-2018), which was later replaced by a unitary alternative (the Prosperity Party).

During these periods Ethiopia held five terms of elections (once every five years) and the sixth-round national election of the country was supposed to be in April 2020. However, the government (led by Prime Minister Abiy) tried to seek an amendment to the existing constitution and revoked the 2020 election stating it should be postponed until the pandemic (COVID-19) cleared out. Conversely, to most opposition parties, and particularly to the Tigray government, this amendment was illegal for two different reasons. Firstly, the constitutional amendment was made without public consultation and participation of all political parties (it was un-democratic). Second, when COVID-19 will end was not

determined. Unlike in other regions of Ethiopia, the people of Tigray challenged the decision-made following the Ethiopian constitution and based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Burgess, 2013). Most Tigray people claimed Tigray to have its regional election using all the necessary precautions applying the recommendations made by the World Health Organization.

Accordingly, the Tigray government from now on will be (TG) decided to hold the 2020 election to maintain their political freedom. No valid justification was obtained whether the TG decision has followed the Tigray people's feelings or the converse. However, history revealed the Tigray people challenged Emperors, stating the king should also be bound by law and that the appointment of a person to a position of power is neither divinely ordained nor naturally determined (Woldegiyorgis, 2017).

Likewise, the respondents, (Tigray Women from now on will be TW) explained how the decision made by the PM, countervails the constitution and constitutional rights, which made them distrust the federal level. This observation developed a fear that the agenda of Tigray freedom, human rights in general, and gender equity and equality would become in great danger. Therefore, this paper was conducted to formally document women's narrations pertinent to the cancellation of the 2020 Election in Ethiopia, and identified answers to the following questions:

- Does COVID-19, used as an excuse by the Ethiopian government?
- Did the TW prefer postponing the election for an unlimited period or having an election in the presence of COVID-19?
- If the women were in favor of having/canceling the 2020 Election, why?

1.2 Rationale of This Study

Pre 1991, Tw barely held any positions in Ethiopian politics. There are a lot of debates and disagreements on the definition of politics. Arendt (2005) explains this view of politics as:

Politics ... is that men in their freedom can interact with one another without compulsion, force, and rule over one another, as equals among equals, commanding and obeying one another only in emergencies - that is, in times of war - but otherwise managing all their affairs by speaking with and persuading one another. Politics ... is therefore centered around freedom, whereby freedom is understood negatively as not being ruling or being ruled, and positively as a space which can be created only by men and in which each man moves among his peers.

The term "man" in this definition also refers to "woman" (men=women) and reflects the necessity of interaction with the freedom to maintain the interest of one another. TW aggressively struggled to find an equal place in Ethiopian/Tigray politics. Their struggle, commitment, strength, and aspirations were to annul gender inequality and change history. Related to this, Tsegay (1999) noted the main factors for the TW to join the front, which were political justice, development, and social progress, achieving equity, equality, and ratifications passed at the international conventions (The human rights of women, 2006; Olufade, 2013).

The idea for the development of any kind to be successful women who make up a larger proportion of the population, should not be left out emerged because men and women have some potentials and rights to contribute meaningfully to the development of their countries throughout the world and accordingly gender document was created (Kasomo, 2012).

However, even after all this, the system didn't treat women and men equally. Even though laws existed, and diverse conventions passed in some offices gender was used as a tool for receiving resources (gender aid) from donors. In fact, some EX-TPLF women commented on this statement expressing the existence of gender equality during the struggle post. During the war, there was equality between men and women, and equity among all women (Veale, 2003, P. 31). But they expressed their feeling stating "this has been changed after winning the war."

In peacetime, however, women's contribution to the struggle seems to be under-communicated. This silencing implicitly undermined their experience and knowledge gained as fighters and women, upon return to civilian life (Mjaaland, 2004). Therefore, TW were very aware that gender equality had been in the law than in practices but still, they appreciated the small change; granted equality and equity in front of the law.

The aim of this study is to show how the Tigrya women value the freedom they attained even if it's limited and are still challenging the PM after hearing election 2020 will be postponed. To these women political participation and freedom of decision is not an important but necessary criterion; it is a means to decide about the future.

All Tigray people and particularly informants challenged the federal government stating, "government is a representative of people and shouldn't decide without having public consultation. Any decision without public participation is a violation of rights. When individual rights and freedom are violated, citizens can't expect a functioning economy that grants access and opportunity. (views from an informant, civilians interviewed on TV, and other informal dialogues ma).

The women felt that the election would help them not only to secure what they have but to properly implement the opportunity they have been granted by the constitution. They assumed that the Tigray people's election is not a gift that can be given or revoked through the decision of one man, but it's a right that helps to maintain their choice, keep their preferences, and evade an autocratic government.

Therefore, the view collected from the informant and majority underlines none of these civilians were willing to go back to the previous era, a one-man decision. Accordingly, most Tigray people and exclusively women challenged resonating "Tigray will vote". Therefore, this paper is conducted to assess what was the core justification of Tegar for such a reaction. The study was conducted based on the novel theory of social preferences under risk adopted. However, the social situations of risk might make both the instrumental and expressive dimensions salient.

2. Literature Review

Studies related to women's participation in politics and its effect, and particularly women's participation in electoral politics in Tigray, the northern part of Ethiopia are very low. To address this gap, related reviews from other African countries and regions of Ethiopia were used believing that would suffice.

Unlike other African countries where the foundation for the current status of women was laid by a Eurocentric educational system that was inherited from colonialism, the system in Ethiopia initially was designed around the informal economic sector (feudalism) where gender roles are prescribed; put women as subordinators (Logan and Bratton, 2006). Similar to other African countries in the Tigray region, society's perception of women for the most part was unnoticed, sometimes negative, and their capabilities and capacities were virtually unrecognizable. Moreover, society used to legitimize the underestimation and exclusion of women from participation in politics and other decision-making (Note 1).

All of these justify how a culture used to force women to value themselves with low self-esteem because women were more ambivalent; they consistently offer more "don't know" or other null or neutral responses (Adhiambo-Oduol, 2003)

This had a major impact on the micro (women) and macro (national) economic performances of Tigray women, nurturing men to lead in different political and public positions. However, the drive to promote women in decision-making positions worldwide gained momentum during the 1980s, and early 1990s. TW proved that they are equal to men after joining the struggle. Following the political, economic, and ideological changes made through internal struggle, and external influences gender got space in Ethiopian politics and was in 1990 (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>).

The internal change came particularly after Tigray women joined TPLF, an armed struggle for promoting women's participation in political dispensation which was based on equity, equality, and development (Tsegay, 1999) but little has been documented about all these (Jenny, 1990).

