

The Matrix of Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia in Protecting Internal Minority Rights: Examining Perceptions in Oromia Regional State

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Abstract: This study aimed to analyze the matrix of ethnic federalism in protecting internal minority rights in Ethiopia via Goba and Robe towns as a case study at Oromia regional state. The post-1990s political formula of Ethiopia was designed considering all ethnolinguistic groups as inhabitants of their own defined territory. It seems that in the architecture of the constitution, there will be ethnic homogeneous states. But, the reality in the ground has shown that none of the units is purely homogenous due to economic migration, (re)settlement, villagization programs, and freedom of movement granted in the constitution. A mixed approach with a cross-sectional survey was used. Questionnaires, interviewees, focused group discussion, and document analyses were used as a primary data. Snowball and purposive sampling were used to select survey respondents. In both town administrations, a kin situation exists; there are constitutional and other legal frameworks gaps, inducing mistrust and tension between minorities and dominant groups, systematic segregation, denying fair and effective representation at levels of government. Therefore, adequately recognizing and legalizing the rights of internal minorities should be the prime duty of the region, establishing particular institutions mandated to protect internal minorities, and government should work on fostering people-to-people integration to reverse the looming mistrust.

Keywords: Amhara, Ethiopia, ethnic federalism, Goba, internal minorities.

In the contemporary world, minority rights are increasingly getting tremendous attention in the international frameworks, state politicians, and the world of the intelligentsia (Malloy, 2015; Wolff et al., 2008). Minority rights are additional rights that a member of a particular minority group enjoys besides their rights. Minority ethnic groups, as part of a given society, are entitled to some group rights and can enjoy these rights individually or collectively. Significant aspects of their rights are autonomy (self-government rights), preservation and promotion of cultural identities, and political representation (Kymlicka, 1995; Selassie, 2003). So, especially in a diverse society, it is impossible to achieve its ultimate goal without the state's legal and political recognition or/and response of different ethnic groups (Addisu, 2020). A multinational federation accommodates ethnic and linguistic groups by establishing constituent units in line with the

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majority ethnolinguistic groups in the federal setting. The boundary of the units is delimited to match an ethnolinguistic group with its constituent units. However, such configuration results in the dominant ethnocultural group can control the constituent unit to protect and promote their distinctiveness in the name of self-governance (McGarry, John, 2005).

Although the above multinational federations arranged their constituent units based on ethnolinguistic cleavages aiming to manage the diversified nature of the people, it is not easy to establish a constituent unit with a pure (homogeneous) ethno-linguistic population. Creating a homogenous regional state in any federation is “chimerical” (Cairns, 1995). Thus, the consequence of such a lack of homogeneity will create groups with no significant number of populations to form their constituent units but within the dominant ethnic group constituent units. These minority groups, mainly dispersed and politically insignificant, are forced to be lumped with the majority ethnic groups in a given autonomous constituent unit. Because the dominant group perceives the constituent unit as its sole 'ethno-national homeland', internal minorities face an existential threat and are marginalized from participation in the political institutions of the self-ruled government (Fiseha, 2017). The practical impossibility of forming ethnically homogenous constituent units forces federations to embrace different mechanisms to accommodate internal minorities² (Fessha & Beken, 2013). The western multiethnic federations were faced the improper treatment of internal minorities at different periods. This implies that “the need to take into account the interests and rights of internal minorities is particularly important for a multiethnic federation” (Fessha & Beken, 2013, p. 34). In multiethnic federations, internal minorities are common features such as Spanish speakers in Catalonia, English speakers in Quebec, and French speakers in Flanders are some prominent examples (Fessha & Beken, 2013). In Africa, though seldom the 1990s was an impetus to reflect its ethnic diversity in its constitution or laws (Selassie, 2003). For instance, the South African constitution is the modest approach since it recognizes the rights of ethnic groups to their languages and cultures and reinforces these rights through a highly decentralized system (Selassie, 2003).

Ethiopia, as a unified state, has diversified ethnic, linguistic, religious, and national groups. The year 1991³ indicated the country's transformation into a new political landscape after a long time of unsuccessful attempts to establish a strong nation with homogeneous people, culture, and language. The attempt of accommodating differences finally got its formal structure when the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia constitution (hereafter FDRE) launched the de jure federal structure of the country (Fiseha, 2017). Currently, the federation has ten ethno-linguistically designed states and two self-governing city administrations. These are Amhara, Oromia, Afar, Tigray, Somalia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nation Nationalities Regional State (hereafter NNPRS), Gambela, Harari, Sidama (*Sidama region is recently established without constitutional amendment*), and two City Administrations that is, Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa. Though not the only one, the effort to match ethnonational groups with regional borders is the main reason, to dub Ethiopian federalism as ‘ethnic federalism’ (Aalen, 2006; Abbink, 2011; Selassie, 2003). Nevertheless, each federating unit is highly diverse, and no regions are homogenous (Záhořík, 2014).

² Literatures uses different terminology like internal minorities, ethnic minorities, intra-units minorities, minorities within minorities, dispersed minorities, non-natives, non-indigenous to mean those who do not belong to the regionally empowered group or dominant groups. For the sake of uniformity, this study has preferred to use the term internal minorities.

³ The Charter that grants group rights to all the ethnic groups of Ethiopia was published in this year, in the Negarit Gazeta.

Furthermore, by any means of definition, Ethiopia is a land of minority (Chekole, 2012). It means no ethnic group is counted more than fifty per cent out of the total population at the national level (Central Statistical Agency, 2007; Fiseha, 2017). Despite various degrees, all federating units are internally diverse (Assefa, 2007) and inhabited by “old historic minorities and new emigrant minorities” (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 175). Similarly, in Abbink (2006) words, all states, including those with one big majority (Somali, Oromiya, Tigray, Amhara, and Afar), have significant ethnolinguistic minorities ranging from 5 to 15 per cent of their total population. Furthermore, some regional states, namely Benishangul-Gumuz, SNNPRS, Harari, and Gambela have no clear ethnic majority population (Abbink, 2006). The impossibility of forming purely homogenous ethno-regional units brings the political exclusion of the internal minority and thereby a tendency of a skirmish between minority and majority groups since the majority groups tend to suppress the internal minority (Abbink, 2006; Ahadu, 2020) and become as an “existential threat” for minorities (Fiseha, 2017). This makes the majority-minority relation at the regional states' level crucial in Ethiopia's ethnic federalism (Fiseha, 2017).

