

Addis Ababa University

**Causes and Consequences of Early Marriage
among Selale Oromo Women:
The Case Study of Hidabu Abote and Kuyu Woredas,
North Shewa Zone, Oromia National Regional State**

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BY: AMSALU HUNDIE

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to those women who are discriminated from birth to death and are victims of early marriage through out Ethiopia.

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Glossary

- Aseena* _____ A girl going to a man for marriage without his knowledge
- Ayyaana* _____ Deity or divinity believed to bring death, disease, happiness etc.
- Bullukkoo* _____ A thick traditional cloth made of cotton that is often worn
by males usually in the evening.
- Caacuu fi Kallachaa* _____ A Symbol used for spiritual and traditional belief of Oromo
in the community.
- Dabo* _____ Traditional Unity for self help scheme
- Gaabbi* _____ Cloth made of cotton that is worn by both
males and female during the day time.
- Gott* _____ A unit for development activities below Kebele level.
- Guudifachaa* _____ Adoption
- Guuftaa* _____ Just like a big scarf made of cotton usually worn by
females on top of “*Wandabbo*”
- Gurguruu* _____ Giving a daughter for marriage on payments of bride price
- Haaftuu* _____ A girl who has passed her age at first marriage expected
in the community
- kamisii* _____ Just an ordinary dress made of cotton worn by females
but less in quality than ‘*Wandebo*’ .
- Maacaa* _____ The bride wealth in the form of money given to the bride’s
parents as supplementary to ‘*uuwisaa*’
- Natella* _____ Almost half of ‘*Gaabbi*’ but less in quality to be worn
on top of ‘*Kamisi*’
- Qaalu* _____ A person who pretends that he knows every thing
by virtue of possessing power from God.
- Sabata* _____ Just like a belt made of cotton for tying the ‘*Wandebbo*’
- Uwisaa ufachuu* _____ Wearing of traditional clothes by the daughter’s parents as
the bride wealth.
- Wandabboo* _____ Wide traditional dress made of cotton that is
worn by older women.

List of Acronyms

BOFED.....	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
CEDAW.....	Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination against Women
CRC.....	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRLP.....	Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
DHS.....	Demographic and Health Survey
EGLDAM.....	Ethiopia Gojii Limadew Dirgitoch Aswagajii Mahiber
EWLA.....	Ethiopian Women’s Lawyers Association
FDRE.....	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD.....	Focus Group Discussion
FFS.....	Forum for Social Studies
FMRWG.....	Forum on Marriage and Rights of Women and Girls
HTP.....	Harmful Traditional Practices
IAC.....	Inter Africa Committee
IGS.....	Institute of Gender Studies
NCTPE.....	National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia
NGO.....	Non Government Organizations
UDHR.....	Universal Declaration of Human Right
UN.....	United Nations
UNECA.....	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA.....	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF.....	United Nations Children’s Fund
WAO.....	Women’s Affairs Office
WHO.....	World Health Organization

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage is a deep rooted and tradition based practice in major parts of Ethiopia. Women are victims of early marriage as holding family responsibilities before they get matured physically and psychologically represses their participation in social and economic development of activities of the nation. The main objective of this study is to investigate the causes and consequences of early marriage among Selale Oromo women residing in the North Shewa Zone of Oromia Regional National State.

A survey was conducted in two randomly selected woredas; namely *Hidabu Abote* and *Kuyu* to collect qualitative and quantitative information on causes and consequences of early marriage. Statistical data were collected by employing structured questionnaires to measure the magnitude of the early marriage practices, while in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were held to gather detailed information that help to investigate the root causes and consequences of early marriage.

Findings of the study reveal that early marriage is widely practiced in the study communities due to economic motives derived from parents and close relatives, societal influences and cultural impacts. The economic motives behind early marriage includes parent's desire to strengthen economic ties with in-laws, to get betrothal gifts from the bride groom's family, to improve the economic conditions/vulnerability of the family and parent's desire to secure their children's future before they pass away. Societal influence, on the other hand, deals with the urge of parents to establish or strengthen kin relationship, to avoid loss of virginity and clear of stigma of '*haaftuu*'. Cultural impacts that promote conformity of the age old tradition, fear of traditional belief of the Oromo known as '*Caacuu and Kallacha*' and elder's pervasiveness are also identified as one of the factors promoting early marriage. More importantly, marital disruption, problems related with sexuality, reproductive health and child delivery, perpetuation of poverty among victims of early marriage and lack of educational opportunity are also documented as consequences of early marriage.

The study concludes that problems associated with early marriage are pertinent issue of girls/women in the study area, as the practice that is supported by social norms and customs goes against their right. To overcome such a problem, findings of the study call for strong campaign to enhance the legal literacy of women, community leaders and gender activists; putting pressure on legal enforcing bodies to fight against such harmful traditional practices, and formulating net working with different government, non-government and civil societies that work on gender issues.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Early marriage refers to the practice of marriage before or during adolescence. It is any form of marriage that takes place before a child has become 18 years old. It is a kind of marriage usually conducted without the full consent of both couples.

As the global understanding of marriage is expressed in terms of the legal age for marriage, early marriage is not something that is accepted as it is. Early marriage prevails across much of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It also involves both girls and boys. The problem with the magnitude of early marriage is lack of comprehensive statistics. As early marriage is customarily practised and there is no registration of marriage particularly in the rural area, it is difficult to explain it. Although both girls and boys are forced in to marriage, the low status of girls in many countries makes them to marry at earlier age and at times to older people.

UNICEF (2000) defines early marriage as any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and child-bearing.

In the Ethiopian context early marriage is described as a deep-rooted, age old and traditional practice mainly among peasant communities of Christian dominated and crop producing highlands of central and northern Ethiopia (Haile Gabriel, 1994). Customs surrounding marriage including the desirable age and issues related to it depend on the view of the family and society makes difficult to give a universal definition for early marriage (UNICEF, 2001). Therefore, the global understanding of marriage ability is expressed in terms of the legal age for marriage (Guday, 2005:55).

As it has been observed from different studies, early marriage of girls is widely practised in Ethiopia in general and particularly in the northern parts of the country (Haile Gabriel, 1994; Guday, 2005). Although there is the legal provision for the protection of early marriage, the practice continued to be implemented.

Women's participation in all spheres of life at national and regional level can not be realized unless the issue of early marriage is properly addressed and treated. And hence, it remains the major problem for personal and social development of women in Ethiopia. Early marriage is a practice that parents particularly and the communities at large impose on the girl child (Haile Gabriel 1994; NCTPE 2003; Guday 2005). As the marriage is executed without considering the physical, and psychological development of the girl child, it has adverse effects on the overall development of the girl child.

According to Haile Gabriel (1994:3) "Early marriage in Ethiopia mainly takes place under the customary marriage known as 'Semanya', which is a legal marriage based on agreement between two families." While commenting on the social implications of early marriage, Guday (2005: 124) also stated that it is the most privileged form of marriage marked with an elaborate wedding ceremonies and feasts.

The first national base line survey that was conducted in Ethiopia in 1998 by the National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia (NCTPE) revealed that marriage under 18 years of maturity age is widely practised in Ethiopia with the national prevalence of 54.6%. Prevalence of early marriage was 56.5% in rural areas while it was 48.9% in urban areas (Haile Gabriel, Fissiha, Tilahun, 2004). Regarding the magnitude of early marriage, it has been stated that about 25 ethnic groups, including Oromo, Amhara, Tigray and Gurage practice early marriage with occurrence rates between 50-80%. Thirteen smaller ethnic groups such as Agew and Kemant from Amhara societies, Fadish, Gumuz, Gedeo, Kuyru and Ma'ο from Benshangul communities practice early marriage at a occurrence rates between 80-100%. Besides, Members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (43%) tends to practice early marriage much often than other religious groups, including the Muslims (29%) (Haile Gabriel, Fissiha, Tilahun, 2004). Although early marriage is widely practiced in many parts of the country, the prevalence rates in Amhara and Tigray regions are much higher than the national average (82 percent in Amhara, 79 percent in Tigray, as compared to 64 percent in Benshangul, and in Gambella each and 46 percent in Afar (NCTPE, 2003).

Population Council (2004 cited in Path Finder International Ethiopia 2006) in its recent study conducted in two woredas of the Amhara region has showed that 14% of women were married

before age ten, 39 % before age fifteen, and 56 % before age eighteen. Supporting the aforementioned findings, another study conducted on causes and consequences of early marriage in Amhara Region by Path Finder International Ethiopia (2006) showed that 15% of ever married women in Amhara region were married before the age of 12 years. The same study also revealed that about 44% of urban and 53 % of rural ever married women were first married between ages of 12 and 15 years as compared to 16.2 % of rural women and 26.6 % of urban women married at the age of 18 or older. According to this survey the mean age at first marriage was 14.5 years.

With respect to the practice of early marriage in North Shewa Administrative Zone Of Oromia Region, the sample survey result on Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP), Women's Participation in Economic, Social and Political situations, Use of Family Planning and Perception of Pre marriage HIV/AIDS test organized by Women's Affairs Technique Committee of North Shewa Zone of Oromia National Regional State (2005) identifies early marriage as the second major practice in eight weredas of the Zone. Besides, a study on culturally condoned violence against women in three selected regions of Ethiopia (FFS, 2003) revealed that most of the girls in Oromia marry at around the age of 15 although girls marry at ages as early as ten years in Northern Shewa Zone.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most studies on early marriage have focused on premature sex and pregnancy and school drop-out. Early marriage has been discussed from health perspectives in relation to fistula (Tabeyin, 1993); justice (Netasanet, 2003); education (Guday, 2005). More over, many of them focused on defining early marriage from the point of different factors exacerbating the perpetuation of early marriage at national or regional level.

According to the national baseline survey that was conducted in 1998 by NCTPE, occurrence of early marriage in Oromia region was 48.9% with a Mean age of 17 at marriage. As it has been explained in the already mentioned survey, the occurrence of early marriage in Oromia region by zone is as is shown below;

Table 1.1 Prevalence Rate of Early Marriage in Oromia Zones (1998)

Zone	%	Zone	%
East Hararghe	97	Bale	44
North Shewa	85	Ilubabor	40
East Shewa	74	Jima	33
West Hararghe	71	Borena	16
West Shewa	68	East Wellega	16

Source: NCTPE, 1998

In spite of the highest prevalence of early marriage in East Hararghe, the researcher focused to carry out the study in North Shewa Zone due to the time constraint and accessibility of the zone. Although early marriage is researched predominately centering the Amhara communities, it has not been researched in the in the middle of Oromo communities particularly in the Northern Shewa Zone of Oromia Regional State. Thus, the researcher became interested to find out the socio- cultural factors of early marriage among Selale Oromos that enforce early marriage. i.e. causes and consequences of early marriage among them in a very comprehensive way and at the grass root level for this has not been researched so far.

Moreover, the study helps the Selale Oromo women through giving voice to voiceless group. The study, using women's experience as a stand point, wants to reveal the consequences of early marriage from the experiences of the victims themselves. Explaining the importance of bringing women's experience to the forefront, Reinharz (1992) stated that revealing women's life and experience by themselves as subjects of the issue is of paramount importance in feminist research.

In general, the researcher wants to reveal the practice and effects of early marriage among Selale Oromos at the grass root level in the community. Besides, the birth place of her parents is Selale, and this has helped in sharing the experience in marriage life and stimulated her to

work on early marriage particularly among Selale Oromos. Is it not necessary then to study the causes and consequences of early marriage among Selale Oromos in their own settings?

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study is to investigate the causes and consequences of early marriage among Selale Oromo women residing in North Shewa Zone of Oromia Region. More specifically, the study attempts to:

- Identify the root causes of early marriage among Selale Oromo women.
- Analyze and describe social norms and customs promoting early marriage.
- Investigate the over all problems (impacts and consequences) of early marriage.
- Suggest ways and means of reducing and thus eliminating the practices of early marriage.

1.4. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The major limitations in under taking this study were the absence of detailed and in-depth study on causes and consequences of early marriage in the study area and at regional level, and the National Baseline Survey of 1998 by NCTPE on early marriage that provides only the prevalence rate in each zone without assessing issues related to it. Although an effort is made to reveal the consequences of early marriage from the point of women's/victims' perspective, it is difficult to reveal the psychological trauma of victims of early marriage as words fail to express their deep feelings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Feminists' debate on the issue of early marriage usually revolves on the rights of women and children as well as on the issue of consent to marriage. Their discussion is not limited to women but extends to include men in early marriage. The feminists raise the disadvantage of women being married at early age in two ways. The denial of the rights guaranteed to children and denied of the rights guaranteed to women for they are forced to marry at early age with out their consent.

Feminists view on early marriage is thus as early marriage lacks the necessary consent and should be regarded as legally invalid or punishable by law. Advocates of women right argue strongly 'a society can not prosper if the interests of women in its society are neglected.' They emphasized that the main reason for this sort of discrimination against women basis the fact that historically and universally, women and girls are treated as inferior and secondary to men.

These women's right advocates emphasize on describing early marriage as 'a multiple abuse' of a girl's human rights. This 'multiple abuse' has been explained as firstly deprivation of women's freedom, and hindrance to educational development, an early marriage usually tends to be followed by an early pregnancy and women are likely to endure sever physical, and psychological damage as a result of giving birth at such a young age.