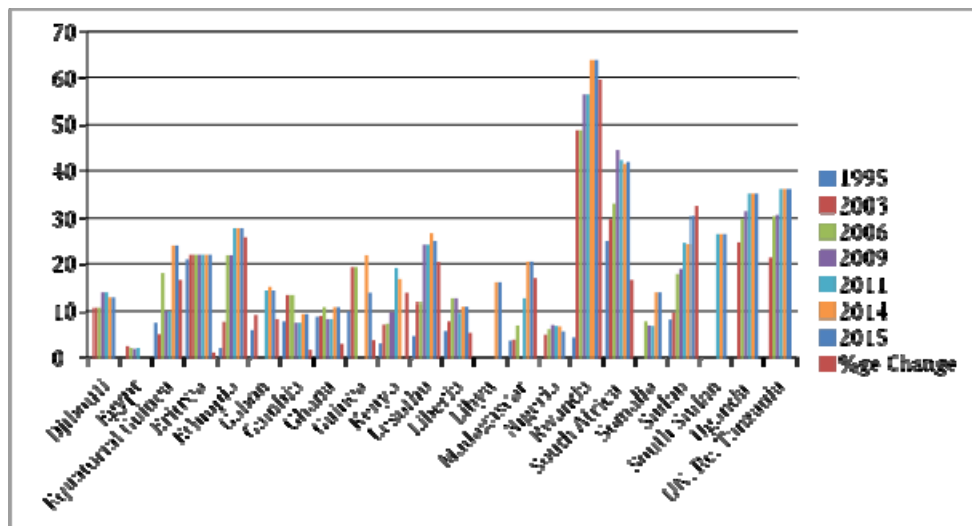
Externally diverse conventions aimed at improving women's well-being were made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in 1995 played a crucial role that called for at least 30% representation by women in national governments (Muriaas, Tønnessen, & Wang, 2013). In September 2000, at the UN Millennium Summit in New York, world leaders pledged to "promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable" (<https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents>).

The quota law initiative coupled with political dedications made in each country fostered the inclusion of gender in development and decision-making in Africa, (Kasomo, 2012). Of the Sub-Saharan African countries, Mozambique led women's political inclusion and held 25.2% of the parliamentary seats in 1997. In 1998, South African women held 28.8% of the parliamentary seats which ranks South Africa 7th out of 107. Countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia (1995), Uganda (since 2001), and South Africa (since 1999), made substantial

progress towards the 30% goal over the last 20 or more years (Asiedu et al. 2017, unpublished). Despite these accomplishments, Uganda's parliament is 25% female, while women's presence in South Africa's parliament is approximately one-third (Goetz & Hassim, 2003). Moreover, McEwan (2003) also reported the underrepresentation of women within South African local government structures.

This implies that in most of the African countries' conventions; Quota laws served as a tool among many to engender equity, particularly when accompanied by broader cultural and institutional change (Staudt, 1998). Subsequently, the level of women's representation in parliament in sub-Saharan Africa became higher than in many wealthier countries (<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2004/women-break-african-politics3>).

The graph below shows the African classification of the percentage of women in the lower house from 1995 to 2015.



Sources: Inter-parliamentary Union (PU)/www.ipu.org (only selected countries)

The above chart shows countries that have made substantial progress towards the 30% goal over the past 20 or more years. The highest change recorded was in Rwanda, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania. On the other hand, countries with the least change were Egypt, Nigeria, and the Gambia. Within the 20-year period, the participation of women in Ethiopia also rose from 2 to 27.8, with an overall change of 25.8%.

Besides the institutional rights that promoted women's participation in Ethiopian politics a number of strategic action-oriented programs that motivate women's participation was promogulated. The provision of gender quotas for female students after finishing high school to enter higher education was one.

These strategies were implemented with the presumption of there is a positive relationship between education and political participation. Knowledge requirements are high for democratic citizens (Galston, 2001).

Subsequently, Electoral gender quotas targeting a minimum of 30% female candidates at the

federal level had been uniformly implemented. Following this, even small administrative units (region, wereda, zone) implemented the same law, and women's participation/representation in politics become high throughout the country. Having laws and institutions helped to raise women's participation in politics in both, rural and urban areas (Krook, 2010; Luhiste, 2015; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995, women in Indonesia).

The possession of leadership in top political positions in Africa and in Ethiopia is evidence that the role of implementing national laws and adopting international conventions. Among the top African countries, a high percentage of women in ministerial positions were Rwanda (51.9%), South Africa (48.6%), Ethiopia (47.6%), Seychelles (45.5%), Uganda (36.7%), and Mali (34.4%). The lowest percentage in Africa was in Morocco (5.6%), which has only one female minister in a cabinet of 18. Other countries with fewer than 10% women ministers include Nigeria (8%), Mauritius (8.7%), and Sudan (9.5%) (<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2019-july-2019/african-women-politics-miles-go-parity-achieved>).

Generally, for women's representation in politics to be high or low in addition to institutional arrangement, and transformation of political culture their level of education, and the ideological orientation of the leading politicians in the country matters (Ndlovu, S., & Mutale, S.B. 2013). However, there are still arguments on the role of increasing numbers of women in the HPR. While there are groups that deem women who are a member of the parliament takes care of the needs and advantages of their voters (Swers 2002, and Reingold 2000, Tremblay, 2007). The second group argues stating once women are voted, they often have a marginal effect to vote and decide on matters related to women. Previous studies indicate this could happen either due to an institutional gap, or a lack of competitive skill. The advent of electoral authoritarianism, and proportional rules, in combination with the increased 'party magnitude' of the pro-government party, continued to exert expectedly positive effects; yet these effects were offset by the decreased competitiveness (Golosov, 2014).

The above argument highlights participation does not guarantee that women's problems are solved (Wagnerud, 2009). There is practical evidence in most African countries where the Tigray case can be one. To some parliamentarian women, their presence in the House of Parliament is to possess power and once they enter the HPR they often forget their promises (Stockemer, 2013). This confirms that the identity of the legislator matters for policy determinations (Osborne & Slivinski 1996; Besley & Coate, 1997).

In Tigray impact of quota helped to narrow the gender gap in politics in the period 2000-2018 but political participation failed to address the economic question. Of the total poverty in Tigray (29%) the total number of women affected by poverty in the region shows 43% (Regional Survey, 2019). This confirms how policies designed and development programs introduced failed to address the economic need of marginalized women. Once progress was measured in micro-steps the struggle has a long way to go. Given these general debates, the reason why women vote is to make sure that their preference is given weight in the parliament though they had some reservations in the past. The opportunity to vote ensures that their voices are heard, their demand is considered, and their concerns are addressed

(UNDP 2005). Tigray women were pro of election, and this ideological stand was in line with the philosophy of the noble price winner Sen (1999), who presents freedom as a crucial guiding factor for any economic, and/or political related matters.