According to Article 52 of the Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia Constitution, the Oromia Regional State is one of the constituent units allowed to establish its regional government. It enacted its constitution in which the supreme political organs (legislature, executive, and judiciary) are established. In the stated regional state, the Oromo constitutes absolute majority counting around 88% of the total population, and the remaining 12% are internal minorities in the region which the Amhara constitute 7.2% of the total population and other groups cumulatively constitutes 4.8 but separately below 1% of the total population of the regions (Central Statistical Agency, 2007). Most internal minorities occupied and still dwell in Oromia's urban centres due to historical and freedom of movement (Fessha & Beken, 2013; Záhóřík, 2014). Notwithstanding, the constitution of the Oromia regional state does not recognize the existence and the distinct identity of internal minority groups even though there are significant numbers of dispersed ethnic groups in the region (Assefa, 2007). This can be justified in the regional state constitution as “*sovereign power in the region resides in peoples of Oromo nation*” (Oromia Regional State Constitution, 2001). However, solely taking this argument does not weigh enough so that scrutiny analysis thoroughly the whole provision of the constitution is necessary. This is because, at least in its form, some of the provisions in the constitution implied socio-economic and political equality in the region⁴.

Studies conducted before on minorities limited on analysis of constitutional clause that resulted in the lack of relevant practical detailed analysis at the grassroots level (Fiseha, 2012). An exemplary scholar Fiseha (2017), unveiled the gap as “the studies offer little detail on the rights of dispersed intra-unit minorities” (p. 171). Moreover, Beken (2007) exposed the need for empirical investigation to evaluate the feasibility of ethnic federalism to accommodate diverse groups in each region in Ethiopia. This is because fruitful federalism is unthinkable without harmony inside the regions (Beken, 2007). Considering this reality, the study attempt to address the following basic question: how the local/regional government and its constitution treat intra-unit minorities in the matrix of ethnic federalism. This study mainly analyzes and explores the extent of legalizing, institutionalizing, and practically implementing the variables of protecting internal minorities to measure the feasibility of the existing ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. Therefore, in line with the aforementioned basic question, this study attempts to address the following issues;

⁴ See, article 2, article 25, article 31, article 34, article 38 and article 41 among others.

1. How does the region's constitution and other legal frameworks address the existence, representation, and self-government of internal minorities inhabited in the region?
2. How does the practical implementation concerning internal minorities residing in the region?

Theoretical Issues

Ethnic Federalism and its Contestation

Whether ethnic federalism is a successful or divisive instrument for an ethnically divided society, including Ethiopia, is yet unclear. Opponents decry it as a dangerous concept that will eventually dismember the country. For civic nationalists, the policy is a deliberate ploy to undermine national identity. They see the constitutional granting of self-determination to an ethnic group as deliberate steps to reverse the nation-building process. Some writers argue that ethnic federalism accommodates diversity in highly divided societies. It effectively alleviates deep ethnic divisions that can help avoid disintegration (Lijphart, 1977; Wolff, 2013). Ethnic federalism considers ethnicity in the organization of the state as “relief of ethnic tension, rather than a problem” (Twibell, 1999, p. 436) The inclusion of the ethnic factor in designing the territorial structure of a state presents an ideal framework to provide extensive self-rule for an ethnic group, guaranteeing its ability to make decisions in certain areas without being outvoted by the larger society (Kymlicka, 1995).

In Ethiopia, on the occasion of developing a new political system in 1991, it was decided that ethnolinguistic identities would have to find organizational expression and form the basis of the system (Abbink, 2006). Considering the system's viability in current Ethiopia is inconclusive (Abbink, 2006). Some see the system surely and endorsed ethnic federalism as an appropriate state structure and legitimacy. For instance, (Tsfaye, 2008) stated in Ethiopia such an arrangement enables to avoid the continued dominance of the dominant group over national minorities by providing territorial autonomy. Reversely, opponents of ethnic federation contend the current situation in Ethiopia presents dangers that could affect all ethnic groups in the future (Holder, Christina, Zeba Huq, 2006). The federal system of government with the politicization of ethnic identity could cause deep ethnic division that brings multiple problems such as secessionist movements and a culture of mistrust. It also impedes the economic development of the state-Ethiopia (Kendie, 2003). Whereas, some others also argued the current ethnic discord in Ethiopia is not the federal structure inherently problematic rather the incumbent party dominated by TPLF manipulate the system for divide and rule purpose (Aalen, 2002; Halabo, 2019; Keller & Omwami, 2007; Temesgen, 2015). In this regard, Agegnehu and Dibu, (2016) aptly noted;

the development and consolidation of centralized dominant party rule which is paradox of genuine federalism, manipulates ethnic group in search of enlarging its power through A[a]pplying a divide and rule approach. The paradox is emanated from the idea that centralized party rule and authentic federalism are incompatible as if powerful party manipulates ethnicity and undermines regional autonomy. This manipulation of ethnicity by the name of ethnic self-determination encourages the feeling of distinctiveness and gradually develops their own identities (p. 4843).

Furthermore, ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is misused by different groups at the expense of societal stability (Berhane & Tefera, 2018), the proliferation of ethnic-based political parties and narrow ethno-nationalist politics obstruct its success (Eresso, 2021).

Internal Minorities in Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism

Even though there is good progress in the federal experiment and minorities granted the right to self-determination, the experiment has faced different challenges to transform into a viable and vibrant system (Abebe, 2012). Correspondingly, Fiseha (2012) also stated that one of the major challenges of the federal experiment in Ethiopia is the issues of internal minorities within the regional state since they faced local tyranny by majority groups. The federal structure leaves alone the internal minorities for regional states. In this regard, some regional states promulgate institutional and administrative mechanisms to answer the minority rights claims. For instance, some regional states establish ‘nationality administration’, ‘special woreda’, and ‘special kebele’ (Beken, 2007). But, this legal and institutional decentralization ignored specifically internal minorities and is solely given for the region’s politically empowered ethnic group as claimed by regional constitutions. As per Articles 46 and 47 Constitution (1995) nine regional states delimited mainly along linguistic lines, and two administrative regions are established. More than two-thirds of the people live in five out of the nine regional states, including Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, and Afar designing by considering those belonging to the dominant single ethnic group since each region is named after these dominant ethnic groups (Fessha & Beken, 2013). However, there are internal minorities in each regional state (Assefa, 2007; Beken, 2007; Fessha & Beken, 2013).