The review of literature related to this study focuses on:

- a) An Over view of Early Marriage in International and Regional Context
- b) Early Marriage in the Ethiopian Context
- c) Causes of Early Marriage
- d) Consequences of Early Marriage

a) An Over view of Early Marriage in International and Regional Context

Different studies revealed the prevalence of early marriage in developing countries such as Africa, Asia and Latin America (FMRWG, 2000; UNICEF, 2001; Charles, 2003;). According

to NCTPE (2003) high rates of early marriage among girls under 19 years old have been reported in South East Asia (54%), Africa (44 %), South Asia (24%) and Latin America (16 %) in general.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s research report titled "Early Marriage: Child Spouse" (2001) examined early marriage, marriage of children and adolescent below the age of 18 that is widely practised from the human right's perspective. The study revealed that the prevalence rate of early marriage among girls residing in Central and West Africa was 40% and 49%, respectively; while it is about 27% in East Africa and 20% in North and Southern Africa. To mention the situation in some of the Sub Saharan African countries, the prevalence rate is 77% in Niger, 70% in Mali, 62% in Burkina Faso, 57% in Mozambique while it is about 64.9% in the Middle East and North Africa, 30% in Egypt.

Studies conducted on trends of Marriage and Early Child bearing in Developing Countries' on the basis of DHS data also revealed that some of the Sub-Saharan Africa countries particularly Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali had the highest early marriage practices ranging over 80%. (Charles, 2003). The same source also describes that out of the 30 countries that were covered by the survey, the prevalence rates of 11 countries lie between 60-80% and the rates of another 11 countries range between 40-60%. The least prevalence rate is recorded for South Africa and Namibia 14.2% and 20% respectively. According to this study Ethiopia had a prevalence rate of 64.7 % by then. The African Child Policy Forum (2006) that analyzed the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) carried out between 1986 and 2004 also identified the proportion of girls aged 20-24 years old who were married before the age of 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa among 14 countries revealed that Niger 76.6%, Mali 65.4%, Mozambique 57%, Uganda 54.1%, followed by Ethiopia 49.1%. Therefore, early marriage is predominately practised in Africa.

Similar to the situation in Africa, patterns of early marriage are much more diverse in Asia. The extreme cases are Afghanistan and Bangladesh, where 54 percent and 51 percent of girls respectively are married by age 18 (UNICEF, 2001). Charles (2003) also stated that from the South and Southeast Asian countries Bangladesh, Nepal and India have taken the lead 75.4%, 74.5%, and 66.4% respectively while Pakistan (37%) and Indonesia (34%) were in the lowest

category (UNICEF,2001). On the other hand, in Caribbean and Latin America girls get married at early age between15-19. However, these figures mark diversity with much higher ages in the Caribbean and lower ages in countries such as Paraguay, Mexico and Guatemala (UNICEF, 2001). In general, early marriage is an issue of developing countries though the prevalence rate differs between continents and countries.

b) Early Marriage in the Ethiopian Context

As it has been observed from different studies, early marriage of girls is widely practised in Ethiopia in general and in the northern part of the country in particular (Haile Gabriel, 1994; NCTPE, 2003; Netasnet, 2003; Guday, 2005; Path Finder International, 2006).

The 2005 Ethiopian DHS report indicated that 13% of the girls in Ethiopia are married by age 15 (a slight decline from 14% reported by 2000 Ethiopian DHS but those married before 18 remained high at 66% (CSA and ORC Macro,2006). The median age also remained at about 16 years for the nation. The survey reported that the lowest median age at first marriage is 14.2 years in the Amhara followed by Benishangul Gumuz and Tigray 15.3 and 15.6 years, respectively. Whereas, the median age at first marriage in Oromia is 16.7 years. The DHS report has further revealed that the practice of early marriage is decreasing among the younger generation.

In the Ethiopia context, the research carried out in Amhara and Tigray regions identified six types of marriages namely promissory marriage, child marriage, early adolescent marriage, late adolescent marriage, adult marriage, and old age marriage (Haile Gabriel,1994). According to this comprehensive survey, the age preferred by the parents and community to marry off their children (ideal age) is 14.4 years for girls while 20.1 years for boys.

While describing early marriage in Northern Ethiopia, four kinds of marriage arrangements have been identified based on the age of the bride: Promissory marriage (before the birth of the child), child marriage (usually under 10 years of age in a form of *Madego*: that is introduction of a girl to wife-hood under the custody of parents-in-law until she reaches puberty age), early adolescent marriage (between 10-14 years in a form of *Meleles*: the married

child may stay with parents but periodically visits her parents-in-law), and late adolescent marriage between 15-18 years (Guday,2005).

Promissory marriage arrangement occurs when a friendly family shows interest, as long as the girl's parents are respected and of good standing in wealth and status. Unlike this, child marriage is the one that a girl can get married any time to a boy a little older than her. In this case, the wedding is arranged without consummation of marriage in the form of '*Madego*' (where a girl stays under the custody of her mother-in-law) or '*Meleles*' (if a girl child refuses to stay in her mother's in laws house). In any case this marriage arrangement is performed to introduce her to subordinate status as a wife (Haile Gabriel, 1994).

On the other hand, when a girl reaches early adolescent age, a marriage takes place and at the same time consummation of marriage is allowed at the wedding night which is also applicable for late adolescent marriage. If a girl does not get married at early and late adolescent period, the girl as well as the parents gets ashamed for they don't adhere to the age old tradition. Therefore, early adolescent marriage takes place for the conformity of the tradition of getting a girl child married at early age as a norm or a tradition among the Tigre–Amhara cultural groups (Haile Gabriel, 1994).

C) Causes of Early Marriage

Most of the literatures focused on defining early marriage from the point of factors exacerbating the perpetuation of it and their findings revolve around economic, social, and cultural factors (NCTPE,1997; FMRWG,2000; Essayas,2000; Guday,2005; Path finder International Ethiopia,2006)

According to UNICEF (2001) undermining the impact and consequences encountered on the girl child, many societies primarily in Africa and South Asia continue to support the idea that girls should marry at a very early age. Marriage is considered as a family building strategy, an economic arrangements or a way to protect girls from unwelcome sexual advances. For example, it was illustrated in India basically as an economic arrangement; in Niger mainly to follow tradition, reinforce ties among communities, and to protect girls from out of wedlock

pregnancies; in Bangladesh as a means to protect parents from an economic burden and protect a girl's sexual purity.

Therefore, the causes of early marriage are diverse and more of complex. In Africa, the most commonly cited motives to justify the practice of early marriage include preventing extra marital pregnancy/child bearing, strengthening friendship between families, the need to establish a family for one's child before one dies, promised marriage as payments for debts that can be considered as part of the future bride price, and to ensure the girl's virginity (Monoja, 1997; IAC, 1997). Similarly, the main reason that girls in Latin America get married early with parental consent is usually due to pre marital pregnancy. Explaining such a situation FMRWG (2000:7-8) states that "In Bolivia, Elsalvador, Guatemala, the shame of pregnancy out of wedlock appears to be the most steadfast reason for a couple marrying no matter what their age".

The motives that perpetuate early marriage in Ethiopia is somewhat linked to that of Africa's and Asian countries. In the Ethiopian Context, early marriage is practiced for several reasons. Most of the reasons revolve around and are tied to economic, social and cultural factors. According to the results of different studies conducted in the country (NCTPE,1997; Essayas ,2000; Guday,2005; Path finder International Ethiopia,2006) the major reasons for the practice of early marriage among the different ethnic and religious groups are to improve the economic status of the family through marriage, the parent's desire to see the marriage of their daughter and their off springs before they pass away, to strengthen ties between the marrying families, to avoid the perpetuation of non married status/ that is ensuring that a girl gets husband, and to avoid premarital sex or loss of virginity and its consequences.

For instance, as Haile Gabriel (1994) clearly stated in the survey result of Socio-Cultural Background of Early marriage in Ethiopia particularly among Tigre and Amhara communities of Northern part of the country, the major factors that still sustain early marriage are the urgency to utilize the immediate capacity of parents to establish a family for their children; "The marriage rush" is partly to enlarge kinship relations for protection and economic security. Another reason, of course is the urge to conform to the internalized norms of age old

compelling tradition and the patriarchal subordination of women that places high value on virginity.

Similarly, among the communities of Bachema and Rim, Mecha Woreda, West Gojjam ‘parents arrange early marriages for their children mainly for socio-economic reasons and life insecurities, In this communities Guday stated that (2005:139) socio-cultural reasons and gender ideologies contribute to the relatively higher prevalence rate of early marriage for girls. The main socio-cultural reasons that parents marry of their daughter at an early age is the need to secure their daughters’ future and to protect them from the dangers of pre-marital sex and its social consequences (Guday, 2005:139). Besides, poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage in all circumstances. Whatever the reason behind, the underlying cause of early marriage in Ethiopia is part and parcel of discrimination against girls and women from the time they are born and through out their life cycles (FMRWG, 2000).

d) Consequences of Early Marriage

According to UNICEF (2001) early marriage for both sexes has an influence in physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts, including lack of educational opportunities and chances of personal growth. Where as, for girls, in addition, it will almost certainly mean premature pregnancy and child delivery and is likely to lead to a life time of domestic and sexual subservience over which they have no control. How ever, most studies on the effects of early marriage have focused on the complications related to premature sex, pregnancy and child delivery (Tabeyin, 1993; Okiwelu, 1994; UNICEF, 2001; Essayas, 2000). Explaining the benefits of controlling sexuality, Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (2000:6) stated that “if women have the reproductive health care they need and autonomy in reproductive decision making, they may fully participate in all spheres of the society”.

Regarding complications to pregnancy and child delivery, UNICEF (2001) revealed that statistics show that girls who marry before the age 18 are disproportionately affected by complicated pregnancies that may lead to maternal mortality and morbidity. Girls aged 10-14

are five times more likely to die in pregnancy or child birth than women aged 20-24; girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die where many of these deaths take place within marriage.

Besides, NCTPE (2003) stated that with an estimated 1500 new cases annually, Ethiopia has the highest prevalence of Obstetric fistula in the world. Regarding the effect of early marriage on fueling population pressure and its influence on the victims of early marriage Bogalech (2003:9) stated that births to girls aged 15-19 and 20-24 years contribute to the over all fertility of the country accounting to nearly 1/3 of the total births. More over, the risk of dying due to pregnancy related courses are twice as higher for women age 15-19 than for women age 20-24, and it is higher for girls aged 10-14.

On the other hand, Okiwelu (1994) categorized the consequences of early marriage from two perspectives. He analyzed deeply the health risks of early marriage, pregnancy and child bearing and the social problems related to it. Under health risks of early marriage, he stated sexual abuse, unwanted pregnancies, illegal induced abortions; sepsis, hemorrhage, infertility, death; inadequate antenatal supervision; anemia and malnutrition, spontaneous abortion that can be caused by malnutrition, pre eclampsia and eclampsia (diseases peculiar to pregnancy) ; obstructed labour and fistula; as well as maternal death. “Major reproductive health problems associated with early marriage are: ruptured uterus, fistula, maternal mortality and morbidity, still birth, abortions, sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS, divorce and other gender based violence”(Alemante,2004:4). Therefore, there is a close correlation between child bearings before the ages of 18 and high health risks to both the mother and the baby.

Different studies also reviewed on personal and social problems associated with early marriage such as dropping out of school, psychological complications, dissolution of marriage, rural-urban migration, prostitutions and the health risks of AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease. (Tabeyin, 1993; Okiwelu, 1994; Essayas, 2000; UNICEF, 2001; Alemante, 2004 Guday, 2005 ;) According to Okiwelu (1994) a victim of early marriage without education and income is likely to affect not only herself but also her off spring. Emphasizing on the worst outcome of early marriage, Okiwelu (1994, 136) said that “teenage mother begets a teen age mother”. NCTPE (2003) in ‘Old beyond Imaginings-Ethiopia Harmful Traditional Practices’ citing the 1998 National Base line Survey revealed that early marriage is

predominately practised among the high lands of Amhara and Tigray societies. Commenting on the consequences of early marriage, the study has indicated that 47% of the girls who got married before age 15 dissolved their marriage.

Early marriage is also commented as one of the 'tradition based violence' (EGLDAM, 2007). Out of the violence's against women in the family the marriage of children and adolescent below the age of 18, which can lead to poverty, health problems (fistula), early pregnancy and other vulnerability to violence is registered. Besides, forced marriage in any situation in which women and girls are coerced, enticed, induced or tricked into marriage are taken as the violence against women in the Glossary of Violence Against Women (The NGO Working Group on Violence against Women,2004)

In general, early marriage severely affects the whole life of the girl child. The low status and the communities' negative attitude for girls indulge them in multifaceted problems from birth to death. Thus, the participation of girls in education is very low, early marriage is a norm that exposes them to early pregnancy and child delivery.

The whole issue emanates from the discrimination against girls that is manifested in different forms of gender related violence. Such barriers to improving women's health and living standard are often rooted in social, economic, cultural, legal, and related conditions that transgress health considerations. Social factors, such as lack of literacy, and of educational or employment opportunities, deny young women alternatives to early marriage and early child bearing. Therefore, the gender dimension of early marriage is addressed as the deprivation of women's right in all spheres which results to gender inequality and power imbalance in gender relationship.