It's an inclination to this argument that the Tigray people in general and particularly Tigrayan women preferred to vote and was to decide about their future political and economic processes. All echoed one theme: "to vote is our constitutional right, and we are going to elect as an election is the means to determine our leader that decides about our future demands."

2.1 Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is based on the theory of ethics of voting (the rationality and morality of voting): is it rational for an individual to vote? This is a question that challenges one of the principles of economics, "Rational people decide at the margin" (Mankiw, Kneebone, & McKenzie, 2019).

The rational choice approach typically assumes that an individual receives instrumental benefits, which depends on the effect their vote might have on the outcome, which is irrational because it doesn't satisfy the axiom of Expected Utility from now on will be EU. Nevertheless, other theories also suggest that beyond investment benefits, individuals receive value from expressing their preferences (Tontrup, & Morton, 2015, p1). This theory fits the election 2020 decision made in Tigray and is similar to the theory of ethics of voting.

Despite the decision made at the federal level; Revoking election (R) fearing COVID-19, or having election (E), a preference made by Tegar following their constitutional rights. They preferred the second (E); a strategic decision, which is very much linked to the theory of "Ethics of Voting". Their decision was to choose the one that maximizes their EU given the alternatives. To indicate how this theory is linked to the EU, the writers of this paper used the following presumptions that are formulated following the actual scenarios at the time of the 2020 election in Tigray, the northern part of Ethiopia. Tigray people opted to have an election believing their constitutional right allows them. The assumptions include:

1. Voting for Tegar People (women) is a constitutional right, which is supposed to be held once in five years. April 2020 was supposed to be the 6th round election in Ethiopia. A constitutional right to be maintained if there were some tolerable treats.
2. COVID-19 is a global pandemic that affects the lives of individuals globally and can be protected following some precautions.
3. In the absence of accountable government (that refutes people participation, and authoritarian type) protection of COVID19, or implementation of laws that protect the economic and political interest of people is unthinkable. Therefore, to avoid the worst (public or private) scenarios Tigray people assumed election is necessary.

Respondents prefer to vote because they presumed the opportunity cost of an election in Tigray is only COVID-19 keeping other issues constantly. Likewise, the respondents stood for E believing COVID 19 is protectable applying all precautions.

To the Tigray people, an election was seen as a means of having a leader that supported their expectations (maximizing their expected utility). However, since there is a conflict that arises when a behavior satisfies axioms it's considered irrational behavior. The hope was that the outcome of the vote would dictate what it would be, but the reality might lead to the "paradoxes of voting" (Downs 1957). (Note 2)

Moreover, Tigray people perceived the act of voting as a civic duty, independent of the social, political, and/or economic consequences of individual decisions (Evren & Minardi, 2011, p.1). Voters were inspired by the intrinsic pleasure associated with the form of pro-social behavior, which is often referred to as "warm glow motivation". Nevertheless, controversies might arise as the government of Ethiopia contemplated the activity of "voting" made by the Tigran people as unreasonable and illogical, which ended up in disagreement that violates the theory of expected utility. (Note 3)

The central feature of the warm glow model is observationally meaningful, as It's a model used to accommodate a wide range of behavior, including voting in large elections, and remains as axiomatized. The intuition is straightforward and in line with the choices made to any normal goods. If bundles A and B are both affordable and bundle A is chosen (A is revealed preferred to B), then if B is chosen at a different set of prices, it must be that A is not affordable at those prices (Hands, 2017). Applying this theory, Tigray preferred to have an election in the presence of a pandemic as canceling was deemed not affordable, or an election was chosen. In other words, Election, E (like that of bundle A) was preferred because it was also affordable. On the other hand, revoking election; R (like that of bundle B) was expected to have higher costs in normal circumstances; it's not only undemocratic but plans to establish illiberal Democracy. Illiberal democrats are characterized by attacking independent institutions, undermining the rule of law, and violating the right of minorities after they ensure that they are in power. This is exactly what Abiy is, he used words until he come to power and slowly start to attack TPLF (who are his opponents ideologically) and Tigray people (<https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-undemocratic-dilemma>).

The choices of the Tigray people were associated with the theory pioneered by Sen (1988), connected to the measurement of freedom associated with the menu (choice sets). The research conveys the importance of freedom while making choices. A certain degree of freedom of choice is more valuable for decision-makers than the alternatives the consumer would select from the set, which is free of errors. But the election in Tigray might be constrained by diverse unexpected outcomes if the federal government stand is against "E".

Despite there being possible risks, the respondents still opt for "E", and their decision was merely pro-social behavior, which departs from the traditional approach that explains such behavior with the classical notion of altruism (Evren & Minardi, 2011). They viewed that when their preferences are violated (forced to don't vote) the democratic right of Tigray will be in danger, and the agenda of gender equality will be at risk. (Note 4) Moreover, their constitutional right of "regional autonomy and independence could be at a great risk that could also put the region/entire country in jeopardy challenging the little freedom attained as a result of having the constitution. All this presumption makes the choice made by the

respondents free of error.

In this regard, the voter's decision satisfies both; the instrumental (Note 5), and expressive (Note 6) theory of voting. This implies that the goal of Tigray women was directly and indirectly connected to the very nature of the choices under consideration (Borah, 2019). Voters vote for the alternative they regard as morally superior, which is prosocial behavior under risk. Since voters have the feeling that rather than in a situation when an election is revoked due to the global pandemic voting was expected to maximize their Expected utility, and minimize their expected risk provided if both; “R” and “E” are given as free choices similar to both “A” and “B” was considered as affordable goods.

Generally, Tigray people felt the efficiency and effectiveness of the winning candidate in Tigray, and the ability to bargain with the federal government would maintain the interest of Tigray people (the region) and particularly the interest of Tigray women, which is a function of their vote (election) and is instrumental. However, contextualizing their narration respondents said their decision to vote was also an “expressive theory of voting”; the women's fidelity to the current government (TPLF) is still intact. Respondents' argument for pre-election was to express their values; both, moral and/or ideology, which is beyond influencing the electoral outcome, which they hold is significant.

Summing up, the argument towards the act of voting for a certain alternative is expressively compelling. This may not only be because of the costs they paid during the time of struggle, but it was also due to the virtual commitment made by the Tigray government, provision of access and opportunities that relatively helped to have better well-being “welfare”, and fear of the federal government decision on Tigray might reverse the achievements made so far, including the authority of regional autonomy.

3. Data and Methodology

This study drew on one-on-one interviews with nearly 40 Tigray women in addition to the media interview recorded, and other documentation reviewed. The formally obtained information was also complemented by the informal discussions made with individual and group discussions made. The objective of the study was to:

- Indicate the contribution of Tigray women to the political economy of the region.
- to identify the perception of Tigray women about the 2020 Election in Ethiopia, decisions taken at the federal government level, and how it was perceived.
- To present how women value election, and why they preferred to have an election even in the presence of a pandemic.