To sketch out the situations, for instance, the constitution of *Afar*⁵ and *Tigray*⁶ also acknowledge the existence of other ethnic groups besides the titular ones (Beken, 2015). The *Harari* constitution recognizes only the *Harari* and *Oromo* as indigenous groups though significant numbers of dispersed minorities in the region⁷. Compared with *Oromia* and *Somali*, the *Amhara* regional state steps forward by granting self-determination for indigenous minorities and even recognizes the existence of dispersed minorities⁸(Beken, 2015). The *Amhara* region goes further to protect its internal minorities (Addisu, 2018); Beken, 2007). Though internal minorities exist in the regional state of Oromia, the regional constitution does not give enough space for non-Oromo ethnic groups(Daba, 2010). Some argue that as the regional constitution stated, “sovereign power in the region resides in peoples of Oromo People” (Oromia Regional State Constitution, 2001: Article 8), it does not grant and protect the rights of internal minorities residing in the region (Beken, 2007). However, such scholarly finding defies scrutiny analysis thoroughly in the region’s constitution. For instance, Article 2 sub-article 1 recognizes the existence of non-oromo ethnic groups in the region (Oromia Regional State Constitution, 2001). Besides, in its form, some of the

⁵ Article 8 of the constitution states that the Afar ethnic group is the bearer of the region, nonetheless article 43(2) of the constitution recognizes the right of the *Argoba* people to have their own “special *woreda*” in the region.

⁶ See, Van der Beken, 2015, p.163: *Federalism, Local Government and Minority Protection in Ethiopia: Opportunities and Challenges*. “Although the Tigray Constitution grants the right to self-determination to the Irob and Kunama minorities, it does not endow them with any specific ethnic-based local administration”.

⁷ Article 8 of the Harari’s constitution grant the sovereign power for the Harari ethnic group, but simultaneously article 7 states the working language of the region is both Harari and Afan Oromo.

⁸ As reads at Article 8 of the *Amhara* region’s constitution; the supreme power of the national regional state resides in and belongs to the people of the *Amhara* region.

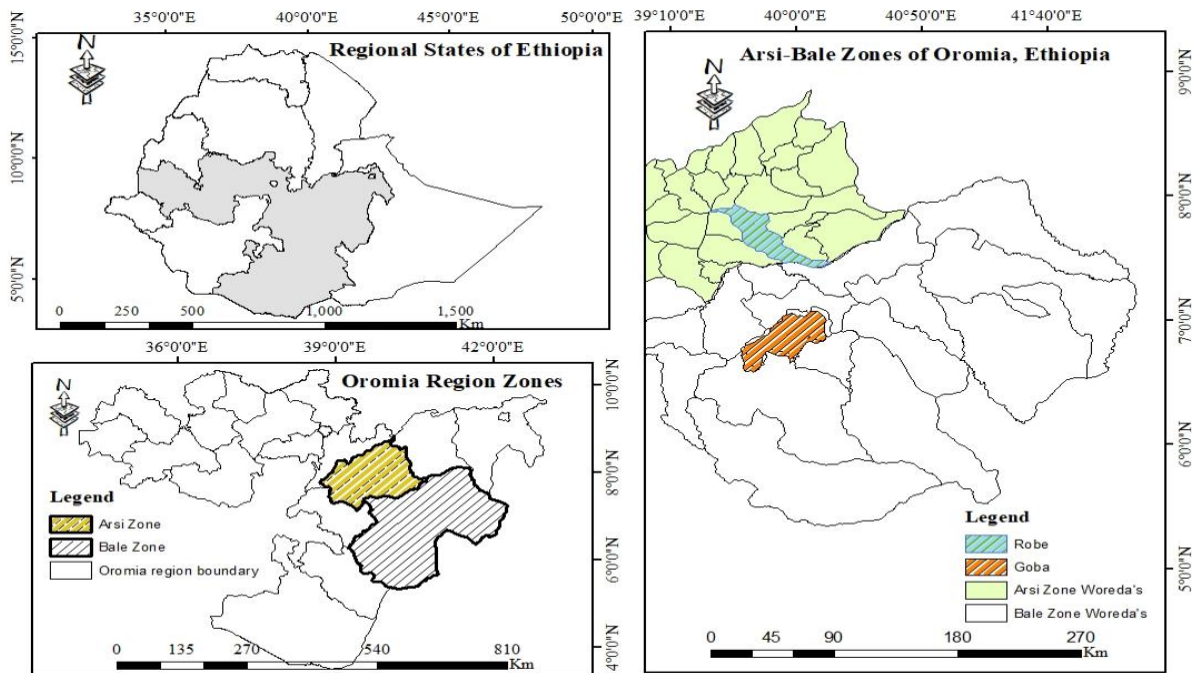
region’s constitutional provisions granted political, social, economic, and cultural equality between ethnic groups in the region⁹.

Materials and Methods

Study Area Description

Oromia regional state is one of the ten federating units in Ethiopia. Bale zone is one part of the zonal administrations in this regional state. Bale zone is located around 442 kilometers from the capital city of Ethiopia (i.e., Addis Ababa). It is bordered by Somalie national regional state at the east, East Hararge at the northeast, West Hararge at the north, Arsi zone at the northwest, and Guji at the south. In the regional state of Oromia Bale is the second-largest zone in terms of size. It constitutes different ethnic groups in which the dominant ethnic group (i.e., Oromo) counts 1279098. Others are internal minorities like Amhara count 80,002, Somalie 20,255, Sidama 5722, Tigre 1,976, Guragie 1,656, Welayta 1, 038 (Central Statistical Agency, 2007). Robe and Goba were selected as a study area because these town administrations comprise highly diversified ethnic groups, and all the above ethnic groups are inhabited.

Figure 1
Study Area Map



⁹ In the 2001 revised constitutions of Oromia, article 25 granted equality regardless of sex, religion, ethnicity e.t.c, article 32 provide the right to movement, right to have own property, article 38 stated the right to par-take in the political affairs including the right to elect and to be elected, and article 41 stipulate the right to engage in any economic activity and profession.

Research Design and Approach

A mixed approach with exploratory research design was used. The research question raised in this study mesh with the nature of the research problem, which is to describe the characteristics of phenomena, focus on what, how, and who elements with the undefined hypothesis.

Sampling Size Determination and Techniques

Total kebeles ¹⁰ were taken in each town's administrations to determine the sample size since each study town has limited *kebeles*. Accordingly, the internal minorities were the primary data sources in this study. This is because the research aimed to examine the perceptions of internal minorities inhabited in the area. The majority ethnic group (i.e. Oromo) since they are a *titular ethnic group* cannot be part of the study. So, internal minorities are the target group for this study. The size of respondents was determined by considering the scope or availability of internal minorities. The snowball sampling method was applied to select the sample respondents. This kind of sampling enables to arrive at the target respondents in a mixed or heterogenous society. The researcher used (Cochran, 1977) as a statistical formula to determine the sample size. Due to a long time since the national census was conducted, it was impossible to find statistical data of internal minorities from legitimate institutions. Hence, the formula mentioned above is used to determine the size having an exactly unknown population.

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where n is the sample size, z is the desired confidence level that is 95% or 1.96, p is the estimated proportion of the population for responses (the p-value here is 50% or 0.5), q is equivalent to 1-p (1-0.5=0.5), and e is a maximum allowable error (in this case 5% or 0.05).