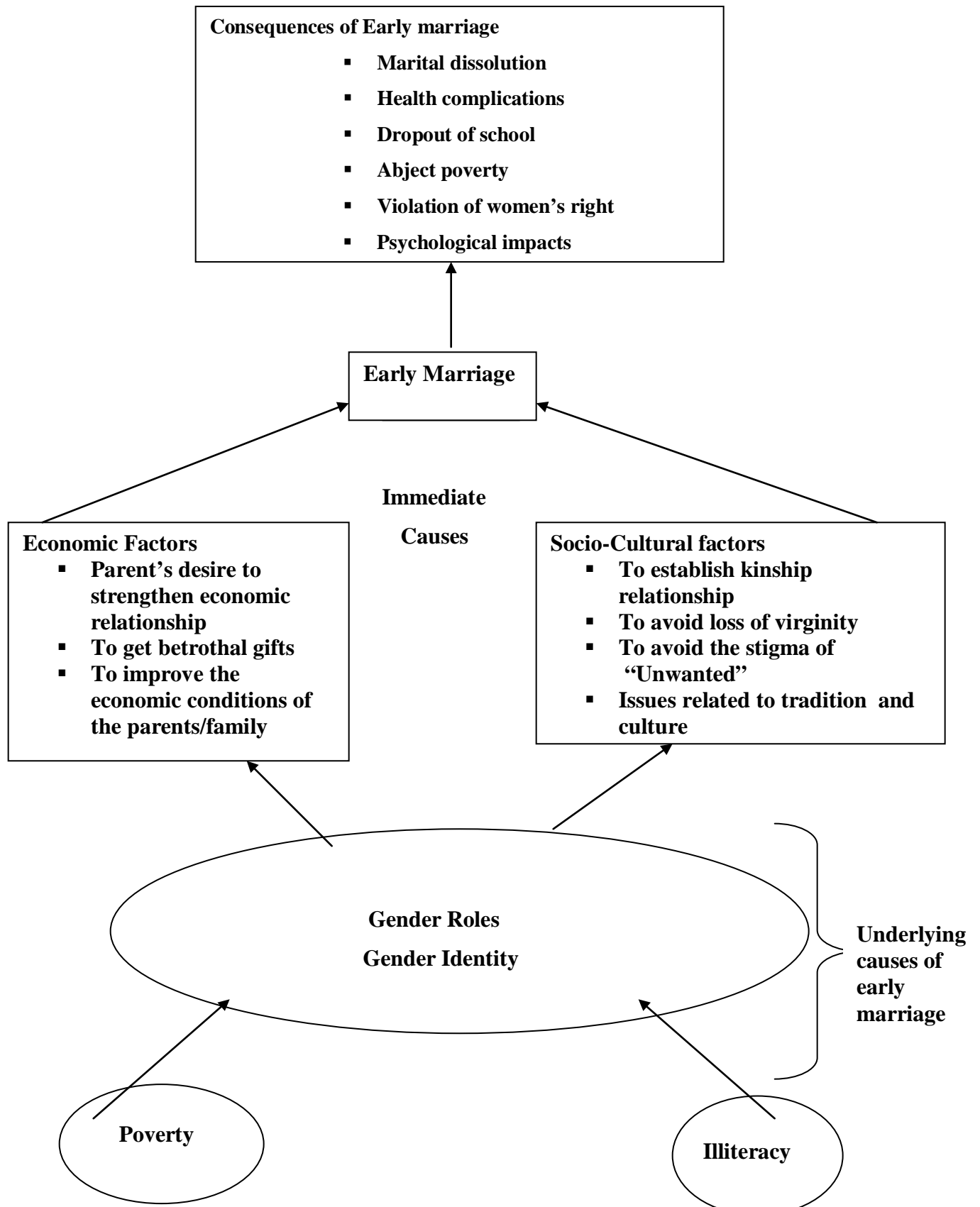
e) Conceptual Framework :-

It is developed based on the readings of reviewed literature and it is analytical base for the study. Poverty and illiteracy intertwined with the socially constructed gender roles and behaviour in the community are the underlying causes of early marriage while the immediate causes of early marriage can be viewed from the perspective of economic and socio-cultural factors. The immediate economic factors for early marriage are Parent's desire to strengthen economic relationship, to get betrothal gifts and to improve the economic conditions of the parents/family.

Where as, the socio-cultural factors are to establish kinship relationship, to avoid loss of virginity, to avoid the stigma of 'haaftuu' and issues related to tradition and culture. These causes of early marriage lead to the consequences of early marriage such as marital dissolution, Health complications, Dropout of school, Abject poverty, Violation of women's right and Psychological impacts.

The following conceptual or theoretical frame work has been developed by the researcher as analytical frame work for the causes and consequences of early marriage.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This section of the thesis describes the methods used, subjects included in the study, the instruments and procedures used for data collection, and the techniques employed for data analysis. The study is based on data collected in Hidabu Abote and Kuyu Woredas of North Shewa Zone of Oromia National Regional State. Detailed description of the study area has been presented in Chapter Four.

3.1 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The research methodology that was applied in this study is both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative methodology is used as the main tool for collecting the data while quantitative is taken as supplementary. The triangulation method is used when combinations of the two forms of inquiry are used (Dawson, 2002: 23). Thus, the primary source of data collection instruments that were employed is questionnaire, in depth interview and focus group discussions.

3.1.1 Questionnaire: - The closed-ended questionnaire is employed to collect quantitative data from 300 households of the sampled population.

3.1.2. Interviewing: - Unstructured/in depth interviews have been carried out with the victims of early marriage, and those who are at risk of early marriage so as to assess the causes and consequences of early marriage from the experiences of different cohorts. Thus, a total of twelve in depth interviews were conducted with victims of early marriage who have different life experience (For details in the in-depth interview see Appendix 4).

In addition to the in-depth interviews, Key informants interview was carried out at Woreda level with experts of sectoral offices to grasp ideas as to what the magnitude of the problem is and what is being done so far. A total of twelve interviews with government officials and six opinion makers of the communities were held at Woreda level (see Appendix 2A).

Attempts were also made to interview clan and religious leaders to dig out on the root causes and factors responsible for the perpetuation of early marriage (see Appendix 2B).

3.1.3. Focus group discussion/Group interview: - Separate focus group discussion was also carried out with victims of early marriage. The discussion was focused on childhood experience and life after marriage in general. It was carried out with married older women (over the age of 40), middle aged women (between 25 and 40), divorcees and widowed women and unmarried girls who are at risk of early marriage (below 18 years). Altogether eight focus group discussions were conducted. (See Appendix 3) The focus group discussion was conducted in school compound. Like results of in depth interviews and focus group discussion findings were used to report on causes and consequences of early marriage as their consensus is more helpful to explore the issue in detail.

3.2. SAMPLE DESIGN AND SAMPLE SELECTION

The study was conducted in two weredas; namely Hidabu Abote and Kuyu of North Shewa Administrative Zone of Oromia Regional State. These weredas were selected randomly. From each of those two weredas, two rural kebeles were again selected randomly. Two 'gotts' were again taken randomly from each of the rural Kebeles. Following such a method, a total of eight gotts were selected to undertake the current study.

First in order to collect quantitative data, closed and structured questionnaire was administered to the sample population (Appendix 1) and the number of households to be sampled from each Kebele was determined. The following assumptions were made to determine the minimum sample size for the study;

- The prevalence of early marriage in North Shewa Zone estimated to be 73%
- A marginal error of 5% was taken assuring a 95% CI (Infinite Interval)

Accordingly, the following formula given by Adem (2003) is used to determine the sample size.

The sample size (n) would therefore be: $n = P(1-P) [Z_{\alpha/2}]^2 / E^2$ where $P=0.73$, $Z=1.96$ $\alpha =0.05$ the sample size equals 302.8 which is approximately taken as 300.

Efforts were made to select households to be included in the sample and identify eligible women through

- Obtaining a list of recent and complete households of each ‘*gotts*’ from Kebele Administration and arrange them sequentially;
- Creating a sampling interval by dividing the total number of households to the required number of sample size, which is 300 in this study as mentioned above;
- Identifying a household to start with using a lottery method and
- Choose every Kth households until the target sample was obtained.

Using the aforementioned procedure, a total of seventy five house holds were taken from each Kebele using systematic random sampling technique, and it constituted 300 households as a whole. Information obtained from the quantitative survey was used to generate data that indicates the prevalence and patterns of early marriage within the study community. Besides, it has served the purpose of identifying members of the FGD and women to be interviewed in detail.

3.3. FIELD WORK PROCEDURE

Before undertaking the actual field work, initial communication was made with Sampled Woreda Administrative Offices through the North Shewa Administrative Zone to get a research permit.

3.3.1. Quantitative Data

The quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaire (Appendix 1). It was designed to generate a wide range of statistical information that would describe the existing situation in general. Besides, it served to identify women that would be included in the focus group discussion and in depth interview based on their personal profile. All women and men above 10 years old were considered as eligible for the study.

The questionnaire was prepared in English and translated into the local language, ‘Afan Oromo’. The translated questionnaire was then pre tested on twenty women residing outside

the study village. The purpose of the pre test was to assess the gap in terms of content and structure of the questionnaire. All the necessary modifications were made before finalizing the instrument. Eight enumerators and two supervisors, all females, are employed for the collection of quantitative data. They were selected setting the criteria related to educational background, behavior and experience in field work. The enumerators and supervisors were given training for two days on the objectives of the study and the guiding principles on data collection. The day-to-day activity of each field work was supervised by 2 female supervisors who were selected on the basis of their experience in similar activities. The quantitative data collection process at each woreda has taken about seven days and the entire survey was completed in two weeks period.

3.3.2. Qualitative Data

For qualitative data, the methods employed were in depth interview and focus group discussions. Interview and discussion guide questions were prepared in English and translated into local language 'Afan Oromo' for easy communication. As Gary (2001) stated for the qualitative data the approach of obtaining the information in the research process is to move from general to specific question so as to stimulate the respondents' attitude towards responding the issue. Key informants interview was also carried out with six respondents of sector offices from each Woreda on causes and consequences of early marriage.

The respondents were selected in consultation with knowledgeable persons in the area and their level of knowledge on the subject matter. As the motive of such interview is to dig out the root causes of early marriage and factors enforcing it, the essence was helpful to understand the subject matter in much detail. Key informants interviews were also conducted with influential persons living in the study villages of the study area like elders, religious and clan leaders so as to obtain further information particularly on the socio-cultural and traditional norms affecting early marriage. Each in depth interview and focus group discussions was tape-recorded, and at some point notes were also taken. All data recorded on tapes were transcribed and translated into English before undertaking data analysis.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

In the study, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to analyze the information sources. The data collected using the questionnaire was entered into a computer and analyzed accordingly using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics specifically percentages and averages were used to analyze the data as the main purpose to get summarized statistics that revolves around the general background characteristics of respondents in the study area.

Regarding the information obtained from interview and focus group discussion, thematic and comparative analysis were used as an approach for the analysis (Dawson, 2001:15). After transcribing the information obtained from in-depth interview and focus group discussion into 'Afan Oromo' and translating in English language, themes were identified. Then, major issues within each theme were further reduced and revisited while checking the consistency of each of the ideas that arose during the field work. Similar ideas were clustered and different ideas were further checked on the spot in the field. The core issues pertinent to the objectives were separated. Pseudo names that are shortened to the first alphabet of the names were used in analyzing in-depth interview of the victims. Finally, data from quantitative and qualitative methodology were integrated and analyzed so as to give interpretation of the whole study.

In general, qualitative data was used to obtain the information required to assess the root causes, enforcing factors and impacts and consequences of early marriage while quantitative data was used to measure the level and magnitude of early marriage in the study area.

CHAPTER FOUR

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY AREA AND POPULATION

In this section, the general characteristics of the study area and population are presented. First an effort was made to present the geographical, population, and socio economic characteristics of North Shewa Administrative Zone followed by the sample woredas. Then, demographic characteristics of the study population have been presented.

4.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY ZONE

North Shewa Zone which was selected for this study has an area of 11,377km², located between 8^o57' and 10^o23' N latitudes and 37^o56' and 39^o32'E longitudes. It borders Amhara Regional State, West Shewa administrative zone, and the city Administration of Addis Ababa and East Shewa zone (fig 2). Fiche is the Zonal capital located in the central part of the zone. About 20.7%, 42.6% and 36.7% of the total area of the zone is covered by tropical (Kolla), Sub-tropical (W/Dega) and temperate (Dega) agro-climatic zones respectively. North Shewa zone has 16 rural woredas and 2 urban reform cities including 321 peasant associations (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of Oromia, 2006)

According to the CSA (2006), North Shewa Administrative Zone has a total populations of 1,621,006 of which (9.5%) are living in urban area. The female population accounted for about half (50.4%) of the total population. According to the 1994 population and housing census, the average family size of North Shewa zone was 4.7 persons per house hold (4.0 for urban and 4.8 for rural). Population in the age groups 0-14, 15-64 and 65 years and above constituted 45.6%, 49.9% and 4.5% of the total population in the zone respectively. Women in the child bearing age (15-49 years) were (22.2%) of the entire population of the zone (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of Oromia, 2006)

Regarding social facilities particularly education and health, the zone has 269 Primary schools (1-8), and 10 secondary and preparatory schools. The enrolled students during the 2003/4 fiscal year first cycle (grade 1-4), and second cycle (grade 5-8) were 114,965 (51,974 female) and 53,102 (20727 female) respectively. Similarly, the enrollment for grade 9-10

and 11-12 were 167 (16 females) and 85 (7 females) respectively (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of Oromia, 2006).

According Oromia Health Bureau's plan and Performance Report of (2003) North Shewa zone has 1 hospital, 6 health centers, 44 clinics and 33 health posts. The number of mothers received antenatal care, post natal care, delivery service and family planning service in the same year were 18,972, 2382, 1869 and 42,478 respectively.