The center of the analysis is mainly based on information obtained from these women in addition to other information gathered from interviews and panel discussions made with key informants by the state media (Demtsi Weyane) pre of the regional election. Emphasis was: Identifying whether the respondents were in favor of motions passed at the federal: postponing of election 2020 due to COVID-1, or against; having election protecting COVID 19. The interviewees were asked different questions. The following are some of the

open-ended questions:

1. What is an Election for Tigray people in general and for Tigray women in particular? Do you think the current decision made by the federal government violates the freedom of individuals and the constitutional rights of Tegraru?
2. Was the decision of the Ethiopian government to protect citizens, or to extend its power in the name of maintaining Ethiopian unity, replacing the system of federalism with centralism?
3. Whether the Tigray women are in favor of having an election, or postponing until COVID-19 is cleared out (1 and/or 2), what was their main justification?

All the respondents (a total of 40) (Note 7) have been interviewed in Tigray and were from all woredas (Note 8) of Tigray. Respondents were selected using a snowballing-effect approach, one interview led to another with the help of respondents and private journalists (Note 9) who provided information. The selection was based on their histories and involvement in the regional politics/administration. Questions asked were what an election to these target groups is and how the decision of the federal government was perceived” Before the research session began consent forms were obtained from all participants.

After ensuring that respondents were willing to provide the necessary information, share their old histories openly, all their expressions were audio-recorded. Yet, considering the sensitivity of the information given to this study, the names and the details of respondents remained anonymous. Following the interviews, a thematic analysis (TA) was applied. (Note 10) Focuses were to analyze the critical perception of Tigray women on the 2020 election in Ethiopia. In addition, opinions of the community, mainly the views from the key actors (heard on TV, and information shared in different newspapers), and verbal expressions given by diverse people were also added.

The information gathered was categorized/grouped into the 2020 election in Ethiopia and COVID-19, decisions made at the federal level. This is the same as the interest of the Tigray people in the 2020 election, and freedom of participation for Tigray people.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 COVID 19, Election in Ethiopian, and Federal Government Decision

In countries where democracy is exercised freely holding regular periodic elections is one of the characteristics of democracy (Przeworski, 1999). But in time, unexpected disasters (like Tsunami, COVID19, etc.) elections may potentially introduce greater threats to human life and security. In such circumstances, citizens should decide either by directly participating in the process or through their representatives.

When the COVID19 spread in 2020, elections in 70 countries and territories across the globe had been postponed. On the other hand, the plan in 54 countries for national and subnational elections continued (<https://www.idea.int/2020-annual-report/>). Ethiopia is one of the countries that suspended its election using COVID19 as a case without letting citizens discuss

the matter. Tigray women were disobedient to the federal decision on the 2020 election of Ethiopia asserting that it was undemocratic, illogical, and unreasonable. To these women, interpretation of undemocratic was like the terms given in dated back research, as it alluded to any conduct by an individual, a group of individuals, a non-state actor, or a government seriously inimical to the enjoyment and the exercise of the right to democracy (Manirakiza, 2019).

On election 2020 in Ethiopia and how the circumstance should be handled has rarely been discussed. A court case battle ensued through the one man's decision "PM of Ethiopia" supported by his allies without letting political representatives put their remarks. The Supreme Court blocked an executive order by the federal government to suspend the 2020 election in Ethiopia for an unlimited period.

An informant from the rural area of Tigray was more critical of the actions of the federal government of Ethiopia as undemocratic, not only for decisions made related to the election but the shutting down of Tigray media; there was a repeated attempt made by the federal government shutting down the regional media called Demtsi-Weyane. Most said as a society we have the right to have access to media and information, and a right to decide. As a leader of the country, the PM has the responsibility to provide open access. Government sectors are ready to provide the information required if it does not fall under the exemption clause (Ahmad & Mohd Dian, 2011). However, in Tigray the case the government has failed in its accountability to its people and denied their constitutional rights such as access to media, the right to vote, the right to participate, and the right to decide.

The postponement of the election was predominantly because of the political interests of the PM and his incumbents (prosperity party). History reveals that every election (US election) year has a major pandemic (disease) outbreak. The list of diseases was SARS, Avian flu, Swine flu, MERS, Ebola, and Zika matching them up to the years 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 but their election was not canceled (<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-election-year-diseases-idUSKBN20S2X0>).

Unlike these histories, Abiy used COVID19 predominantly to fulfill his political interest (possessing power and becoming a king; his mom's dream). Almost all opposition parties have agreed on this and they said: COVID19 served as a structural advantage to PM of Ethiopia. He used it as a tool to introduce system reengineering, abolishing federalism, and dismantling the already implanted national laws (the constitution was not removed but violated). His plan was to come up with a new election date and year that assist him to buy more time, and, in the process, the federal government can create a fertile ground to have full access to editorial influences over the state media outlets (Norris and van Es, 2016 Norris, Van Es, & Fennis, 2015). The Federal Government used the global pandemic as a reason; COVID 19 served Abiy's interest.

Following his verbal assault, and violation of laws (Note 11) Tigray people in general, and the regional government critically analyzed the hidden agenda of the federal government of Ethiopia; disseminating hate propaganda and dehumanization of Tegararu. Every decision of the Federal Government was aimed at breaking down the psychological and social status of

the society as history reveals Tigray is a region with an open, vibrant, and diverse society that strongly believes in freedom.

Since the Tigray Government and its people predict the FG intention TG tried to challenge every decision made despite political decisions and dialogue was almost blocked. In fact, considering the past behavior of the PM, and analyzing his moves the government of Tigray has repeatedly called on international institutions to intervene. There was a repeated call, a letter that points out the danger of the PM move, the regional government stressed in diverse letters: “if this is not solved it might lead to a violent war” (Note 12).

This projection was made following the warning and verbal expression of the PM. Pre-war he has clearly mentioned what the outcome would be if the decision of the Federal Government is not respected. He gave a verbal warning stating “if ever Tigray held election mothers in Tigray will cry, children will die, and the entire region will be in chaos”. However, this order did dissuade the Tigray people as they knew their decision to vote was constitutional and is both, expressive and instrumental: “we vote to maintain our independence rights” (Meresa, 2020).

Therefore, if the PM of Ethiopia was bounded by the principles of democratic decision and freedom, holding the 2020 election in Ethiopia as possible. Most political analysts have explained how the government of Ethiopia used the pandemic to adjust its political strategies; replace federalism with centralism and undermine the constitution of an independent right of the region (Article 39 of the constitution).

4.2 Why Were Tigray Women Against the Decision Made at the Federal Government?

Pre of answering the above question respondents were initially asked: what is a vote? Those who lived in town knew the term and the process since their childhood when an election was held by an authoritarian government (1974-1991).