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.5 * (1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{3.8416 * 0.5 * 0.5}{0.0025} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384.16$$

Therefore, a total of 384 internal minority respondents were administered. A total of 12 key informant interviewees, namely Mayors, Local/town Council Spokesmen, Education Sector Officials, and Civil Service Sector Officials, took. Besides, two focus group discussions having around ten members in each group were held. Accordingly, purposive sampling was used for informants' in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative data was obtained through close-ended questionnaires and analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-20) and presented with custom tables, frequencies, percentages, and charts. Similarly, qualitative data obtained with interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed through themes and narrating the respondents' perceptions.

¹⁰ Initially, the term Kebele was used during the Derg period and since then it referred to the lowest administrative unit found next to district/s or/and literary Keble mean sub-district/s.

Results

For data presentation, this section comprises two parts. Part I describe the characteristics of the respondents in terms of sex, age, and ethnic composition. Part II on the hand, presents the result of variables that determines the status of internal minorities in the study area.

The demographic characteristics of respondents, such as their ages, sex, and educational background, have direct or indirect relations with the way the respondents perceive issues under study. The survey result illustrates, in both towns, concerning sex 42.7% were females, whereas 57.3 % were males. Ethnic composition, Amhara counts 71 %, Guragie 13%, Wolayta 7%, Somali 4.7%, and the remaining 4%. From this result, one can infer the target respondents were non-Oromo ethnic minorities and all were considered. This finding is consistent with Fessha & Beken (2013); although Amhara ethnic group is the majority, individuals that belong to other non-Oromo ethnic groups, who nevertheless speak Amharic, are also widely scattered throughout the country, and these majority of internal minorities (i.e., Amhara) inhabited mainly in urban areas. In the same way, Abbink (2006) unveiled that including the regional state of Oromia those with one big majority have significant internal minorities ranging from 5 to 15 percent of their total population.

Table 1
Background of the Sample Respondents

Variables	Category	Town Administrations					
		Goba		Robe		Total	
		<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex	Female	77	20.1	87	22.7	164	42.7
	Male	115	29.9	105	27.3	220	57.3
	Total	192	50	192	50	384	100
Age	under 18	-	-	-	-	-	-
	18-30	66	17.2	59	15.4	125	33.7
	31-40	43	11.2	47	12.2	90	23.4
	41-50	40	10.4	46	12	86	22.4
	above 51	43	11.2	39	10.2	82	21.4
	Total	192	50	192	50	384	100
Non-Oromo Ethnic Group	Amhara	148	38.5	126	32.8	274	71.4
	Guragie	22	5.7	29	7.6	51	13.
	Wolayta	14	3.6	12	3.3	26	7
	Somalie	2	0.6	16	4	18	4.7
	Others	6	1.6	9	2.3	15	3.9
		Total	192	50	192	50	384

Note. Source from the field survey (2019) F: Frequency

As Figure 2 above demonstrates, 25.8%, 32.8%, and 32% of respondents replied very good, good, and fair, whereas 8.6 % and 0.8% answered poor and very poor, respectively. It infers that the majority of the respondents (91%) have a positive relationship with the dominant group. The data from interviews and FGD (i.e., focus group discussion) revealed that a societal relation between the internal minority and the dominant group is positive and peaceful. Respondents further confirm such good relation is the derivation of peaceful co-existence and good traditions of Ethiopian people regardless of ethnic background, religion and others. Accordingly, smooth

relations in both town administrations emanate from the bigger pictures of Ethiopian people living together. However, some respondents stated their fear since recently the town has faced mistrust and undermined the peaceful societal co-existence among groups. This mistrust was induced mainly by government institutions and ethnically manipulated youths for the interest of titular ethnic groups. The spillover effects of ethicizing politics instigate mistrust and a sign of mistreatment is showed at some public institutions in the study area (FGD, 2019).

Figure 2
Internal Minority Relations with the Dominant Groups in the Study Area

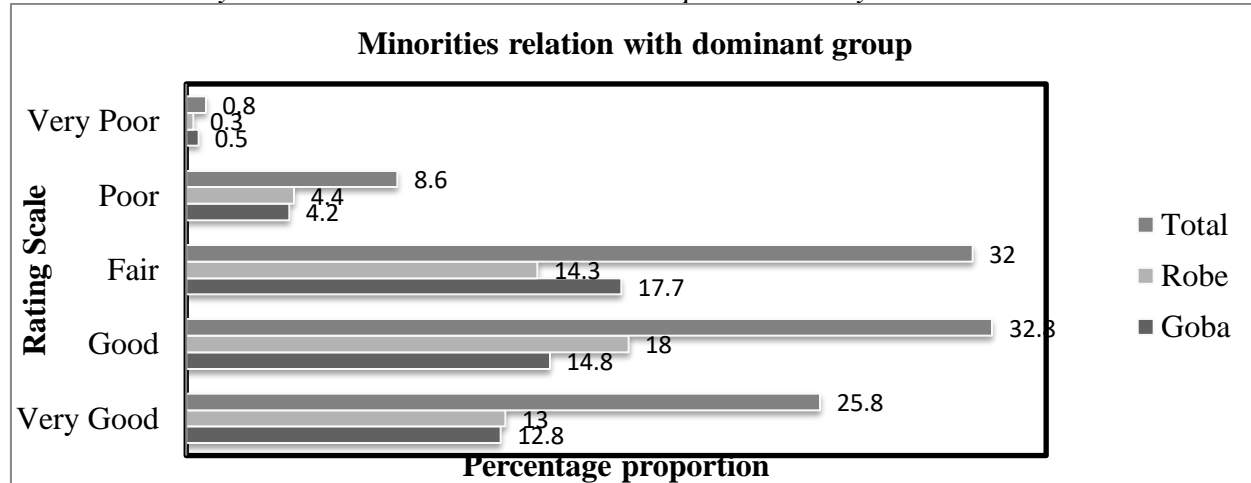
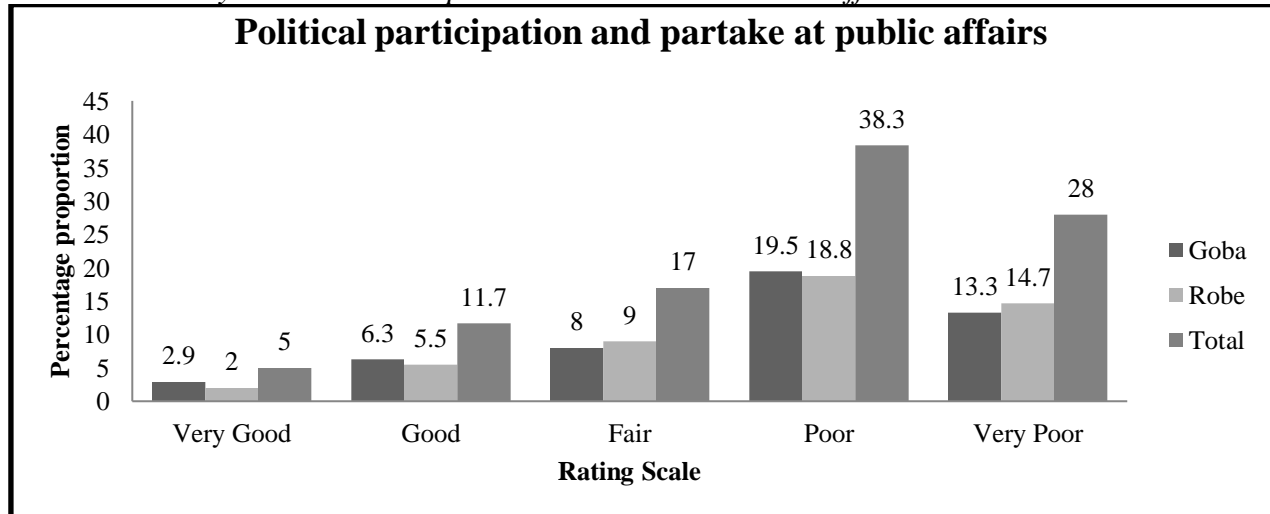