4.2. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY POPULATION

The focus of this particular study is on the rural parts of the two Woredas of the zone namely *Hidabu Abote* and *Kuyu*. These Woredas were randomly selected. *Hidabu Abote* is found at the distance of 147 kilometers away from Addis Ababa. It borders Dera Woreda in the north, Wera Jarso in the west, *Kuyu* in the south and south west, and Degem in the north east, east and south east. Ejere town is the capital of the Woreda. Where as, *Kuyu* is found at the distance of 155k.m.North from Addis Ababa and shares border lines with Wera Jarso in the north and north west, *Hidabu Abote* in the north east, Degem in the east and south east, West Shewa in the west and south. Gebra Guracha is the woreda capital. *Hidabu Abote* has 20 kebeles where as *Kuyu* has 25 Kebeles (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of Oromia, 2006)

Hidabu Abote has a total population of 89,387(3.8 %urban) by July 2006. The female population accounted for about 45,037 (50.3%). The economically active age group (15-64 years) was 50.9% of the total population, while 45.2% and 3.9% were 0-14 and above 64 years respectively. On the other hand, *Kuyu* has a total population of 138,934 (14.2 %urban) by July 2006. The female population accounted for about 70,067 (50.4%). The economically active age group (15-64 years) was 50.8% of the total population, while 44.6% and 4.6% were under 15 and above 64 years respectively. The sample population sizes for both sampled woredas were 927 respondents which were consolidated from 300 house holds of the target population (Bureau of Finance and Economic Development of Oromia, 2006).

Table 4.1 Distribution of House hold Members age 10 and above in the Survey Woreda by sex

Woreda	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Hidebu Abote	259	49.7	262	50.3	521	100
Kuyu	200	49.5	204	50.5	404	100

Out of the total 925 house hold members 466(50.4%) were female whereas 459 (49.6%) were found male. The number of female house hold members was slightly greater than that of the male. When the distribution of respondents by survey sites is observed, the number of respondents at the survey site of Hidabu Abote was 521 (56.3%) and Kuyu 404 (43.7%) (Table 4.1).

Table 4.2 Distribution of House hold members age10 and above by sex

Age of Household members	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Less than 15	85	18.6	92	19.8	177	19.2
15-24	120	26.2	140	30.2	260	28.2
25-34	91	19.9	93	20.0	184	20.0
35-49	86	18.8	91	19.6	177	19.2
50+	76	16.6	48	10.3	124	13.4
Total	458	100	464	100	922	100

Distribution of house hold members by age shows that 18.6% of male and 19.8% of female at the early adolescent ages. Where as, 16.6% of male and 10.3% of female belong to age group above 50. Distribution of age of house hold members is almost evenly distributed between different age groups. This had helped to obtain the pattern and experience of early marriage among different age groups (Table 4.2).

Regarding distribution of respondents by ethnic composition the greater majority (97.4%) were Oromo. As to religion of the respondents 98.3% are Orthodox Christians. Thus, key informants who took part in the interview were Oromo Orthodox Christians.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Household members age 10 and above by Occupation and Sex

Occupation of Household members	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Farmer	311	67.6	243	52.8
Student	127	27.6	108	23.5
Petty trader	9	2.0	27	5.9
Office woman	4	.9	1	.2
House wife	-	-	77	16.7
Daily laborer	2	.4	4	.9
Military	2	.4	-	-
Other	5	1.1	-	-
Total	460	100	460	920

The above table shows most of the participants' i.e. 67.6% of male and 52.8% of female of the survey area are farmers. The next greatest share 27.6% of male and 23.5% of female are students. This implies the relatively higher female participation in education despite the high number of drop outs that is observed usually after the proposal of marriage.

Table 4.4 Distribution of House hold members age 10 and above by Marital status and Sex

Marital Status	Male					Female				
	NM	CM	D	W	S	NM	CM	D	W	S
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
>15	44.8	.0	.0	14.3	.0	56.9	1.5	9.1	.0	.0
15-24	49.7	9.7	33.3	14.3	25.0	41.0	25.1	54.5	6.7	85.7
25-34	3.3	32.6	.0	.0	25.0	2.1	32.2	9.1	6.7	14.3
35-49	.6	32.2	33.3	71.4	25.0	.0	28.5	18.2	43.3	.0
50+	1.7	25.6	33.3	71.4	25.0	.0	12.7	9.1	43.3	.0
Total	181	258	3	7	4	144	267	11	30	7

When we look distribution of house hold members by marital status, most of them 56.6% of male and 58.2% of female are currently married. Where as, 40.4% of male and 31.4% of female found in the group never married. Besides, 6.5% and 2.4% members of the women are in the widowed and divorced group respectively.

Table 4.5 Distribution of House hold members age 10 and above by sex and Education Level

Educational level	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Illiterate	244	54.5%	330	71.7%	574	63.2%
First Cycle (1-4)	118	26.3%	105	22.8%	223	24.6%
Second Cycle (5-8)	70	15.6%	20	4.3%	90	9.9%
Secondary School	16	3.6%	5	1.1%	21	2.3%
Total	448	100.0%	460	100.0%	908	100.0%

As to the level of education of the house hold members 574 (63.2%) were illiterate, 223 (24.6%) have some primary level education. Out of 448 male respondents 244 (54.5%) were illiterate while 118 (26.3%) have some primary level education. Where as, out of 460 female respondents 330 (71.7%) were illiterate and 105 (22.8%) were in the primary level education (Table 4.5)

CHAPTER FIVE

ROOT CAUSES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

The results of in depth interview and focus group discussions held in Hidabu Abote (Gidabo Gorges and Hidabu Jamaa kebeles) and in Kuyu (Jila Kerensa and Dawicha Kerensa kebeles) on early marriage revealed that issues related to early marriage had become the tradition of the communities under study mainly due to acculturation to Amhara communities.

Regarding the age at first marriage among Selale Oromos, for the question at what age most of the time boys and girls get married, the respondents said that during earlier times girls were forced to get married before they reached 12 years of age while for boys between 14 and 16 ages. This time the girl child was given for marriage at early age and had been growing with the spouse in her parents in laws' home.

According to the interview with key informants, nowadays there is a slight improvement in age at first marriage for both sexes. Girls get married between 14 and 16 in most of the cases. Marriage before age 13 is a rare event. Early marriage is a common phenomenon for the girl child in the study area (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Percentage Distribution of Age at First marriage 10 years and above by Sex of Household members

Age at First Marriage	Male			Female		
	Number	Percent	Cumm. Percent	Number	Percent	Cumm. Percent
Less than 12	0	0.0	0.0	40	12.8	12.8
12-15	32	11.8	11.8	152	48.6	61.4
16-17	28	10.3	22.1	72	23.0	84.4
18	39	14.4	36.5	21	6.7	91.1
19-22	108	39.9	76.4	27	8.6	99.7
23-29	49	18.1	94.5	1	0.3	100.0
30+	15	5.5	100.0	0	0.0	100.0
Total	271	100.0		313	100.0	

As it could be discerned from table 5.1, 12.8% of females got married before 12 years of age where as males got married after 12 years in general. This implies the discrepancy between ages at first marriage that can make the boy superior in marriage life. This implies females got married to males who are older than themselves. Moreover, the table also shows the prevalence rate of early marriage. The prevalence of early marriage, marriage below 18 years old is 84.4% for females while it is only 22.1 %for males.

Table 5.2. Percentage Distribution of Household Members by Age at First Marriage, Current Age and Sex

Current Age	Age at First marriage			
	Below age 18		18 and above	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Less than 15	n.a	n.a.	-	-
15-24	25.9	75.0	74.1	25.0
25-34	27.1	82.4	72.9	17.6
35-49	22.4	86.8	77.6	13.2
50+	14.9	97.9	85.1	2.1
Total	22.1	84.4	77.9	15.7

n.a. refers to ever married household members who have not yet reached age 18.

Table 5.2 shows the trend of early marriage over the years. The age at first marriage between different age group reveals the trend of early marriage. As it is observed from table 5.2, 97.9% of women over 50 years of age were married at the age below 18 years of age while 75% of younger women got married at the age below 18 years. When we compare the trend of early marriage over years, it is improving slightly in terms of age at first marriage and in prevalence rate (Table 5.2). According the interview and focus group discussions carried out in the study area, early marriage is practiced particularly for girls before the legal age of 18 years. Mean age at first marriage for female respondents is 14.8 while it is 20.9 for male respondents. The empirical study conducted in rural areas of Tigray, Gonder, Gojjam, Wello, and Bulga of North Shewa revealed mean age for first marriage for female was 13.5

while it was 19.7 years for male (Haile Gabriel, 1994:40). It is, thus, possible to argue that much effort is required to change the existing scenario.

Independent but detailed replies were given from many respondents and focus group discussants for the following questions posed to them: Which group of society marries their children at early age? The researcher tried to summarize and categorize these causes basically under economic motives, societal justifications and cultural factors.

Table 5.3 Root Causes of Early Marriage

Economic Motives	Societal justifications/Influence	Cultural factors/Impacts
1. To strengthen economic relationship/ties	1 To establish or strengthen Kinship Relationship.	1 Early marriage is considered as the tradition of the society
2. To get betrothal gifts from the bride groom's family	2. To avoid loss of Virginity	2 .The fear of the Oromo traditional belief 'Caacuu and Kallachaa' ²
3. To improve the economic conditions/ vulnerability of the family	3. To avoid the stigma of 'Haaftuu' ¹	3. Elder's pervasiveness
4. Parents' desire to secure their child's future before they pass away		

¹“Haaftuu” refers to a girl who could not get married by about age 20. The community looked down at her as if she remains at her parent’s house for not finding marriage partner because she is not wanted’.

²“Caacuu and Kallachaa” is a spiritual and traditional belief of Oromo in the community.

5.1. ECONOMIC MOTIVES.

While responding to a question on who gets rush to marrying off daughters, members of the FGD and key informants focused on three major points: (a) those that are in a better position in living standard or wealth as they are needed to strengthen economic relationship; (b) those parents who want to get some kind of benefit through their child's marriage by receiving gifts from the brides family (c) those poor parents who can not feed their family.

a) To strengthen Economic Relationship/ties through Marriage.

According to key informants and FGD, those parents who are in a better economic position rush to get their daughter married as early as possible. The underlying cause during Haile Selassie regime was the need to get access to land through marital ties. During these days both girls and boys used to get married as early as possible. It was common to ask a child for marriage before it was born in advance among and between people who want each other's relationship through marriage basically to promote economic interest.

After the down fall of Haile Selassie regime, however as land was nationalized, the need to establish or strengthen ties between parents of the same economic status has taken a new feature. That is competition charged to getting tied up to the economically better families before some one takes over. Here, there was a rivalry between boy's families. Explaining the then situation Guday (2005:139) stated that among the socio-economic reasons the need to forge economic, social and even political alliances with families or individuals....with specific reference to the need for forging an economic alliance through early marriage practice is primarily based on "equal-matching" between the inter marrying families.

Thus, marriage between the preferred or known clans in economy has been rooted in early marriage. Most of the time, preferred clan runs for the tribe/clan of equal resources or status. That is why Guday (2005: 123) explicitly put in plain words that "Marriage is customarily a central concern for two marrying families. The two families arrange marriage for their children based on wealth, social status, and family ties". If the girl's families are in a better position, they like it for they can maintain their property. If they are not in a better position

in wealth, there is a need on the part of the couples to be supported by the boy's family as well.

b) To get betrothal Gifts from the Bridegroom's family/ 'Uwisaa ufachuuf'³

As the information in depth interview and focus group discussion indicated, the urge of the parents of the bride to get bride wealth /betrothal gifts is one of the major factors for early marriage. Parents look forward for the day on which they would get bride wealth as their neighbors or immediate relatives did/ do. According to the interview with key informants and focus group discussion, the bride wealth in the form of betrothal gifts of traditional clothes is not restricted to parents alone. Immediate relatives also share the bride wealth depending on their relationship to the family.

Thus, regarding the role of bride wealth NCTPE (2003:124) stated that "The majority of marriages through out the world are arranged marriages. This is especially true in Africa. In most cases, marriage is not the business of individuals but of the whole family and even of the whole community". Similarly, in one of the zones of Oromia Hirut (2000) revealed that marriage and marriage customs among the Arsi is only legitimized on the payment of bride wealth which will be confirmed and sanctioned with the approval of parents.

³'Uwisaa ufachuuf' means getting betrothal gifts such as traditional clothes to the daughter's Parents as the bridewealth.

Table 5.4 Bridewealth/ betrothal gifts to be given from the Groom's Parents to the Bride's family

No.	Type of Relationship to the bride	Gifts given	Remark
1.	father	'Bullukkoo' ⁴	
2.	mother	"Gaabbii" ⁵ + 'Wandabboo' ⁶ + 'Guuftaa' ⁷ + 'Sabata' ⁸	
3.	grand father	'Bullukkoo'	
4.	grand mother	"Gaabbii" + 'Wandabboo' + 'Sabata' + 'Guuftaa'	
5.	aunt	"kamisii" ⁹ + 'Natella' ¹⁰	If only her grand mother is not alive
6.	uncle	'Bullukkoo' or 'Gaabbii'	If her grand father is not alive
7.	god mother	'Guftaa' or 'sabata' or 'Natalaa'	In some places, it is not common at all.