Those who lived in rural areas they are familiar with the term since the 1980s when TPLF held an election to appoint people who take care of land administration, and its purpose served as a lesson (participation, election, decision, majority vote, etc.). To TPLF, it helped to have best practices, build capacity (administrative system), and helped to create trust. In fact, some informants recall these historical facts which made them condemn the decision at the federal level “Cancelling the 2020 Election” and have commented stating: the 2020 election in Tigray will neither be canceled nor postponed because it’s not our preference. Tigray knows how to handle risks not only in normal circumstances but even in abnormal situations (informants).

4.2.1 Women and Their Preferences to Vote During the Global Pandemic

The respondent’s opportunity cost of voting was COVID19 a systematic preference made taking all unexpected risks into consideration. Their reply was considering the political advantage of the pre/post-1991 election held in Tigray. Though their opinion sounds free of subjective judgments it was also purely objective reasoning “understanding the importance of freedom and maintaining democratic rights”. Respondents justify their preference to vote as

to have a government that will take care of their deeds. They further explained comparing their well-being pre-1991 and post 1991 where decisions were relatively based on majority rule to some extent. Despite exercising the principle of democracy was still in question, they still appreciated post-1991 economic and political strategy acknowledging the past problems, realizing the achievements, and hoping it would improve only if they voted. They said relatively having a right to decide, and participate would grant better economic, social, and political advantages.

Moreover, their remark was based on the unprecedented problems that happened in Tigray since 2018 (after PM came to power), as the region had been put in diverse problems. (Note 13) The respondents strongly believed having had the election in Tigray would have helped to avoid the current sabotage (change the national government peacefully) and eliminate unexpected political shocks (dictatorship, marginalization, elite's decision, etc.). All participants accentuated how democratic rights at present were at greater risk not only in Tigray but in all parts of Ethiopia at large. These informants underlined the necessity of having an election as an exit to the designed quagmires. To these women the overall plan set, procedures applied, and the final decision made at the federal level (following the PM order) is undemocratic which made the incumbent Ethiopian leaders stay in power and is beyond the procedures prescribed in the Constitution (All informant).

The voters said: Ethiopia follows a parliamentary system and power is supposed to be on the people (Note 14) and Tigray (as a region) should have the ability both, to enjoy and exercise their political sovereignty. The right to participate freely in political processes aimed at political, economic, or social institutions situated in a proper place (informant from Edag-Arbi).

Apparently, present-day Ethiopia puts the rights of the Tigray people at a higher risk, both politically and economically. Equally, they were afraid that the agenda of gender in general and women empowerment would go to its subordinate position as it used to be. Generally pertinent to the decision on the 2020 election in Ethiopia the respondents (100%) underlined the decision made at the federal is undemocratic stating:

Since the PM's action is not in favor of the Tigray peoples' economic, political, and social advantages it's hard to rely on his decision. Rather, the Tigray government has to take the responsibility for its people, and people must vote to have an accountable government that sustains their needs; preserves people's freedom. To these groups the link between freedom and democracy is straightforward and they said "we want to vote on who will coerce us"

The respondents could have this standby by recalling the history of Tigray where some were a part of the struggle by being directly involved and some indirectly participated just because of being in the area where the 17 years of struggle took place. All this made them understand the advantages of relative freedom, and the costs of unfreedom. It's following this experience they commented on the PM's decision on the election made; all echoed in the same tune (The informant from *sheraro*) stating:

Freedom is a right that guides action and triggers resistance against the illegitimate action of

the PM or others.

An informant from Tahetay Koraro also exclusively added a critic quoting the story she has been hearing during the 1970s by one of the freedom fighters. She recalled everything and said:

the people who slept forever 'our martyrs' have told us to, don't admit to any leader who is against freedom. Therefore, we "women" as part of the Tigray people knew what freedom is, and we would like to maintain this at any cost.

To those women, the opportunity cost of freedom can be anything, and they are ready to bear it even in the case of uncertain decisions (like the election in 2020). This shows how respondents perceived the relationship between individual freedoms and social development, which is important and goes beyond the constitutional convention. What respondents expected from the election was access and opportunity that maintained their decision and advanced their wellbeing. However, the institutional arrangement for well-being is influenced by the exercise of people's freedom through the liberty to participate in social choice and the public decision that impedes the progress of these opportunities (Putnam, 1993).

Another informant continued challenging the PM's decision (canceling the election) she began with a question of: If the PM cares for Tigray and wants to protect people from COVID-19 then why was the media exclusively shutdown only in Tigray?

She said instead it implies that the PM is falling under the exemption clause. She even demanded the involvement of the international institutions stating: the international organization should know that the people of Tigray have the right to have access to information both locally/nationally and internationally. Hence, instead of canceling the 2020 election using COVID-19 as a reason, it would have been better to equip the people of Tigray with the necessary information from all corners of the world, which is vital not only to protect the pandemic but also to run regular daily affairs doing all precautionary measures.

She added:

the impact of COVID-19 would be severe when people are blocked from information, denied their rights, lack access to international media, evicted right to vote, and forced to be led by an illegitimate government.

Following this critique, the majority of respondents gave their remarks stating:

Since the PM is dictating Tigray people and trying to send his comrades to administer Tigray people we should have to stand together and say no to this dictatorship: "we have the right to vote, we are ready to elect our legitimate government that takes care of all our needs, saying no to the federal government." Even if any coercion comes, Tigray people shall continue resisting, fighters never fear any political costs, and our history also revealed that.

In addition to the above narrations that show the PM's decision is undemocratic, all informants said the decision of the PM is also unreasonable. Most (85% of the respondents) said:

Dictating a region “you don’t have the right to elect your leader is the same as forcing an adult woman to live with her husband even if she doesn't like him.” This metaphor underlines the necessity of choosing a leader.

Accordingly 85% of the informants paraphrased the above metaphor as follows:

The lives of one family and particularly the relationship between husband and wife will always be like a honeymoon provided they are together by choice, have common objectives established following their choices, and appreciate each other's decisions. Otherwise, it would be like a prison and their relationship will not last long. In the past, our parents were choosing our partner (husband), and likewise, the king who was in Addis Ababa palace used to appoint leaders of Tigray. These all are old practices and are valid anymore we fought for 17 years to abolish it, and have administrative authority that grants freedom.

This statement points to choosing a leader if the society had expected a better functioning economic and political system where society has an equal chance of participation. It also designates the necessity of freedom for people; where the freedom to vote is one of the values of democracy that relatively Tigray people have practiced in the past 25 years, and they still want to have broader freedom instead. The respondents said, “we want to have an elected government who will broaden the scope of democracy, set us free to decide about political and economic needs, help us to exercise our rights, be accountable, and grants us better access and opportunities. All these can be ensured only if we vote.” Her statement points to the necessity of domestic support for democracy that tends to increase when elections are not marred by a tyrannical government like Abiy, who tends to make all public decisions without public participation.