Figure 3
Internal Minority Political Participation and Partake at Public Affairs



The survey results in Figure 3 vividly illustrated that a total of 66.3 per cent of respondents replay as poor and very poor, whereas 5 per cent, 11.7 per cent, and 17 per cent of respondents answered very good, good, and fair, respectively. Similarly, the FGD result exposed internal minorities are marginalized and disregarded in various ways, such as participating in political elections, receiving *Kebele* identification cards, *Kebele* house, urban housing, land distribution, bidding, and public meeting. Concerning this, participants of group discussion stated the issue as follows:

The town administration usually calls us for fund-raising, demonstration, and public meeting issues for the sake of dominant group interest. Even unwillingness and negation from dominant group/s and public officials have seen at the various meeting to use Amharic¹¹ as meeting instruction so that we are highly demoted to partake in the public decision. Unless we avail on the meeting, we have faced criticism like ‘Nefitegna’ ‘anti-Oromo’ ‘settler’ and ‘anti-development. On top of that, when we raise different questions at meeting halls or public institutions, the dominant group refutes the question owing to our ethnic background (FGD, January 2019).

Equally, the finding from key informant interviews with Mayors and some sector officials showed as there is no exclusion on the ground of ethnicity in any affairs. However, the spillover effects of ethnicizing politics inducing mistrust and a sign of mistreatment might be here and there at some public institutions in the study area. Thus, it is possible to infer there is a gap to create a system of trustful and inclusive political participation. (Bieber, 2001) rightly noted minorities’ rights cannot be fully realized without the ability to have control over their affairs and be free from dominant group domination. Conversely, the survey finding is inconsistent with the federal constitutional provision that declares the right of every individual to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including to vote and be elected without any discrimination based on their ethnic groups and another status (Fessha & Beken, 2013).

Figure 4
Legal and Institutional Systems

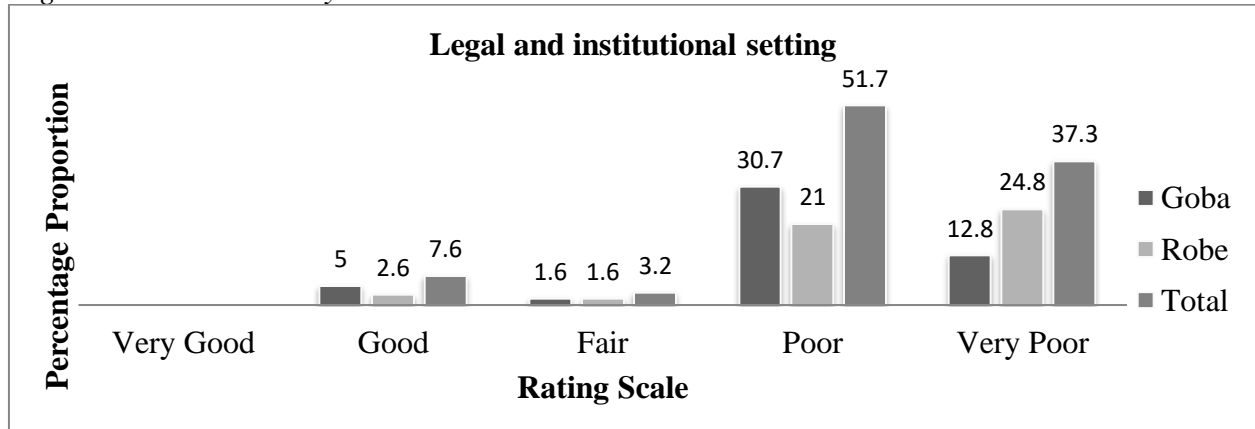


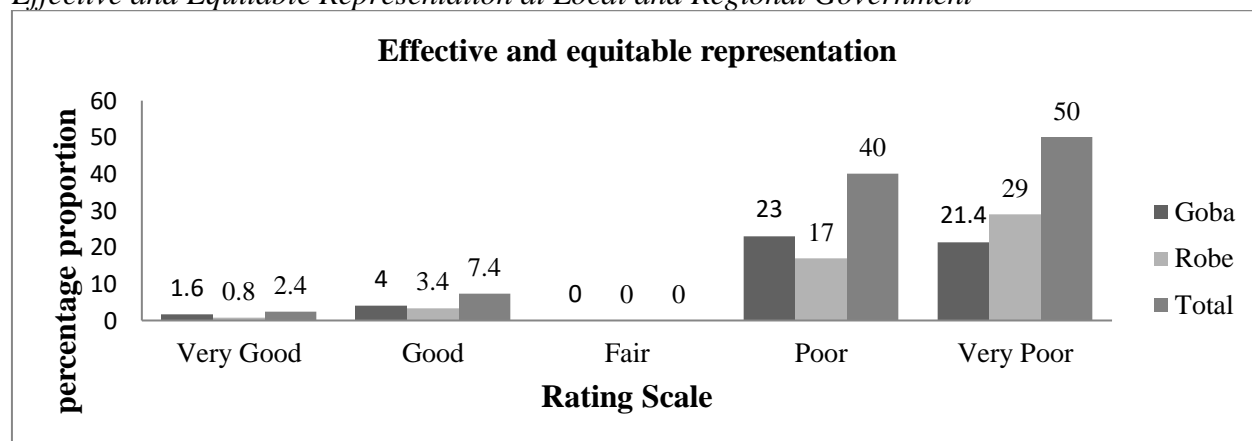
Figure 4 illustrates that most respondents (89%) responded very poor and poor, whereas 11% of respondents replied good and fair. The survey result confirmed that there is a gap in legal and institutional mechanisms in the study area that protect the rights of internal minorities. An interview with both town mayors also endorsed no distinct legal and institutional setting to protect internal minorities. In asserting this, Fessha and Beken (2013) stated that most regional state constitutions would reveal either explicitly or implicitly empower the dominant groups. At the same time, they exclude the legal existence and protection of the rights of non-territorial minorities inhabited in the regional state (Beken, 2007). But, the result obtained from key informants showed