The parent's of the bride could get so many traditional clothes such as 'Bullukkoo', 'Wandabboo' etc. excluding 'Guuftaa', and 'Sabataa' that are considered as simple. This means about five or six people may get 'uuwwisaa'.

⁴'Bullukkoo' is a thick traditional cloth made of cotton is usually worn by men in the evenings.

⁵"Gaabbii" is also made of cotton that is used to be worn by both males and females during the day time.

⁶'Wandabboo' is a wide traditional dress made of cotton that worn by elder women.

⁷'Guuftaa' is just like a big scarf made of cotton usually worn by females on top of "Wandabbo"

⁸'Sabata' is just like a belt made of cotton for tying 'Wandabbo'

⁹"kamisii" is just an ordinary dress made of cotton worn by females but less than in quality than 'Wandabbo'

¹⁰'Natella' is almost half of 'Gaabbii' but less in quality to be worn on top of 'Kamisi'

Therefore, bridewealth is a big deal and respect when one talk about the parents who gave their daughter for marriage and get ‘*Uuwisaa*’. It is not only “*Uuwisaa*’ but “*Maacaa*”¹¹ is also given to the daughter’s family. This is particularly if the required ‘*Uuwisaa*’ is not complete, it is customary to give birr from 150 up to the amount of money decided per elders mediation. For example, it was used to be given 70 birr if one ‘*Bullukkoo*’ or ‘*Wandabboo*’ has been left out. To give a girl child for marriage in ‘*Maacaa*’ only is not acceptable. ‘*Maacaa*’ is just supplementary of ‘*Uuwisaa*’.

‘*Uuwisaa*’ and ‘*Maacaa*’ have adverse effects on the woman for her husband and in-laws feel that she is subordinate to them. That is why it has been said that “Bride price has equally complex repercussions for women for she is considered as commodity” (Hirut, 2000:45). However, the size or amount of the bride wealth depends upon the agreement and capacity of the two families.

Thus, according to Selale Oromo the major cause for early marriage is the urge to get ‘*Uuwisaa*’. It implies great reputation of a family and particularly of the parents. The story stays hot for years when a family gives off a daughter and wears a lot of ‘*Uuwisaa*’. Therefore, many families try to marry their daughters at their early age to secure her virginity and hence the ‘*Uuwisaa*’

In general, according to information obtained both from key informants and participant’s FGD, a girl is given to marriage not to benefit her. The girl child/woman in this community is considered like a commodity that has brought economic and social benefit to her parents and relatives. Wealth and reputation is bought at the expense of the rights of the girl child. The parents calculate the benefits that they could get in advance. According this customary traditional marriage, the word that they used ‘to give a girl child for marriage’ is ‘*gurguruu*’ literally it means “selling the daughter”. Thus, a girl child is an asset that can bring value to her parents.

¹¹“*Maacaa*” is the bride wealth in the form of money given to the bride’s parents as
Supplementary to ‘*uuwisaa*’

c) To Reduce Family burden /Vulnerability of the Family.

The other economic motive behind early marriage rose during interview and FGD is to reduce the burden of the family. Parents who have many children get their children married at an early age. This is due to the scarcity of food to feed the family. Such kinds of parents aim to reduce the members of the family through giving their daughters for marriage. According to an interview carried out with an Orthodox religious leader in Kuyu Woreda, “Parents in this community produce and reproduce children than food grain. Most of them have many children and when they grow up they give or hire them for shepherd, when they get back and if any one proposes for marriage, it is a blessing and they accept the request for they get economic benefit out of marriage”

Besides, there is a hidden interest from the parents to benefit from their child’s marriage especially if the in laws have resources and they feel that the marriage has also additional benefit for their life improvement. Thus, there are times when they give a girl child at early age even for an older man, who is old enough to be a father or grand father to that child. It is only the quest for the resources of the in laws that the female child is forced to get married to an older person.

The other motive of such kind of marriage is the sooner the old person dies, their female child would inherit the resources and all would benefit from the resource so as to get rid off poverty. This happens if the woman who gets married is younger than the spouse and particularly if the spouse is an old person who has resources. The woman may give birth to children and as time goes on the husband gets older and older. When he is retired or dead, it is considered as a lottery for the woman and her parents for they will inherit the resources.

d) Parents’ desire to secure their child’s future before they pass away.

Parents prefer to give their child for marriage before they die, get old or incapacitated. They just want to secure the future of their child while they are alive as the future is uncertain. Parent’s desire to see their child’s marriage is one of the major concerns. Thus, the enthusiastic feelings to get their child married as early as possible provide them relief in their life.

5.2. SOCIETAL INFLUENCE

The social factors for the perpetuation of early marriage that were cited during in depth interview and focus group discussions were the need of parent's to establish or strengthen kinship relationship, to avoid the stigma of 'haaftuu', and to avoid the risk of loss of virginity. The causes raised in this category are more or less related to one another. Marriage has its own norms to be practised and it is the affair of parents, relatives, clans and communities at large. Thus, issues related to the protection of marriage are rested on the attitude and culture of that particular community. Concerns related to marriage as NCTPE (2003:124) stated '... entails responsibilities for the couple and their kin. Central among these is the control of sexuality, legitimacy of children, and economic stability of households. It is therefore, surrounded by legal restraints and customary /traditional and religious sanctions.

a) To Establish or Strengthen Kinship Relationship

The clan /tribe that are preferred or known would like to create relationship with the same status. The boy's parents after investigating the root of the girl's parents send elders for marriage proposal. Primarily what is considered is the kind of tribe or clan the family of the child girl belongs to. "The primary function of marriage is procreation of children and perpetuation of one's own gene pool, continuity of the genetic pool of the individual and, in the African context; the family line is one of the most important variable of marriage" (NCTPE, 2003:124). Those tribes who consider themselves 'pure' in their root and neat are taken for granted. For instance, even if one posses abundant resources or wealth, getting married to those people or tribe who are labeled as having evil eye and the like is acutely forbidden.

Thus, the parents of the boy propose marriage in advance at early age so as to secure before any one asks for the girl's hand for marriage. The parents of the daughter want to get in laws of the same status. Besides, if they are the well to do family, they want to gain fame by organizing big wedding feasts as the demonstration of their status. These are the underlying factors to insist on getting married their child as early as possible.

Case 1: A life history of Ms A, 45 years old, from rural Kebele of Hidabu Abote Woreda, a victim of early marriage due to her parents' desire to establish kin relationship of the same status.

I am now 45 years old. I got married at the age of 8. My husband was about 16 years old. At the time of my marriage, I do not recall much as to what happened at the time of her marriage. I was neither happy nor sad. I delivered my first child at the age of 12. My elder sisters also got married at 8 and 9 years old. I was asked for marriage while I was in the womb of my mother. My family had been respectable in their clan. My father was a 'wise' person who had been accepted socially in the community. My parents and relatives wore 'Uuwisaa' and received 'Maacaa' as the bride wealth and I was given for marriage. I lived with my parent-in-laws in one household sharing same dish for about 10 years. I gave birth to 12 children since I got married at early age.

Ms A is not the only person who got married at a very early age. There were many who have been given for marriage untimely just to strengthen the family relationship. Ms A delivered her first child with great suffering. For she had got married at early age, she has many children that directly and indirectly affects her life in general.

b) To Avoid loss of Virginity

The girl child is expected to be virgin during her marriage. If a bride is not virgin, the social and psychological consequences on the female child and her parents are demoralizing. Regarding the importance given to virginity, (Stewart, Sithole, Gwaunza, 2001:22) described that "Women's sexuality and their reproductive capacities are perceived as being owned and controlled by their natal families and thus their virginity and sexual purity are closely monitored and enforced so that they can be transferred intact to their marital families"

Therefore, if there is a proposal for marriage, they just accept the proposal; parents just would accept the deal. There is a saying that a girl, who does not get married early, may loss virginity. So, a saying 'Dubartiin hin Koran' which literally means 'there is no dignity /proud for having a girl child' is common. "Except in a few ethnic groups in the South, premarital sex is strictly prohibited. Virginity is a sign of purity and honor among the Oromo, Amhara, Tigray and most of the largest ethnic groups of Southern Nations and Nationalities"(NCTPE, 2003:132)

Besides, if the parents of the daughter give their child as early as possible, the chance of getting a number of 'uuwisaa' and the reputation related to the wedding is significant. They have confidence in the virginity of their daughter if they give her hand for marriage earlier. If the bride is found not to be virgin, her parents will be obliged to give back the bride wealth. Giving a girl child for marriage and receive 'uuwisaa' is a great deal for her parents and for the community in the surrounding.

According to the tradition of Selale Oromos, if a girl child loses her virginity, it is a shame and disgrace and can create very upsetting conditions for both parents sides. The fear of parents that their child may be exposed to premarital sex or become pregnant out of wed lock compels them to give their child for marriage earlier. The boy's parents assuming that she is virgin give her parents' 'uuwisaa'. Thus, if she is not virgin, the spouse beats her severely. Early in the morning one of the best men takes her back to her parents place in her under wears. The parents of the boy request her parents to pay back the cost they incurred for the wedding including the bride price that they paid in the form of 'Uuwisaa' and 'Maacaa'. Then after, the parent's of the child will be obliged not to go the social ceremonies and events for they will be insulted for their child's behaviour.

On the other hand, if the spouse due to different reasons cannot deflower and take her virginity, there is a means on the part of the boy's family. The bride groom's cousin deflowers her so as to take the blood and show to the in-laws not to defame their son as incapable. This is the in built societal mechanism in the system of patriarchy that tries to maintain the dignity and fame of the other gender.

c) To Avoid the Stigma of "Haftuu"

One of the reasons and reinforcing factor for early marriage is to avoid the stigma of 'haftuu'. A girl child can be considered as 'haftuu' due to the following reasons: If her parent's tribe is not preferred; or if they are migrant people whose tribe is not known. However, even if the tribe of her parents is poor economically, their girl child can get married as early as possible and can escape from the stigma of 'haftuu'. These parents can be fortunate to get rich husband for their child. If the mother of the daughter has good

quality in house hold chores, or if that family has not any flaws such as lying, theft and if they are a respected family in all aspects, the acceptance will be more agreeable.

If the girl child's parents cannot pass the aforementioned causes and her age for marriage passes she is labeled as 'haaftuu'. There are different proverbs that stimulate early marriage of the girl child. For example there is a saying that "Dubartiin gabaan irraa darbinaan haaftuu taatii" It means that 'if the girl loses her chance of marriage while she is young, she becomes 'haaftuu'. It implies that one has to give his daughter whenever there is marriage proposal in spite of severe physical and psychological impacts on the part of the child.

The person who marries 'haaftuu' is usually either a divorced or widowed man. There is a proverb in the local language; "Ayyaanii haaftuu haadha manaa ajjeessaa" literally means 'The chance of 'haaftuu' kills the house wife so that she can get married to the widowed man.' When 'Haaftuu' gets married, there could be 'uuwisaa'. The maximum level of 'uuwisaa' is restricted just for the parents of the girl child, and it is not an event or ceremony at all.

If a girl child is not married during the expected time, there is a fear on the part of the parents that she may not get married and become 'haaftuu'. The fear of parent's is that they may not get 'uuwisaa' as they wished. Besides, there is a fear that their child may be given for marriage to the tribe that they do not prefer or know. This is executed through elder's mediation carrying 'Caacuu and Kallachaa'. Giving their child in such a way is undesirable on the part of the community. "Marriage is closely bound up with other economic and social relations. Thus, any change in a society e.g. age at first marriage, is related to many other social factors and could have repercussions through out that society" (NCTPE, 2003:124)

More over, a girl child who becomes 'haaftuu' can be pregnant and give birth at her parent's home. Birth out of wedlock does not have social approval in the community. It is very embarrassing for her and her parents. The new baby is also additional burden for that family. There after, it will be difficult for those parents to simply join any social affairs. They are back bitten by neighbors and relatives i.e. every one talks about them behind their backs for they are out of the age old tradition of the society. It is tantamount to death for that family.

If a girl child does not get married at the expected time, she is morally harmed and frustrated. Her parents do the utmost for their daughter to get married. They dress her beautifully and even in some cases they go to 'Qaalluu'¹² to investigate the cause behind. Once her young age has passed without marriage, no one wants to her. Neighbors and the surroundings begin to discuss and find out the cause for being 'haaftuu'. They probe and talk if there is a problem in their clan or if her mother is not 'good' in household chores. In the community of the study area, 'haaftuu' has not alternative. 'Aseena'¹³ which is an alternate and common in some parts of Selale is not practised in Hidabu Abote and Kuyu. The only means that she is left with is to get married to old person who is divorcee or a widower.

¹²“Qaalluu” is a person who pretends that he knows every thing and this power is given from God.

¹³“Aseena” is an alternative for ‘Haaftuu’ to get married. The ‘haaftuu’ just looks for a person is not married/ does not have a wife and gets in to that house by herself and refuses to get out of it.