To sum up, all respondents underlined that the 2020 election in Tigray is necessary. Tigray will vote to elect a government that maintains peoples’ choices. If not, the Tigray people will seek other alternatives following article 39 of the constitution, self-determination. Despite the lack of common and binding agreement on this article the Tigray people and particularly the informants clearly articulate what that means, and most of them are aware of their belief that this is a constitutional right, it grants autonomy to each region (Berhe, 2004). They reported that self-determination was understood to mean autonomy or self-rule for Tigray.

4.3 Vote and Tigray Women: A Comparative Analysis

All informants preferred to vote as they have been politically orientated that with all its limitations the comparative advantage of having a leader voted by the majority is better than one man dictating all. They deem it helps to build a democratic society and argues it’s the only way individuals can influence government decisions. The term democracy in this context refers to: “...That institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter, 1987, p. 269).

Despite the nature of politics in Africa is divide and rule (F. Bethke, 2012), a strategy for leaders to sustain power by exploiting differences among potential rivals, political parties stake virtually everything in the accumulation and retention of power and considered election

as a discounted value to the Tigray people building democracy is a stepwise process. They hoped 'election would help to have a government that solves conflict, maintains citizens' preferences, and broadens the political space. To the informant's elections empower ordinary citizens to choose among contestants for top political office-clearly promotes both sorts of rules(<https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/06/the-country-thats-never-had-an-electionm>).

Moreover, to the people of Tigray who fought for 17 years to destroy authoritarian rule, election/voting is a fundamental human right (all informants), though they know that it is not been fully enforced in the region in the past years. Their preference to vote was rationalized using the instance of the neighboring country [Eritrea]. A country under authoritarian rule and guided by idiosyncratic strategies to garner political support which effect diverse economic and political implications because it's one-man rules everyone which led to the increasing displacement of women and children, and mounting migration.

Past economic and political problems of Ethiopia (when the country was under the authoritarian rule) were also additional evidence used to vindicate why respondents preferred to vote following the theme of "Tigray will vote." They suppose they are more likely to hold elected leaders accountable for their actions (Putnam, 1993). Respondents clearly knew that electing their leader would help them to attain their competitive advantages. If their prediction is correct, then by hypothesis having an election in the presence of COVID-19 is better than postponing or canceling, which fits the warm glow model/ theory. They act to aspire even if the action taken is costly and possibly consequential (Revealed Prefer).

To indicate how voting/election of the respondents fits the theory of consumer behavior (theory of revealed preference) a modified standard formulation of warm glow theory that combines instrumental and warm glow pay-off (Cherepanov, Feddersen, & Sandroni, 2013), for choosing to vote (V), which is the same as "E" in Tigray is presented as follows. (Note 15)

$$U(V)=\{U(V)+D \quad \text{if } V \text{ is an aspiration } U(V) \text{ otherwise} \quad (\text{eq.1})$$

$U(V) + D$ An aspiration refers to voting in the presence of COVID-19, or $U(V)$ Otherwise

Where $U(V) + D$ is the instrumental pay-off associated with the choice to elect given by (V), and $D > 0$ is the warm glow pay-off received when the respondents desire to have an election (V) in the presence of COVID-19, which is similar to the earlier studies (Ricker and Order Shock, 1968 cited in Cherepanov, V.; Feddersen, T.; and Sandroni, A. 2013).

The pay-off to vote is given by:

$$\rho\Delta u-C+D$$

Were

ρ =Probability of people to elect/vote is pivotal

Δu =Difference in pay-off between having an election and canceling because of COVID-19

C =Cost of having an election

D=Warm glow pay-off received by having an election in uncertain situations (presence of COVID-19)

The respondents preferred to elect expecting pay-off and presuming it would be positive. The idea is that aspiration is chosen following the prediction of sacrifices (cost of election) will not be too large. However, it should be noted that the cost of an election, in this case, refers to the process, procedure, and result of the election associated with the election only. Any cost that comes because of political conflict that arises between those who believe in the people's voice (Tigray government) and those who think no democracy for a small region is not part of the predicted cost. However, any possible cost that could also come just because of the difference in the value of democracy still refers to aspiration though it's costly (both, material, and human) as without it it's impossible to have lasting freedom. In addition, this informal interview made with some people of Tigray shows their predicted cost even if the federal government believes in no democracy when they held the election. Informants expressed:

"The cost expected when an election is held is least than when it is not. The Tigray people never had been accommodating to any of the orders that come from central and what is happening in 2020 is repeating history that we must defend."

Therefore, the choice made by the respondents from the given alternatives is determined by the preference relation of an aspiration function and tolerance function. (Note 16) This is like the basics stated in the warm glow pay-off theory shows why respondents preferred to vote/elect and is explained as follows:

D is a decision-maker (in this case respondents) who faces a set of choices over subsets of a finite set of alternatives V . A nonempty subset of alternatives

$B \subseteq V$ is called an issue.

Let B be an issue with at least two alternatives. A choice function is mapping.

$C: B \rightarrow V$ Such that $C(B) \in V$ for every $B \in B$.

An aspiration function is a mapping $A: B \rightarrow V$ such that $A(B) \in B$

For every $B \in B$. Respondents' actual choices may differ from their aspirations, so we call choice function C an actual choice function.

Given an issue B and aspiration function A , let $1^{A+B}: B \rightarrow \{0,1\}$ be an indicator function such that $1^{A+B} V=1$

If $f(V)=A(B)$. That is, 1^{A+B} indicates the respondent's aspiration is B .

We consider utility functions $U: V \rightarrow R$ such that $(U(V) \neq U(y) \text{ if } V \neq Y)$. So, indifference is ruled out. Given an issue B and aspiration function A , let

$$U^{A+B}(V) = u(V) + D \cdot 1^{A+B}(V)$$

Therefore, respondents aspire to vote believing it will help to maximize their utility and can deliver the warm glow pay-off, and their decision is irrational. In a normal voting situation

where the choice between two people depends on how likely it is for the voter to make a difference by choosing one (D over C). This is similar to the principle of it might be worth \$500 million to win the lottery, but that does not imply it is rational to buy a lottery ticket. This analogy implies choices made in Tigray were irrational decisions as it implied that to have an election is to maintain their preferences; a preferred system (federalism) but first it is determined by aggregate choices, and second there is nothing sure that the outcome of the aggregate preference is respected by the federal government. Despite all these Tigray voters are trying to show revealed their preferences supposing constitutional rights will be respected and even if not they strongly believe that freedom doesn't come at zero cost. They expect counterbalancing effects from the federal government that arises due to the differences in political ideology but still they opt to vote.