¹¹ Amharic is a language mostly associated with Amhara ethnic group; but it is spoken by other internal minorities and dominant groups in the study area and widely spoken by the Ethiopian people at large.

the region’s constitutional provisions and proclamation of urban government allowed the non-Oromos (i.e., internal minorities) equally participate with the Oromo people in the economic, social, and political affairs. As opposed to interviewing results held with different sectors, the document analysis shows there is a deficiency in promulgating a fair and effective legal framework. For instance, though the Oromo is less than non-Oromo in 1st and 2nd grade towns of Oromia, proclamation No. 69/2006 provides 70 per cent (i.e., 50 per cent for urban dweller Oromo and 20 per cent seats for residing in the surrounding rural areas of Oromo) legislative seats reserved only for ethnic Oromo¹². This means, since 90 per cent of the seat is reserved by Oromo ethnic groups, only 10 per cent is shared by both Oromo and non-Oromo. In terms of existence, the region’s constitution slightly mentions the presence of non-Oromo ethnic groups¹³. Similarly, in its form, the different provisions of the region’s constitution provide socio-economic and political equality among ethnic groups residing in the region. Equivocally, all these principles are overridden by other provisions. Instances, Article 39 sub 1 states “the people of Oromo nation shall have the right to maintain their distinct identity, preserve and promote their history and heritage, to speak, develop and make use, in any other manner, of their own language and enjoy their culture”(Revised Constitution of Oromia, 2001). The preamble of the constitution is another provision that dictates only the Oromo nation owned the constitution and the region (Ibid). In the same vein, the bearers of the region are only the Oromo people, as stated in the constitution¹⁴ (Revised Constitution of Oromia, 2001).

Figure 5

Effective and Equitable Representation at Local and Regional Government



As the figure above showed, a significant majority (90%) of respondents answered very poor and poor, while insignificant respondents (10%) reacted very well. One can understand from this quantified data the great majority of the respondents confirm internal minorities have not been granted representation at different levels. Similarly, the survey result of other instruments displays that there is no representation of internal minorities in the three organs of government (i.e., legislative, executive, and judiciary body) at local and the regional council. Similarly, interviews conducted with mayors at both towns and the focus group discussions confirmed no legal and

¹² Proc. No.1116/2006 a Proc to Amend Proc. No.650/2003 of Urban Local Government of Oromia National Regional State.

¹³ See, Article 2 of the constitution says the Oromia region is the uninterrupted territory inhabited by the people of Oromo nation and other people who made a choice to live in the region.

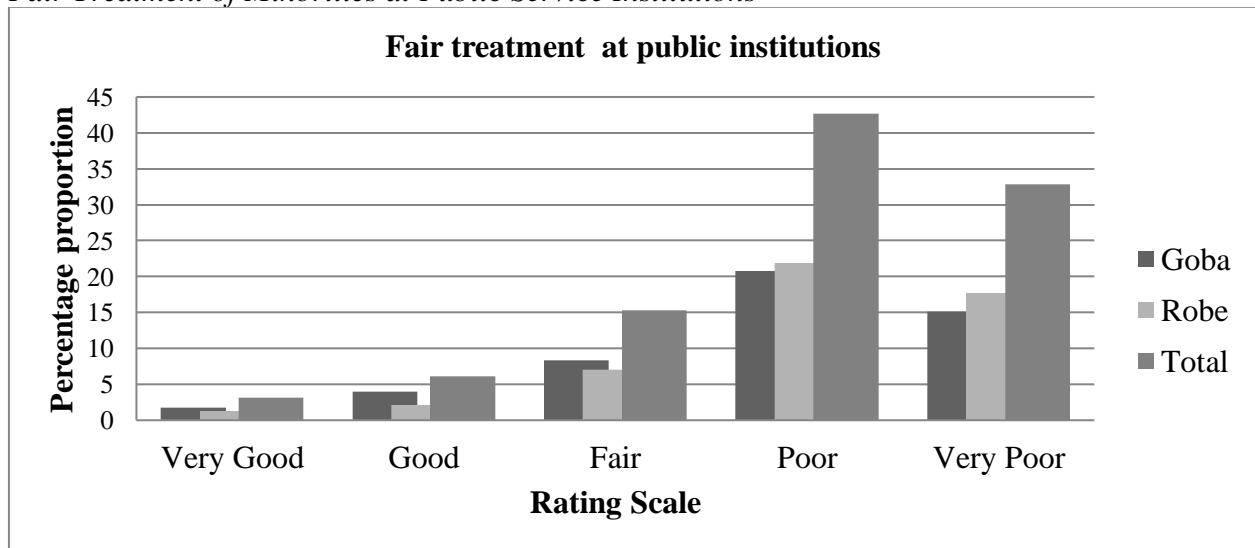
¹⁴ See, Article 8 of the 2001 Revised Constitution of Oromia Regional State.

practical ground to represent non-Oromo in the name of internal minorities. Concerning this, the result of the focus group discussion stated as follows:

There is no legal and institutional device to represent internal minorities at Kebele, the town, or the regional government. But, if the party representing the dominant society in the area believes a person can do the interest of Oromo (hereafter dominant group), whatever their ethnic origin might recruit as a member of the town or Kebele council or executive body. So, there is no space for internal minority representation at the town administrations (FGD, January 2019).

As Selassie (2003) noted, ethnic groups may demand power-sharing and representation at various institutions. Cognizant of this, the regional constitution of Oromia does not endow representation at executive bodies at all levels of government (Beken, 2007). A person who does not speak and hear the working language of the region (i.e., Affan Oromo) is banned from competing for elections (Fessha & Beken, 2013). This survey result is contrary to the principle of the federal constitution since the federal constitution requires the equitable representation of the different ethnic groups in regional governments (Constitution, 1995) and Article 33 of the region’s constitution (Revised Constitution of Oromia, 2001).