5.3. CULTURAL IMPACTS

The cultural factors associated with early marriage were conformity to the tradition, the fear and respect of the traditional belief of Oromo 'Caacuu and Kallachaa' and elder's pervasiveness during marriage. Early marriage is one of the 'tradition based violence' that has deep rooted base and encouraged by the overwhelming majority of the people, both men and women themselves (EGLDAM, 2007).

a) Conformity to the Traditional Norms and Values

According to the key informants in the community under study, in the old day's early marriage was not an issue and a culture of the Oromos. Marriage among Oromo communities residing in the area used to be regulated by the norms and customs of the Gada system. Marriage had its own way to be implemented, and marriage before 18 years of age does not have either moral or cultural approval. It was not the tradition of Oromo community but as Selale is boundary to Amhara region, the community has been influenced by the tradition and culture of Amhara community. Thus, unlike other Oromo communities, the Selales have been practicing early marriage for many years and considered it as their own culture. "Amhara is clearly strong hold for early marriage. All studies have unequivocally documented the high incidence of the practice which is true for all ethnic groups in the region" (NCTPE, 2003: 141). This is due to the proximity of Oromo ethnic group living near by and the cultural integration of one to another

b) For Fear and Respect of the Traditional belief of Oromo "Caacuu and Kallacha"

According to the information obtained from elders, there is nothing historically known about 'Caacuu' and 'Kallachaa'. It has been taken for granted for many years as the symbolic representation of traditional belief of Oromo community in North Shewa Zone of Oromia region. It is just considered as spiritual belief. Most of the time, both 'Caacuu' and "Kallachaa" are being used together for different purposes. But sometimes they can be used independently. 'Caacuu' and 'Kallchaa' are kept in the former times at landlords' house or

else in the home of elders of the community. But most of the time they lend them to people who want them for use. If a person who maintains 'caacuu and Kallcha' dies, the eldest boy inherits it.

According to the interview held with key informants in the study areas, formerly 'Caacuu and Kallachaa', has been the symbolic representation for traditional spiritual belief of Oromo and is basically used to resolve important problems. Therefore, (1) When there is a dispute between clans /communities then they will be used to mediate and settle the dispute; (2) when somebody wants to take "guddifachaa"; and (3) when something evil happens and become difficult to identify. However, the community began to use this traditional belief for the attainment of their egoistic ends. That is for getting married to a daughter with out her family's consent and any other restrictions. The parents of the daughter give off their daughter for the fear and respect of this traditional belief. It is believed that the refusal of 'Caacuu and Kallacha" may end to dissolution of marriage, persisted death of infant or sterility.

The whole process of getting a girl child/woman through 'Caacuu and Kallachaa' is executed through elders. They carry 'Caacuu and kallacha' and go to the daughter's parents in dark night. Elders who have on their hands on these traditional items would get in to the house. It is believed that once the elders were permitted in, they should get the girl child. Hence, the parents in fear of the impending curse on the child and the family with out prior notice, will be indulged in dilemmas of giving or not giving and finally at decision. At the end, the agreement will be reached on the spot for the spiritual belief has the power to win.

C) Elders' Pervasiveness

Elders in Oromo culture have tremendous positive roles such as calming down disagreements between individuals, clans and communities. Therefore, their role in conflict resolution and stabilizing the situation for they are one of influential people in the community should not be over looked. Similarly, in the process of arranged marriage by parents which is commonly executed at early age, the role of elders is very great. The parents of the boy send elders with marriage proposal to the girl's family. In this process, even if the child's parents do not want

to give their child for marriage, they usually do not reject the marriage proposal out of respect for the elders. This is done for elders are given very high respect in the Oromo community. It is unwise or unadvisable to send them back with a negative answer.

Thus, whether they like it or not the girl's parents will be forced to give their child without their consent. The imposition of elders is manifested through saying 'can you live with out clan, or relative? Who is going to provide you social support upon certain occasions such as burial and marriage ceremonies?' etc. And if that parent has any affair at any other time such as in relation with taking look after cattle, or if there is a disagreement with neighbors, the elders will not take part in any of his negotiations, ceremonies and arbitration processes.

CHAPTER SIX

NORMS AND CUSTOMS PERPETUATING EARLY MARRIAGE

According to the information obtained from FGD and key informants interview in the study area, early marriage which is predominately practised, has its own norms and customs. In this chapter, the focus is to describe norms and customs perpetuating early marriage.

6.1 THE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF EARLY MARRIAGE

The culture of the community gives due attention to arranged early marriages by parents. Thus, the parents would prefer to give their child for marriage before they die or get old. They want to secure the future of their child while they are alive. Therefore, early marriage is usually arranged by the parents of the couples. Hence, marriage is primarily an alliance between families rather than the union between the couples.

Early marriage is the primary form of marriage through a marriage bond known as ‘Yesamaney wel’/eighty bond/ (Guday, 2005:123). Timkehet Tefera (2002) in Guday (2005) define ‘Semaneya as the traditional marriage contract between couples. This custom is particularly practised in the rural areas of Ethiopia’

Similarly, in Salale marriage is executed by ‘semanya -wel’. However, early marriage has been taken as a culture of this society/community. It has been implemented centering the interest of the couple’s parents. The age at first marriage for girls as it has been discussed earlier, is below 18 years.

**Table 6.1 Distribution of household members Age 10 and above
by Marriage arrangement and sex**

Arrangement of marriage	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Parents alone	193	71.2	257	82.1	450	77.1
Self alone	5	1.8	7	2.2	12	2.1
Parents and self	65	24.0	39	12.5	104	17.8
Relatives	4	1.5	2	.6	6	1.0
In laws	1	.4	1	.3	2	.3
Abduction	0	.0	4	1.3	4	.7
Elders	3	1.1	3	1.0	6	1.0
Total	271	100	313	100	584	100

As it is indicated in the table, parents arrange 82.1% of the girl's as compared to 71.2% of boys marriages. The role of the couples in arranging their marriage is almost none. Besides, if we see marriage arrangement by both parents and self, the data shows 24.0% for boys while it is 12.5% for girls. This implies that the boy child is consulted during marriage arrangement whereas the girl child does not have the right to choose to whom and when to get married. The data gathered from the respondents regarding arrangement of marriage reveals and confirms this idea (Table 6.1). This some what shows the level of discrimination against women in spite of the arrangement of marriage of both sexes is executed by parents.

As much as possible, parents impose early marriage on their children in conformity to the age old tradition. The consent of the child is dully represented by the parents. That is why it has been said that "The victims of early marriage may have given what passes for 'consent' in the eyes of custom or the law, but in reality consent to their binding union has been made by others on their behalf" (UNICEF, 2001:2). The girl's parents especially the father completes everything by himself without even consulting the mother. The mother of the girl often feels happy when her daughter gets a chance of getting married. Even from the beginning she does not send her daughter to school. She rather makes her stay at home and teach her the

skills of home management. Girls usually are trained to serve the family because the community considers girl's education as less valuable.

Early marriage has its own norms and customs to be implemented. At first, the parents of the boy send elders to the parents of the girl. The couples may not have any information about the process in most of the cases. Thus, the age for marriage and the issue of consent is unquestionable particularly for the girl child, for she is not matured enough physically and mentally.

The major factors for perpetuation of the practice of early marriage are the causes that have been discussed in the previous chapter. Besides, there is a strong wish on the part of the parents to give a child for marriage and organize a wedding ceremony just like others did. Moreover, the victims themselves perpetuated the practice for they do not challenge the existing social norms. The socialization process in which the society takes things for granted has its own influence in gender roles and relationships. Thus, the whole issue has to be visualized within the circle the society/community is constructed. The age at first marriage and the issue of consent differ for girls and boys due to the system of patriarchy / i.e. rule of men over women/.

a) The Process of Early Marriage

The marriage process in this community is executed between the parents of the couples. At first, the parent's of the boy send a letter/ message through elders requesting their daughter's hand in marriage. (NCTPE, 2003:127) states that the role of elders as follows "As keepers of tradition, elderly members of the families strive to maintain these marriageable sets of relationships"

The parents of the daughter can either accept or reject the proposal for marriage. If they accept the proposal, they will keep the letter with them. This is an indication for the approval of the proposal. Having waited for days, the parent's of the boy send back the same elders to that family to confirm that their request has been accepted. This time the parent's of the daughter forward the response that they also need time to know about the background of the

in-laws family. Thus, this time the elders do not get in to the house. They just return from outside. During the third time, the elders will be invited to get in to the house and food and drinks will be served. The elders from the daughter's parent side will also be present on third day. This day is known as 'Mana seenaa'. On this day the elders bless the parents and ask them to decide on the wedding day / the engagement day.

In accordance of the agreement done between the two parents, on the day of the engagement they meet on the daughter's parent's house. On this day accompanied with elders, the best men and the bride groom will come having complete dress for the bride including engagement ring and necklace. Putting on the ring and necklace of the bride, the groom accomplishes his engagement. Food and drinks will be served as usual. On this the day the wedding date will be decided. In addition, the parents of the bride negotiate on the number of 'Uuwisaa' and the amount of 'Maacaa' that the bridegroom shall provide on the wedding day.

Then, on the wedding day, the bride groom accompanied by his best men brings 'uuwisaa' as per their agreement. The cloth for the bride will also be brought. The complete happiness of the wedding is celebrated if the bride is found with her virginity. The best men of the groom take and show the 'blood' of the bride with a piece of cloth on next day with great pleasure and pride. Then, after a month the couple will be invited in the bride's family. This is known as 'Meecaa' i.e. visiting parents. This is more of the traditional practice in Kuyu Woreda. But if a bride is not virgin, she will be thrown out the next day of the wedding. In some places, the in-laws will not give her proper respect and they make her angry and confused so that she may flee away by her self.

The process of arranged marriage is almost similar in both of the woredas up to 'Mana Seenaa'. After 'mana seenaa' in Hidabu Abote the elders are served food and drinks and bless the parents wishing and deciding the day of the wedding. Then, on one of the days people from the boy's family side go to the parent's of the girl taking bread and butter. They put the butter on the head of the bride to be. This is known as "Irra dibaa". As the information from key informants indicated it means hereafter we are relatives and have to strengthen our relationship.

Then, there is a tradition to dress the daughter/the bride clothes by taking her to the market. This is done by the best men of the bridegroom. They collect money from friends and relatives in the form of sharing the expense locally known as 'Debo'. After they purchased everything for the bride, there will be an invitation of food and drinks served at the market place. On the day of the wedding, the engagement takes place and 'Uuwwisa' is presented to her parents, grand father, grand mother , uncle, aunt, god mother, and other immediate relatives depending on their relationships. According to the information obtained during interview and focus group discussions, the quality and quantity of bride wealth varies between or among Kebeles of the two woredas.

On the other hand, if the request of proposal of marriage has been rejected, or if the parents do not want to give their child for marriage due to various reasons, she may be abducted or can be put in the trap of the traditional belief of Oromo "Caacuu and Kallacha" that no one escapes. Thus, there was no way for a daughter to escape from early marriage or such kind of systems.

Early marriage is one of the traditional practices of Selale oromo women. When the parents of the girl give their child for marriage, the benefits that accompany it and the community's perception are many. Once the parents' of the daughter give their child for marriage, it is prestigious for the parents. The father of the bride feels proud of himself. Hereafter, he can be elder that can mediate in various social affairs. It is also prestigious to have in-laws. The parents who have given their child for marriage and become in laws are particularly respected. They are considered as loyal, who keeps their promise and the like.

6.1.THE CONTRIBUTION OF CULTURE AND TRADITION TO EARLY MARRIAGE

a) The Impact of 'Caacuu and Kallachaa'

"*Caacuu and Kallachaa*" reinforces marriage. Because if the girl child passes the expected age for marriage and has grown up, there is a fear on the part of the parents that the marriage proposal can be forwarded from an old person. The elders may be sent to request the proposal carrying '*Caacuu and Kallacha*'. This time the parents are forced to give their child for unknown tribe or for the one they don't prefer. This type of marriage is implemented

between the girl child and an old person, marriage of unequal ages in many respects. A person who is 'Kaalluu/ Ayyana baatuu' in the community uses this strategy to marry any one that he prefers. Such kind of marriage through 'Caacuu and Kallachaa' is known as 'Cabsaa' meaning 'breaking and get into'

Such kind of marriage some times is practiced on the woman who is divorced or separated due to early marriage and found under the custody of parents. During the focus group discussion and interview for the question rose as to how older men get married to younger women, the explanation given had two features. On the one hand, if a person 'Qaalluu' forwarded a marriage proposal, it is unthinkable to refuse it. This emanates from the belief that if we rule out the request, some kind of turmoil will be created on the child and the parents. Thus, the parents are obliged to give their daughter unwillingly. In such cases, the girl is forced to get married a person that can be as old as her father or grand father. Surprisingly, 'Qaalluu' usually has two or three wives and besides there is an occasion that he gets married to a girl child.

Case 2: A life history of Ms S, 16 years old, a victim of early marriage and marriage of unequal ages from the rural Kebele of Kuyu Woreda.

I am 16 years old. I have no education. I has got married at the age of 15 to a person of 50 years old. My husband had already had 4 wives, two in Addis Ababa and two in kuyu districts. I was given for marriage through the traditional belief of Oromo 'Caacuu and Kallachaa'. My husband deceived my parents saying his spirit ordered him to get married to Oromo girl child. He sent elders with 'Caachuu and Kallacha' during sunset. Even if my parents were scared of the whole act, they gave me saying 'you will come back again'. After three months, there was a wedding.

At this moment, I delivered a child and began charging him at the court. I sued him for he has stopped to give me money or grain for my livelihood. I gave birth at my parents' house for he left me with out any support.