To conclude, the informants prefer to have irrational decisions which fit the case of normal and abnormal voting for two general reasons. First, the action and decisions made by the PM since the day of his election were against the Tigray people (violating their constitutional rights), which made them suspect of PM's decision is not to help the Tigray people. Second, the women preferred to vote to have a government that considers their choice and are not ready to be ruled or lead by a government "A king"; too authoritarian and ready to centralize Ethiopia.

4.4 The PM "I Will Be the Seventh King of Ethiopia": The Critique

All respondents critically commented on the dream of the Ethiopian PM, "I will be the seventh king as." Their criticism was: "none of us don't want that system as the King and Emperors have conquered lands and enslaved ethnic groups. Some said recalling the history they heard it was a very cruel administration that treated poorer people and women as an object" (informant from *sheraro, Ofla*). All informants were against the old system (king) presuming the causes of poverty in Tigray, and women's current status (still poorer) is due to the then ill administration, a divide, and rule strategy. Except for the elite women who appeared more frequently in Ethiopian sources themselves and have therefore garnered more attention.

The respondent's argument was valid as history revealed that the political strategy of the King was designed to keep women down by limiting their right to own resources, right to participate in politics, right to decide in public and or private places following the presumption of women are inferior to men (Sultana, 2011). This widened the gender gap between rural and urban areas, among ethnic groups, between landlords and tenants. Tigray women joined the armed struggle with a vision of having a system that identifies them as partners not as sheer objects. Therefore, the respondents' critique of the word of the PM "I will be the 7th-King" was:

"We Tigray women had fought for 17 years to abolish the monarchy system and we will not let the system that enslave women, kept us inferior, denied our rights, and/or kept us as an object to be back. Instead, we are ready to be administered by those that would relatively grant us moral and democratic rights. Therefore, we are going to vote to elect our leader, and we are also ready to serve if we are elected/voted by majorities" (All Informant)

To these informants, election refers to demoting a social structure that undermines the rights of the poorer such as women; the landless; and the disabled.

The reasons informants said why they opted to vote in the presence of a global pandemic include:

1. COVID19 is a global problem that affects everyone but since the lives of individuals don't stop just because of the outbreak of the pandemic it's still possible to have the election. In fact they also exclaimed: If other countries hold their election why not Ethiopia/Tigray? Their second argument was: even if the federal government cancels Tigray can still hold following its constitutional rights.
2. Political history of Tigray reveals elections can take place at any time. This justification was given based on the practical evidence in pre-1991; the election practice held in the absence of a formally accepted government that proves the region can still hold its election.
3. History (2018 o 2019) reveals how Tigray and its people have been targeted. This justifies that the Tigray people must have a government that protects/supports its people.
4. Finally, the respondents also felt the PM of Ethiopia is appointed and not chosen and have the sentiment of Abiy can't continue as a PM.

More than 50% of the respondents said Abiy treat Tigray people like the way Derg treated the region and its people. Majorities in Tigray believe he is *Derg's* junior because:

Similar to the Derg Era (1974-1991) Abiy treated Tigray as a region and its people unfairly. In fact, Derg was better because he was clearly telling Tigray and its people were his enemies. However, Abiy cheated the Tigray people, playing with his words.

All commented on his lip services: *'Ethiopia without Tigray is like a car without an engine'* a speech given when he visited Mekelle after he was appointed as PM in April 2018. But it was in less than a month Tigray people had been attacked, roads from Tigray to Addis were blocked, Ministries (four ministries who were Tigrians) (Note 17) were asked to leave their position without reason, higher officials and especially Generals/Colonel who was originally Tigrayans were tortured and imprisoned. The respondents said:

"It's unusual to have a PM who mistreats his people, and he is a man with a lot of inconsistencies; "he is a pathological liar."

They added:

"We want to vote to have a leader voted by majorities that lobby for us, fight for our rights, grants hope to his people, and protect his people."

Informants from *Edaga-Arbi* also gave other remarks about Abiy authoritarian rule. They said the PM doesn't have the right to deprive the freedom of Tegar. They further remarked:

"If I am not able to be led by the leader whom I elected, or if I am not able to demote the leader who I elected when I find cases my rights are denied; I didn't fought 17 years for this."

She added further and said:

“To overcome this we [respondents] are going to vote to have a government that maintains freedom of individuals, and this right must be uniformly implemented to anyone at any level of administration; at the federal, region, or woreda level.”

To this woman, voting is more than electing a candidate. It's choosing the right person and policy who have their best interest in mind when making a decision. Therefore, to vote is not only about taking an active role in deciding issues regarding women's agenda but is also about the right to use their own language and self-determination. This could significantly contribute to the consolidation of the democratic process of the country and specifically in the Tigray region, a region where people have exclusively paid to have “self-administration” in the constitution.

It's one of the advantages obtained after the formulation of the economic reform program 1993/1994 in Ethiopia. The creation and building of the requisite institutions of government machinery, such as the executive, legislative, and judiciary, including mechanisms ensuring checks and balances including maintaining women's rights, and people participation.

Respondents were also asked what are the advantages of voting? (Almost all replied as follows:

“Election helped us to have a government who is voted by majorities and to some extent it assisted Tigray women to elect their representative even if it was imperfect.”

Additional critique from an informant to the statement “I am the seventh king” was given as follows.

“In the 21st century, it's unfortunate to have a leader (PM) who feels he is a King and repeats the lullaby he heard when he was a baby.”

Her argument was that his mother might have chosen him to be a King, but I don't want to have a leader who has been chosen by his mother. Instead, I want to vote so that I could have an elected government, not a leader that dictates me but rather hears my voice, treats me fairly, and maintain my freedom. This paragraph infers that the respondent doesn't want to have a leader that thinks he is a King who can decide for them. Further, all the respondents joined above view stating:

Tigray women had already developed a growing acceptance of a sort of permanent liminality in which there is no need to return to conventional social structure; relatively an ongoing state of contestation, negotiation, and transformation becomes a way of life (Miller, 2004). Rather they expect a better political and administrative system that overcomes the violation of the existing law and policy, corrects the errors of the past election, and are willing to move forward not backward.

To conclude the Tigray women preferred to vote because they struggle to achieve that right, and experience also showed them its vitality. Election grants them to have their representative as a leader that maintains their interest whenever any decisions are made. Now they want to

vote because they expect better gain from the leader that will represent them. Their overall stand is in line with the principle of democratic values which is implemented in advanced countries. Generally, the following are the 11 reasons why Tigray women prefer to vote and are adopted from the national women suffrage. Unlike in other regions of Ethiopia to Tigray women's voting was preferred because:

- Those who obey the laws should help to choose those who make the laws.
- Laws affect women as much as society.
- Laws that affect women were passed without counseling them and have led to the creation of an unequal society.
- Laws affecting women should include the children's point of view as well as the man's.
- Laws affecting home/region are voted on in every session and unit of administration.
- Women have an experience that would be helpful to legislation that contributes to fairness.
- Having the vote would increase the sense of responsibility among women toward questions of public importance.
- Public-spirited women can create the best institution that minimizes corruption and nepotism.
- More than 80% of women in Tigray are farmers where their bargaining power has started but not matured yet. They need the law because they must maintain equal space and they want to make sure that they can bargain equally on every matter in their future.
- The objection against their having 'Canceling of election' realizing the prejudice and sabotage (what Abiy did to Tigray) and they feel this has to be curbed through voting, believing majority vote gives the best outcome.
- To sum up all reasons is one-it's for the coming good for Tigray and the people of Tigray.