Figure 6
Fair Treatment of Minorities at Public Service Institutions



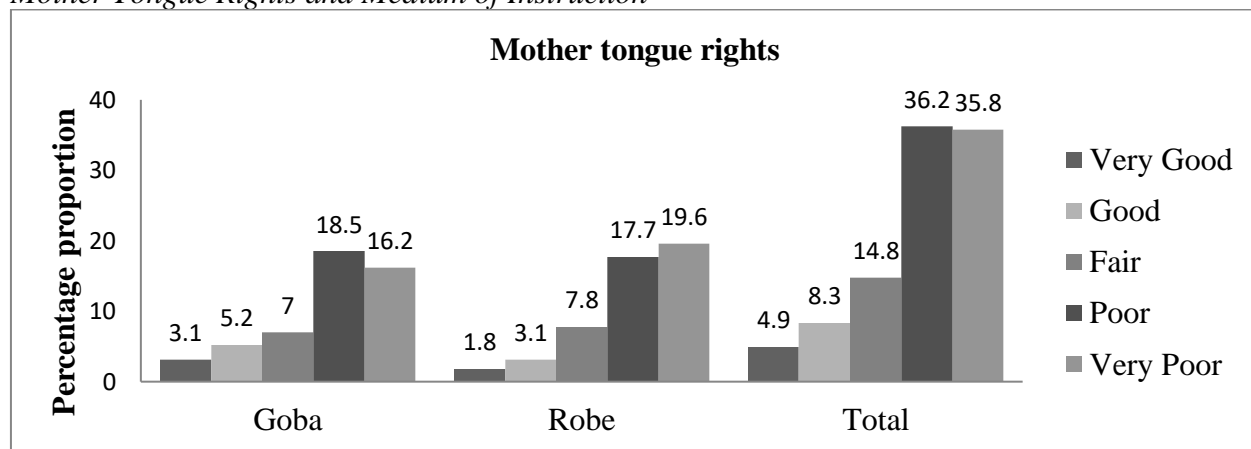
The empirical investigation is shown in Figure 6 regarding the treatment of minorities at public institutions. Thus, significant (75.5%) of respondents responded poor and very poor, whereas only 24.3% answered fair, good, or very good. From this, one can surmise there is a lack of proper treatment of minorities at public institutions. The survey results further unveil that internal minorities were discriminated against hardly owing to speaking a different language and their descent (race). As the participants of the focus group discussion explained:

Even if we can hear and speak Afan Oromo, our descent is a matter. For instance, while a vacancy opened in any sector, the public officials practically and systematically use descent as a criterion to be employed. So, they ask your name up to your grandfather’s name. Suppose there is no Oromo affinity name in your descent. In that case, you do not employ any institution, except if you have relatives in higher authorities either at the federal or regional level (FGD, January 2019).

Similarly, the survey finding stipulates that many youths who graduated from different universities or colleges leave their homeland and migrate to other regional states dominantly to the capital city to pursue employment because of systematic segregations by the dominant group owing to their ethnic origin. The finding further revealed that most government officials and experts in public sectors have no positive attitude toward internal minorities, especially for the Amhara ethnic group in the name of the historically dominant group or/and tagging a name the so-called “Nefitegna” (literally mean shooter). To confirm the problem, Abbink (2006) concludes the situations as follows:

the staffing of local administration has taken on a divisive dynamic of its own, whereby aspiring elites from the regions have used the new dispensation, with its rights to ethnic claim-making, for their benefits and power maneuvering. So, in practice, an ‘ethnic’ policy was often pursued and has led to new perceptions of inequality and elite rule on lower levels in the political system. (p. 393)

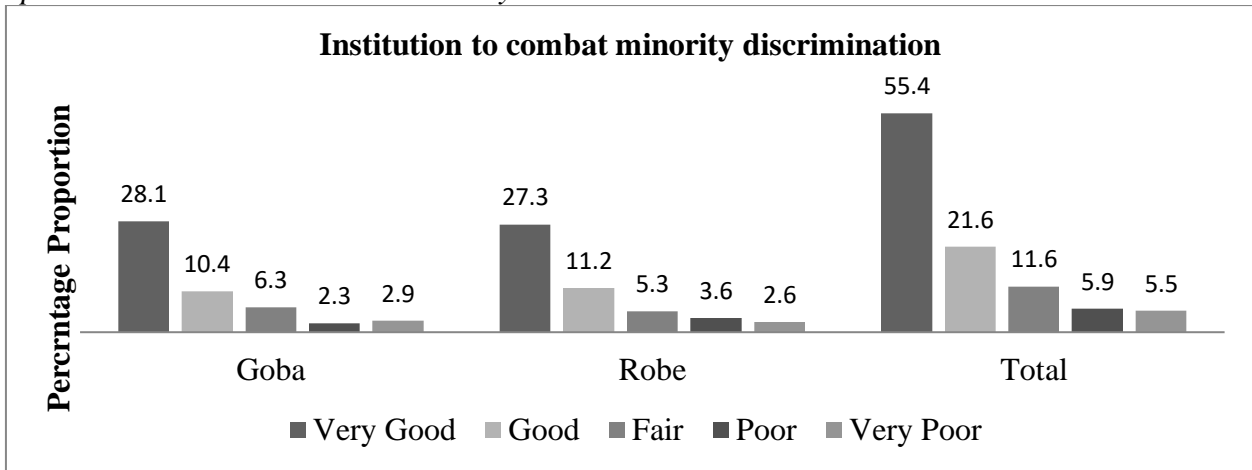
Figure 7
 Mother Tongue Rights and Medium of Instruction



As shown in Figure 7, most respondents (72%) confirmed a gap in using mother tongue rights at the school level. Conversely, 28 % of respondents responded internal minorities are using their mother tongue at school. The “Education and Training Policy” of 1994 permitted mother tongue education. As (Cohen, 2006, p. 166) vividly stated, “cognizant to the pedagogical advantage of the child learning in the mother tongue, and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their language, primary education will be given in nationality language.” Empirical evidence in the study

area also shows schools reserved for internal minority naming *Urgee Berressa*¹⁵ at Goba and blended schools in Robe (i.e., the minority and dominant group’s children attend at the same place). Nevertheless, a survey result confirmed that the children of internal minority groups face many constraints to attend school by their mother tongues. Minorities face systematically designed problems with mother tongue education. For instance, they are denying educational opportunities of minority school teachers, delays of curriculum, an enormous shortage of school infrastructure, high rate of student dropout, students migrate to other regions, and children are enforced to attend at dominant group schools.