According to the interview and focus group discussions held with the respondents, on the other hand, there are occasions that an old person who has resources can get married to a woman of unequal age. This is also implemented through the mediation role of elders carrying 'Caacuu and Kallachaa' as usual when they go the daughter's parents. As it has been discussed earlier, elders, leave alone carrying the traditional belief of Oromo, they themselves are respected and it is not common to refuse the proposal. Thus, the parents whether they like it or not give their

child. If the woman/ girl is divorced or separated and living with her parents the parents accept the proposal of the marriage for she has nothing to do sitting with her parents especially if they do not have resources or if they are poor family. As it has been mentioned earlier, the role of the traditional belief of Oromo “Caacuu and Kallachaa” in exacerbating the issue of early marriage is significant. Whether they like it or not, parents are forced to give their child in fear of the traditional belief.

b) Marriage by Abduction

If a girl child does not get married on time, it is obvious she will be labeled as ‘haaftuu’. If she is ‘haaftuu’ the chance of being abducted is high. According the Oromo tradition of the study areas, it is uncommon to abduct a girl child at a very early age. Thus, the parents prefer if their child gets married at early age than become victim of abduction.

Marriage by abduction particularly in Kuyu Woreda has some times been observed. And in most cases it is arbitrated by elders before it reaches to the legal enforcement bodies. On the other hand, according the information from some key informants and discussants, marriage by abduction in Hidabu Abote Woreda is rare for the past three years. But, some informants said that there is marriage by abduction though it has changed its feature. This is when a girl and a boy want to get married and the parents are not willing for their marriage, and the couple devised a strategy to avoid the stigma of ‘Aseena’. In both Woredas the status of women is very low. The attitude of the community towards women is negative. The place of women is at home, be married, rear children and serves the husband. Different proverbs that reveal the attitude of the community are stated. For instance “dubarii baratee eesa geesii” means ‘women’s education has no effect’,

According the information obtained from the knowledgeable person in Hidabu Abote Woreda, the culture of the community subjugates women. A man during his old age gets married to a girl child at early age that can be as young as his child or grand child. This was done either if his wife is dead or could not give birth to a child. In this case the girl child is needed for reproduction. It is still practised if the parent’s of the girl child are very poor to feed themselves.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

The reviewed studies on the consequences of early marriage have attempted to identify various impacts and consequences of early marriage (NCTPE, 2003; Guday, 2005; Path finder International Ethiopia, 2006).

In this particular study, the data from key informant's interview showed that there are various interactive and complex issues related to the impacts and consequences of early marriage. Most of the issues raised revolve around instability of marriage, problems related to sexual, reproductive health and child delivery, lack of educational opportunity and issues of poverty.

In the structured questionnaire, women who were married at a very early age, below 18 were filtered to respond on consequences of getting married early. Besides, ever married, widowed, divorced and those who are at risk are identified as a group. The responses in in-depth interview and focus group discussions from victims of early marriage revealed women's suffering and consequences of early marriage as an individual and in group. In the focus group discussion with the victims, different experiences of their marital life, experience during child delivery and rearing as well as consequences of early marriage were discussed. Moreover, during in-depth interview attempts were also made to assess the deep feelings and pain that victims of early married experienced which is really difficult to explain.

Some of the consequences of early marriage that were raised during the group discussions and interviews are summarized and listed as follows.

Table 7.1 Consequences of Early marriage discussed during Interview and FGD

Instability of marriage	Problems related To sexual, reproductive health and child delivery	Lack of educational opportunity	issues related to poverty
Psychological trauma due to involuntarily sexual relations	Forced (coercion) sex on the date of her wedding that exposes her to physical damage and verbal abuse.	School drop out	Getting married without any resource
Development of hatred ness between couples & lack of understanding between them	Being exposed to severe pains due to early pregnancy and child delivery as her reproductive organs are not matured.	Lack of employment and other opportunities in life	Being exposed to abject poverty
Inability to manage her home & difficulty to shoulder house hold chores.	Severely affected in health and in life that has an influence on the over all development of the mother and the child.	Become subordinate and subjugated	Dissatisfaction In life
Out migration to cities to serve as house maid and/or prostitute.	Giving birth to many Children & inability to feed them	Lead miserable life	Property dispossession upon divorce

Key issues that rose during focus group discussion and in-depth interviews revealed the consequences of early marriage among the victims. Investigation into such experiences spelt out the physical, psychological, sexual and social damages of early marriage on the female child. As observed from the discussions, respondents at all level have understood of the negative physical and social consequences of early marriage. Following are the major findings on the impacts and consequences of early marriage.

7.1 INSTABILITY OF MARRIAGE

One of the major consequences of early marriage discussed during interview and discussion was instability of marriage. When marriage is arranged by parents, the issue of consent of the couple particularly that of female child is out of question. In most of the cases the couple do not know each other and the girl who is at her childhood age enters into marital union without having sufficient information about it. As a result she lacks interest and develops detest besides failing to carry her responsibility of managing the house hold. Inability to act as a wife due to physical and psychological immaturity leads to constant disagreement between the couple that often ends in dissolution of marriage through migration to urban centers. Explaining how early marriage leads to marriage instability, UNICEF (2001:9) stated that “Instability of marriage is the very common experience of the victims of early marriage. Girls who run back home to their parents may be beaten and sent back to their husbands. Distress is generally endured in silence”.

Case 3: A life history of Ms M, 20 years old, divorced and a victim of early marriage from rural kebele of Hidabu Abote.

I am 20 years old. I was a second grade student when I was given for marriage at the age of 9. My husband was a little bit bigger than me. I was neither happy nor sad on the day of the wedding for I considered it as just getting married as others do. I became nervous due to the sexual intercourse on my wedding day. I could not agree with my husband and hated him strongly. We could not understand each other for we have difference in level of thinking. I was psychologically disturbed and flew away to my parents. My parents got me back to the in-laws the next day. Since I could not run the household and I detested my husband; I repeatedly flew away to my parents. However, they kept on taking me back to my husband for the community believes that women shall be ‘tolerant’ even if their marriage is ‘horrible’. After three years, my first marriage was dissolved.

Ms M’s life history is not the only case among the communities of Kuyu and Hidabu Abote Woreda where early marriage is practised widely. Marriage instability and remarriage are the major features of early marriage. Such practices are very common among members of the communities in the study area.

According the survey report of Path Finder International Ethiopia (2006) instability of marriage is one of the major consequences of early marriage in Amhara region. The region

is characterized with high incidence of marriage instability (27 percent in urban and 19 percent in rural were divorces), and the main reason is often attributed to early marriage. Besides, 38 percent of cases “too young for marriage” were cited as the reason for dissolution of the first marriage. More than one third of the ever-married women had been married at least twice, and 14 percent of these women had been married three or more times.

7.2.PROBLEMS RELATED TO SEXUAL, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND CHILD DELIVERY.

The other severe consequences of early marriage raised during the discussions were problems related to sexual, reproductive health and child delivery. According to some of the respondents when the first sexual experience is not pleasant, the woman hates her husband strongly due to the severe pains during sexual intercourse as a result of physiological immaturity. According to Parker and Gagnon (1995:119) qualitative study of sexual initiation among adolescent girls in the United States entitled as ‘putting a big thing in to a Little Hole’ many girls recall their first intercourse negatively. Most of them mention pain, fear, disappointment, and a sense of not being in control of the situation. When the female child is not physically matured to engage in sexual activity, complications related to pregnancy are among the many of the health hazards faced by young married girls. Lack of access to a means of controlling her fertility, moreover, results in giving birth to many children.

Early pregnancy and delivery due to early marriage often leads to fistula problem, which is mentioned by a number of women interviewed during the field work. In one of the group discussion in Hidabu Abote Woreda, the cases of two women who could not control their urine and stool has been raised and discussed extensively. The following narration could also explain the situation very briefly.

Case 4: A life history of Ms B, 24 years old, divorcee and a victim of early marriage leading to fistula.

I am 24 years old. I was a second grade student when I was given for marriage at the age of 11. My husband was 18 years old. I got married just for it is the tradition of our society. I became pregnant at the age of 14. During my child delivery at the age of 15 traditional birth attendants in the village tried their best to let me have a baby. They were massaging my abdomen and expecting her to give birth soon. However, all were in vain that the next day I was taken to the woreda near by health post for I could not deliver and get tired. Being transferred to a zonal hospital and operated, I delivered a child that had died in my womb. Because of the damage of my organ, I was not satisfied in my life and began to run to my parents though I was not accepted by them.

Due to social expectation of having as many children as possible, I could not control my fertility; I gave birth to four children. My health is severely affected. I am most of the time in bed for I am suffering from fistula problem. I do not want to talk about it with to any one as it is taboo to discuss it with others. Adding up to that is the fact that the couple do not have enough resources to feed the children and educate them.

From the above story one can easily understand how the socialization process denied the female child any opportunity and how early marriage can be the most violent act against women from birth to death. Girls that are denied of education take for granted early marriage as an alternative. Thus, getting married at early age with out any education, shouldering house hold responsibility, suffering due to early pregnancy and delivery are some of the health and psychological problems faced by those children. Besides, Fistula patients are exposed to social problems in addition to health complications. Most of victims of fistula are poor, abandoned by families, stigmatized and have low self respect.

According the survey on causes and consequences of early marriage in Amhara region by Path Finder International Ethiopia (2006) 8.4 %of women who were married under the age of 14 reported to have sexual and sex organ related problems. Almost all respondents in the qualitative survey reported to have knowing at least one case of fistula in their lifetime; some reported to have known up to five fistula cases. The report further discloses the benefits or the power of controlling sexuality against the practice of early marriage. When women get education and have their own income, they are in a better position to control the timing and number of children they give birth. At the same time, they are also capable of protecting themselves from any health hazards related to pregnancy and delivery. Health, including

sexual and reproductive health in turn makes them develop their skills, participate in different development activities that lead them to be more self reliant.

7.3. ISSUES RELATED TO POVERTY

Poverty is both the cause and consequence of early marriage. As it has been mentioned earlier, poor parents prefer giving their daughter at early age for marriage to improve their level of poverty by reducing family size. Besides, poverty is manifested as the consequences of early marriage for the girl child is denied of education and any other opportunities related to personal and social development. At early age she gives birth to many children that exposes her to abject poverty. Moreover, a woman who gets married at early age does not have any resource. Parents arrange marriage for their children with out a means of leading their life. Consequently, the girl child becomes subordinate to the boy's parents.

As most of the early married women run away to get rid of the unhappy marriage, they are dispossessed of their shared property. Most of the time victims of early marriage migrate to town or cities in search of job opportunities. As they often become house maid or commercial sex worker, this severely affects their life to the extent of being exposed to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease. Explaining the interrelationship between poverty and early marriage, Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (2002: 11)Stated that "Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition, ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; and social discrimination and exclusion...Globally, poverty is a major cause, as well as a consequence, of early marriage for many young girls under the age of 18. In many traditional settings, poor families use the early marriage of daughters as a strategy of reducing their own economic vulnerability, shifting the economic burden related to a daughter's care to the husband's family"

As clearly indicated, lack of alternatives forced many of early married victims to migrate to cities or towns. At places of their destination, they are often exposed to physical,

psychological, and sexual violence including the risks of sexually transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS.

Emphasizing the consequences of early marriage in the city of Addis Ababa (Okiwelu, 1994: 137) stated “At night, in the cold streets of Addis Ababa, we find tens and tens of young girls waiting to be picked up for the night. We call them prostitute; they call themselves commercial sex workers. Most of them are runaway victims of early marriage out in the big city to find means of livelihood. If they remained in their matrimonial homes, they ran the risk of premature death from the accidents of pregnancy, and child delivery, as commercial sex workers they run the risk of premature death from HIV/AIDS. Either way they lose”

Case 5. A life history of Ms G 45 years old, a victim of early marriage from rural kebele of Kuyu.

I am 45 years old. My father died when I was a child. I had grown up among six children with great suffering. Each child was given to be a shepherd. I was also hired as shepherd while the marriage proposal has been received. I came from the village upon arrangement of my marriage by my close relatives. I was given for marriage at the age of 15.

I gave birth to my first child at the age of 16. Because I have never used any contraceptive methods to regulate my fertility, I have now eight children. There is nothing to feed the children and we lead impoverished life. My health is deteriorating from time to time. We, women do not have alternatives except to get married and give birth until we get to our age of menopause. I confirmed that the major consequence of early marriage is to give birth to many children that exposes them to series of acute health and economic problems. I stressed that early marriage leads to early pregnancy that exposes a woman to different complications.

Such experience is not peculiar to Ms G. Most of the victims of early marriage share this kind of experience. Victims of early marriage are exposed not only in scarcity of food, due to large family size, but also dispossession of property upon divorce. When the woman gets back to her parent’s home, she is supposed to leave her marriage without getting any of her shares of resources. In the first place, those women, who are illiterate, do not have the legal knowledge or do not know how to deal with the situation to get their share. Besides, if the female child is below 18 years old, she can not even charge any body legally.

According Path finder International Ethiopia (2006) in the Amhara Region women married before age 15 and have an average of 5 children, those who get married between 15 and 17

years have 4.2, and women who get married after age 18 have an average of 3.1 children. Besides, early marriage is detrimental to the upbringing of the children, when the mother is neither psychologically or physiologically ready to care.

7.4 LACK OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Respondents of key informants and focus group discussion participants often raised dropping out of school as one of the consequences of early marriage. The issue is particularly raised by focus group discussion participants who are at risk of early marriage. They said that girls usually drop out of school when they are given to marriage.

Although education is the corner stone for personal, social and economic development of any women, in the study area girls are denied of educational opportunity mainly due to the effect of marriage at early age. Most of the women never had the chance to go to school. Even if they joined school, they often interrupt due to arranged marriage. Lack of educational opportunity results in poverty and vice versa.