5. Conclusion

This study is conducted to show why Tigray preferred to vote following the echo of "Tigray will vote", considering the case of Tigray women, a northern part of Ethiopia. The goal was to indicate what civil choices are; maintain the right of participation and decision, including participation in the election. Even in times of pandemic, Tigray women preferred to vote to realize their preference and maximize their expected utility which is directly linked to the cost they paid from 1974 to 1991 (the 17 years of struggle). They had fought not only to eliminate authoritarian government but also to demand equality in economic and political space. To achieve this Tigray woman had been part of the war either by being directly involved in the war, or indirectly sending their husband and children, and feeding the army.

This is the reason why they react to the violation of people's right “right to vote and participate” a decision made by the Ethiopian government (PM). They strongly argued decision at the federal (canceling of election) was not to protect the Tigray people from pandemic but rather to reverse the political and administrative system of Ethiopia, replacing federalism with centralism (a system Tigray is against). Related to this almost all respondents said:

“An election is a right granted to us and can't be evicted just because an authoritarian leader preferred to cancel it. This argument comes up analyzing the prospects of Ethiopian politics, comparing the lives of Tigray women in pre and post of revolution, forecasting the intent and plan of the Ethiopian government (Abiy), and realizing the necessity of participation all Tegar'u's.

Therefore, this paper clearly indicates that the ideology of “maintaining freedom of election and participation” which is the stronger predictor of voting for Tigray women is important and necessary. Voting in this case is like the goods consumed or preferred. Given a bundle of goods affordable consumers purchase the good that they believe will maximize their utility. Even in this case, voters preferred “E” over “R” believing that the first will maximize their satisfaction.

Informant's narrations followed by content analysis demonstrate that voting/election rights are directly an issue that affects the lives of people and Tigray women. This vote is not only associated with the electing of a leader that takes care of administrative affairs but it's highly related to the entire livelihood of women which can be better or worse off depending on the leaders and administration type. These include Voting to have freedom concerning the right to own property and land, the right to divorce, concerns about women's health, protection of women against violence and crime, and having equal space in politics.

The Tigray women's election was held in August 2020, it was a historic decision voted by 4.2 million of the six million qualified population. An outcome, which was binding for all people of Tigray living in, and outside the country despite the unexpected risks encountered. It justified how the Tigray people were pro-democracy and freedom and is directly linked to the past political histories. This election was complemented by severe unexpected costs but whether this cost was avoided if the election was canceled is still unclear. Tigray has gone through a lot of banning by the federal government even pre of the election. This points on the origin of the conflict is not holding election but power but still further research is required.

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Notes

Note 1. A den made by women demolishes while she is constructing it, A sewer made by women is upside down, A wall made by women collapses when any animal is roaring.

Note 2. When the expected costs (including opportunity costs) of voting appear to exceed the expected benefits it's surprising that anyone who votes would be irrational.

Note 3. Voting (having election) at the federal level was treated as inappropriate and people were attacked for making choices that put the maximization of expected utility in danger.

Note 4. Since 1991 Tigrayan women have had freedom relatively, which is better than pre of these periods.

Note 5. Instrumental; not merely to vote for the party they expected will be a winner but to show that having an election is necessary It can be rational to vote when the voter's goal is to influence or change the outcome of an election, including the "mandate" the winning candidate receives.

Note 6. Voters vote to express themselves and their reliability to certain groups or ideas.

Note 7. 4 informants from 10 places (some are from town, and some are from Weredas). Names of these towns and wroedas are: Ofla, Edagarbi, Irob, Tahetay Koraro, Laelay Koraro, Shere, Axum, Adewa, and Adigrat.

Note 8. Wereda is the smallest administrative unit of Tigray.

Note 9. Awet Wedaje, an independent journalist and poetess, July 2020.

Note 10. TA is an approach used to explain women's values, experiences, and opinions about

the political prospects of Tigray were an election in Ethiopia/Tigray from the interviewed transcripts.

Note 11. The PM neither put effort nor tried to maintain law and order. He has uttered a lot of verbal insults that point to Tigray people, created a lot of documentary movies, and disseminated hate propaganda that blackmails the previous government and particular effort was to alienate not only TPLF but the whole people of Tigray. In addition, he remain silent when gang thieves robbed Tigray people's property in the Amhara region, Amhara militia blocked roads that connect Tigray with Addis, or extremists killed Tigray students studying in other universities (Baheredar/Gonder).

Note 12. This underlines how conflict is created; political and system ideological differences between the federal and regional governments exacerbated tensions. Indeed, the war crimes in Ethiopia erupted in November 2020.

Note 13. Since Abiy came to power as a PM (he was a member of the EPRDF, a coalition party that governed Ethiopia for 27 years) promising to transform Ethiopian politics into a more democratic type Tigray (northern part of Ethiopia) has been extremely marginalized both, economically and politically. To the extent that roads that connect Addis-Tigray were blocked because of inter-party conflict, the region didn't receive enough support in times of health crisis (COVID-19) and crop failure due to the massive tropical locust worm, etc. in all these circumstances PM didn't intervene. All this made them say he is not our PM.

Note 14. To this informant "Power is supposed to be on people". It refers to: people are supposed to decide on who will lead them, the majority voted will be the leader, and this person will be their representative. This is what they learned in the past 5 elections, and they still want to continue with this trend. Though there is a difference between their expectations and realities they still hoped that one day their expectation will be met.

Note 15. The standard approach equating choice with preferences does not apply in warm glow models; there is a need to show how to deduce preferences from choice in these models. This ordinal model of warm glow is observationally equivalent to Eq. 1.

Note 16. An aspiration determines which action delivers the warm glow pay, and the tolerance determines which action, within each issue is sufficiently costly so that they will not choose even if they are an aspiration is determined.

Note 17. After the PM came to power, he dissolved EPRDF (a coalition of four parties) that ruled Ethiopia for 28 years illegally and formulated a central party called the prosperity Party. During this process, only TPF condemned the approaches stating the need to discuss with all the members of our party. Subsequently, TPLF refused to join the new party. In return, the PM forced ministries and higher office officials who were from Tigray and working in Addis to leave their Position (office). Likewise, Generals and Colonels who served the country during the 17 years of struggle and after had been jailed.

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