Figure 8
Special Institutions to Combat Minority Discrimination



The survey result of Figure 8 revealed that most of the respondents (88.6%) confirmed there is no distinct institution to combat internal minority discrimination. But, the remaining 11.4% of respondents replied the existence of unique institutions to protect minority rights in the area. An interview with key informants and FGD was held to triangulate this result. The interview result shows, not only in Goba and Robe, but also in the region there is no special institution established for minority rights. Furthermore, they believe forming unique institutions has no constitutional or legal framework justification for its establishment. Contrary to this, the FGD participants urged that the local government should allow minorities to establish their own institutions that can empower, advise, report issues concerning all rights of minorities. Evidence shows that there is an established unique institution/s to protect internal minorities in the multiethnic federations.

Discussion

As stated elsewhere, the main aim of this study was to critically analyze legal, institutional, and practical implementation in protecting regional internal minorities in the context of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. Hence, this section presents the main findings aligned with the existing relevant theoretical conceptions. To do this, the societal relations between non-Oromo and Oromos, the constitutional and other legal frameworks, participation in political and public affairs, effective

¹⁵ Literary it means “beginner school” or “*Jemari*” in Amharic since it was the first school established in the town around 1957.

and fair representation, inclusion at public institutions, education rights, and special institutional issues were analyzed.

Albeit the societal value of co-existence yet not dismantled, because of the politicization of ethnicity, there has been a looming of mistrust and dichotomization in the area between minorities and dominant groups mainly instigated by politicians and government institutions. This finding is congruent with Gebremichael (2011) as the elite of the dominant ethnic group uses the ethnic identities as an instrument to control the patrimonial state resources. Though the opportunity to be represented at local government institutions is not completely closed, the region's constitutional provisions and proclamations make the loophole very narrowed for non-Oromos. Undoubtedly, the political participation of minorities provides multiple means for strengthening their self-organization, securing adequate representation, and achieving political and policy goals (Dessalegn, 2013). Concerning representation, Abbink (2011) and Dessalegn (2013) aptly noted "first past the post" system guarantees the dominant group in the region always wins the vote and dominates the region. As a result, it undermines the political participation of internal minorities (Dessalegn, 2013). In asserting this, Fessha and Beken (2013) stated that most regions' constitutions would reveal either explicitly or implicitly empower the dominant groups. It is also congruent with the group that enjoys political control over a particular area may often perceive that territory as an ethnonational 'homeland' Fessha (2017) and downgrading internal minorities to "second-class citizens" (Fessha & Beken, 2013).

Similarly, the survey finding shows that there are occasionally non-Oromo representatives in the local council and executive organs. However, these individuals do not represent the collective identity of internal minorities; instead, they are usually enforced to fulfilling the interest of dominant groups. The mere presence of representatives of minority groups in the legislature is not by itself enough (Addisu, 2020; Dessalegn, 2016). For the effectiveness and realizing minority representation, for instance, "one of the core pillars of minority rights is the representation and participation of minorities in the decision-making process. This is very crucial especially regarding issues, which are concerns of minorities" (Chekole, 2012, p. 8) However, democracy is defective if the system is ruled by dominant groups/s without the proportional inclusion of the minority (Dessalegn, 2016). In this regard, legislative representation carries powerful symbolic power for internal minorities (Moser, 2008). In the circumstance where minority representation exists, as indorsed by Verstichel (2010) minority representation in decision-making processes should be translated into influence over decision-making outcomes. This flawed representation is simply window-dressing (Dessalegn, 2016). Effective representation of minorities is more than a mere presence that representatives of minority groups, particularly in areas affecting their needs, should not be outvoted. Instead, they should be given some veto rights to balance the majoritarian dominance (Verstichel, 2010).

The local government provides schools for minority children. Similarly, Cohen (2006); Daba (2010) confirmed that in the study area mother tongue education is provided for children in *Amharic* and *Oromifa*. But, all schools except *Urgee Berressa* at Goba, are blended with dominant group's children schools and children of internal minority face systematically designed problems with mother tongue education, for instance, they are denying educational opportunities of minority school teachers, delays of curriculum, an enormous shortage of school infrastructure, high rate of student dropout, students migrate to other regions, and children are enforced to attend at dominant group schools. Children of internal minorities attending dominant schools face the hardship of receiving instruction and finally discontinue their education (Mowbray, 2012). In problematizing the issue, Fessha and Beken (2013) also argue that the problem of addressing internal minority rights is often visible in language policy and education.

In the final variable, the finding shows the absence of a special institution that is responsible to protect and preserve the rights of internal minorities in the region. For instance, the South Africa experience can be a good lesson in this regard. Tesfaye (2008) disclosed the experience of South Africa, and he stated as “in addition to judicially enforceable Bill of Rights, the constitution provides non-territorial protection of languages and culture by providing the establishment of a Commission for the Protection and Promotion the Rights of Culture, Religious and Linguistic Communities.” Subsequently, this commission has great relevance for the protection of dispersed minorities, and as its objective shows, it must work toward ensuring the development of harmonious co-existence and shared identity (Tesfaye, 2008). Similarly, Section 185(2) of the Republic of South Africa (1996) stipulates the commission's function as it empowers to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise, and report on issues concerning the right of culture, religion, and linguistic communities. In the same vein, Fessha and Beken (2013) firmly adhere that non-territorial autonomy is a good solution for protecting internal minorities.

Conclusion and Policy Implication

The culture of tolerance among society is failing from time to time basically due to institutional weakness and ethnic-driven political problems. Problems also lead to tension and induce mistrust among ethnic groups in the areas. Due to the absence of effective institutions that protect internal minorities, they lost their sense of belongingness to the area in which they bear and grow up. Besides the preamble, Article 8 of the regional constitution of Oromia stipulates it as the sole barrier of the region is the Oromo people. Thus, there are no adequate legal or institutional mechanisms through which the internal minorities are accommodated in the political space of town administrations. Albeit Amharic schools exist for internal minorities in both town administrations, the right to mother tongue does not adequately address because of different constraints facing the school. Internal minorities in both towns are excluded from representation in the legislative, executive organs, and various public institutions because of unfair and ineffective legal and institutional frameworks. Generally, the study shows internal minorities face systematic segregation from political, economic, and social aspects. Therefore, its implication could be both to the federal and regional government to make the federal matrix of Ethiopia is realistic in the protection of the internal minority. First, there should be an amendment of the regional constitution and related proclamations in a way to effectively protect the interest of minorities in the area. Secondly, since inducing inter-ethnic mistrust and tension is looming in the region, the town administrations, regional government, and the federal government should work on people-to-people integration with different platforms like popular festivals, public discussion. Thirdly, either the federal or regional government should form an extraordinary institution for the protection of minorities and can be mandated to promote better cultural relationships among various ethnic groups.

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The data and material used for this article are found in the hands of the author.

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The data was collected after the author got approval from the study area town administrations.

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