Case 6: A life history of Ms F 15 years old student, who is at risk of early marriage from rural kebele of Kuyu.

I am 15 years old. I am a first grade student. My elder sister married when she was 10 years old. She could not stay with the husband and got back home. Mean while, a second marriage was arranged for her and she got married to another person, still she was separated and was made to marry a third. I feel that getting married at early age has no value at all. Even our parents, particularly my father, regretted having given my elder sister for marriage at early age. Though my father was not willing to give me for marriage, for he has observed its consequences, he was forced to do so due to the influence of the immediate relatives and neighbors who forced him to accept the proposal.

Path Finder International Ethiopia (2006) on the survey on causes and consequences of early marriage in Amhara Region revealed that literacy among females aged 12-49 in the region is less than 40 percent. Only 15 percent were educated beyond the primary level. Over 78 percent of never married girls under the age of 24 were attending school, as compared to 8.9 percent among the married girls. Among those out of school, 28 percent cited marriage and

19 percent cited child bearing as the main reason for not attending school. The same scenario appears to prevail in the current study site as well.

In general, the consequences of early marriage are many, complex and complicated. First and foremost, as the girl child gets married at early age she is severely affected during intercourse. She is exposed to physical pain and psychological shock. She detests her husband and may flee away upon losing interest in her marriage. Even if the couple agrees to live together, there is a problem during child delivery. Under worst condition, early marriage victims run away to nearby or large cities to dissolve the marriage. Most of them do not visit their parents for they enforce them to stay in the marriage rather than resolving their immediate problems.

The same evidence in the report on causes and consequences of early marriage in Amhara region has confirmed that victims of early marriage are vulnerable to gender based violence, high fertility, marital instabilities, and to reproductive health related complications (Path finder International Ethiopia,2006) In general, the report further marked that the imposition of marriage on children or adolescents deprives them of freedom, opportunities for personal development, health and well-being, education and participation in civic life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study have already been presented under Demographic Status of the Study Population, Root Causes of Early Marriage, Norms and Customs Sustaining Early Marriage and Consequences of Early Marriage. In this chapter, efforts are made to highlight some of the major findings of the study in general and their implications in particular.

8.1. Early Marriage as a Mechanism of Promoting Personal Well-being

According to the study area, the age at first marriage and the issue of consent goes against the right of human beings. Getting married at early age, the daughter does not know what is going on for she is psychologically immature. She is not at the position of explaining her interest. That is why (FMRWG, 2000:6) commented on “The institution of marriage has evolved to provide protection for the cohabitation of women and men and for family life. However marriage is seldom this simple as protection is rarely afforded to a young girl who is ignorant of her rights as a wife and a child”

Thus, in the study area, early marriage is arranged by parents. The consent is taken for granted on behalf of the daughters. The marriage turns to be more of the affair of parents and is executed between parents of the couple. The girl child is often given for marriage either to get betrothal gifts from the groom’s family or to reduce the vulnerability of the family. The motive of parents and close relatives is to benefit from the marriage in either of the cases. To this effect, the daughter’s parents calculate the ‘bride price’ or what they benefit if they give their child to marriage. When the proposal of marriage is from the well-to-do families, it is readily accepted even if the daughter is at a very early age for marriage; Parents want to get rid of their poverty through creating alliance with wealthy in-laws through marital ties.

Under the conditions mentioned above, daughters are just like commodity for exchange or valuable assets. The parents can create marriage alliance with any family of their interest regardless of the consent and interest of the girl child. The word i.e. ‘Dubra gurguruu’

literally meaning ‘to sell a daughter’ itself reflects how the situation is worse or against the privilege of girls at marriageable ages. Where as for the boy, ‘Niitii fuudhuu’ the term it self differs. Literally it means ‘to get him married to a wife’, a respectful way of expressing his rite of passage.

8.2. Early Marriage as a Means of Maintaining Parent’s Dignity

The daughter can be given for marriage at a very early age to maintain the dignity i.e. the respect of the family. If proposal is made by a family or clan that has due respect in the community, the daughter is given for marriage without considering her physical and psychological maturity. Above all, daughters are given for marriage at early age to avoid loss of virginity and the stigma of “haaftuu” i.e. the social blaming that threat the girl and her family as being unwanted for marital relationship. In both cases the justifications or reasons given to early marriage of a child revolve around on maintaining the benefits and /or prestige of the parents than that of the girl.

If the daughter loses her virginity and becomes pregnant before marriage, it is a great shame not only to the daughter but also to members of the whole family. Similarly, if the daughter does not get married on time, she is considered as ‘haaftuu’, and the entire family gets ashamed of her. The situation embarrasses both the daughter and her family. So to preserve own status, parents usually are forced to give their daughter for marriage so early.

8.3. Early marriage as the Gender Based Violence

According to Article 144 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (UN, 1994), gender-based violence is “...*violence that results in, or is likely to result in ,physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*”(United Nations,1996).

Information obtained from key informants revealed that the dominant manifestation of Selale Oromos is, characteristics related to warrior and heroism. In relation to the warrior

behaviour and history of Selale Oromos, males are preferred than females. When mothers give birth to a boy, the 'ululation' is seven times while it is only three times for the female child. Thus, the discrimination begins from the very first day birth of the child. As a result of this, the treatment for the boy and girl child differs in terms of feeding, caring etc. Finally sending them to school, even consulting during marriage in terms of age and consent differs. Girls are made to marry at younger age than boys. And after marriage they get different status: Boys dictate while girls are supposed to be submissive and obedient.

During child hood the boys are sent to the nearby school, where as girls remain at home to help their mothers and learn how to manage house hold chores. Girls are expected to follow the foot step of their mothers while boys are supposed to learn how to be 'strong' and 'brave' by way of taking adventure such as making 'coercive' sex on the wedding night. Such type of gender biased socialization process begins at the family level. Being subordinate to her husband, a girl child is not given a chance of getting information. The only alternative she has in life, therefore; is to get married as per her parent's wish.

Early marriage in general appears to create a number of conditions that exposes young married girls to poverty and violence. Men's control over key resources, social isolation, and the low status of women are preconditions that make them victims of early marriage. The gender based violence that can be exacerbated by early marriage does not only include domestic violence but also emotional stress. Many girls who are forced to marry at their early age suffer from prolonged violence at house level and psychological disturbance.

8.4. Early Marriage as a Denial of Human right.

According the survey findings of Center for Reproductive Laws and Policy (2000), violations of women's rights within marriage and the family are usually viewed from the point of age at first marriage, the issue of consent to marriage, equal status of spouses with in marriage, protection from marital rape, domestic violence, discrimination in family planning, discrimination in ownership and inheritance of property, and discrimination in divorce.

Where as, as already mentioned in the preceding chapters, different sayings and proverbs have been used regarding the gender roles. According to the focus group discussions and interview in the study area, the role of women is confined to house hold chores. The community at large expects women to be reproductive (i.e. bear and rear children) but not productive and autonomous. For such reasons, parents do not send their daughters to school. Even if they send them to school they let them drop out of school whenever there is a proposal for marriage. Explaining how early marriage denies the right of a child (UNICEF, 2001:9) argues “...Within a rights perspective, three key concerns are the denial of child hood and adolescence, the curtailment of personal freedom and the lack of opportunity to develop a full sense of self hood as well as the denial of psychological and emotional well being, reproductive health and educational opportunity”

Women do have the right enshrined in the international convention, national laws including family laws. Although women’s right should be respected as a human being. Violations of such right begin at early child hood level when the daughter is denied her right and given to marriage.

CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

9.1. SUMMARY

The objective of the study was to assess the Causes and Consequences of early marriage among Selale Oromo women residing in North Shewa Zone of Oromia Region. To this end, a case study research was conducted in Hidabu Abote and Kuyu Woreda of the Zone and attempts are made to explain the issue under consideration. Based on the aforementioned general objective, this study attempted to identify the root cause and factors enforcing early marriage among Selale Oromo women, analyzed and described social norms and customs promoting early marriage, investigated the consequences of early marriage and suggested ways and means of reducing or eliminating the practice of early marriage. The research methodology that was applied for this study was qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data for the study was obtained through administering questionnaires and conducting in depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Early marriage is proved to be an issue of concern among women and girls in their adolescent ages in the study area. The mean age at first marriage for girls was 14.8 years while it is 20.9 for boys. Even though a slight improvement is seen in terms of age at first marriage and choice of marriage partner, a lot remains to be done to bring about radical change in the traditional norms and customs that perpetuate early marriage. The trend of early marriage showed some improvement in terms of age at first marriage in relation to the former times that the key informants discussed and the information obtained from quantitative data. Regarding the consent of the girl child, consent was made by parents on behalf of her.

The root causes of early marriage were identified and presented under three headings: Economic motives, Social influence and Cultural impacts. The economic motives of early marriage were to strengthen economic relationship or ties between parents and clans, to get betrothal gifts from the bride groom's family, to improve the economic conditions /vulnerability of the girl's family and ensure parent's desire of securing their future before they pass away. The social influence of early marriage was defined as to establishing or strengthening kinship relationship, avoiding of loss of virginity and evasion of the stigma of

‘haaftuu’. The cultural factors of early marriage is found to be to maintain the tradition of the community, specifically adherence and fear of the Oromo traditional belief known as ‘Caacuu and Kallacha’ and elder’s pervasiveness.

Although the causes of early marriage have tremendous role for the perpetuation of the practice, the norms and customs in which the process of early marriage is executed and the contribution of culture and tradition namely ‘Caacuu and Kallachaa’ and marriage by abduction were also identified for the perpetuation of early marriage.

Issues raised under consequences of early marriage were found out to be interwoven and complicated. Most of them fall under instability of marriage, problems related to sexual, reproductive health and child delivery, issues related to poverty and lack of educational opportunity.

Finally, along with findings pointed out in each of the chapters, the major key issues reflecting the causes and consequences of early marriage such as the practice of early marriage as a mechanism of promoting personal well being, as a means of maintaining parent’s dignity, as a gender based violence, and as the denial of human rights were discussed thoroughly. The overall findings of the study reveal that a number of assumptions and general beliefs about the effects of early marriage are profound among members of the communities in the study area.

9.2. CONCLUSION

The interview and focus group discussion with the respondents clearly indicated that there is the practice early marriage among Selale Oromo women in general and in Hidabu Abote and Kuyu Woreda in particular. Early marriage is also identified as an issue of girls in the studied area that is taken as a norm though it harms their wellbeing and interest.

In spite of the international conventions endorsed and national laws ratified for the protection of women’s right in general and early marriage in particular, early marriage is practised among Selale Oromos. It is executed as a customary marriage that under mines the age at first marriage and the issue of consent of the couples enshrined in the legal system. It is guided by

social norms and customs that go against the right of women. The legal enforcement bodies are not sensitive to act on the practice of early marriage despite factual evidences showing violation of women's right. The issues of marriage particularly that of sexuality is taboo to be discussed in public. The legal awareness of women in protecting their right is also quite low. Elders who have no idea about women's right and privilege have more power and influence in the system in perpetuating early marriage.

The system that the community dwells and the role of women and men being defined in the socialization processes reinforces the existing unequal gender power relationships. Early marriage is one of the harmful traditional practices that severely affect the girl child. The root causes and enforcing factors exacerbate the situation of early marriage. They are deep rooted in the system in which none of the girls escape it. On top of this, the economic and social benefits of the parents escalate the issue to non reversible situation. Besides, the low status of women and the level of ignorance plays a significant role.

Results of the survey clearly revealed that early marriage is violating women's right. The society maintains the system at the expense of the women since the patriarchal system greatly plays in maintaining the status quo. In any case early marriage is in a position to expose the child to different types of violence's: sexual, psychological, physical and verbal abuse.

According to the findings of the study, the consequences of early marriage affect the overall personality of the female child. It is a 'tradition based violence' that severely affect the personal and social development of the female child. Being a common form of violence practiced in most societies it has deep-rooted base that is often encouraged by the overwhelming majority of the members: men and women together. Victims of early marriage are vulnerable to gender based violence, high fertility, marital instability, and to reproductive health complications.

The violation of women right due to the impact of early marriage begins when she is given for marriage at early age, even before reaching puberty. Empowering women particularly providing them with educational opportunity is a key factor in combating the causes and consequences of early marriage.

Inequality as it limits not only educational opportunities but also reduces employment opportunities that mitigate women's economic independence.

9.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although there are some improvements regarding the age at first marriage, early marriage is still prevalent in the study area. Although efforts are under way to combat harmful traditional practices dealing with early marriage that focused on enhancing age at first marriage, ensuring the girl's consent for marriage, HIV/AIDS test before marriage, reducing cost of marriage, much has to be done to make them practical. To suggest efforts to be made by government and non government organizations in abolishing early marriage in the area the following recommendations are forwarded:

- Awareness creation at family and community level has to be strengthened so as to increase girls' participation in education. The attitude of the community at large needs to be altered or else that girl's education has no value at all.
- Consistent effort should be made on providing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) on gender issues, harmful traditional practices, and the like to the community along with net working with different government and non government organization
- Organize and conduct community conversation with influential people on women's right and the legal frame work to different segments of the society

- Legal literacy should be provided to the women association leaders and active members so as to strengthen and make them a pressure group to fight for their own right at large at the grass root level.
- Enhance more proactive involvement of men and boys to redress gender inequality through affirmative actions and culturally sensitive approaches.
- Efforts at grass root level such as advocacy, reinforcing the legal enforcement bodies, etc should be strengthened with full integration of the concerned bodies.
- Religious leaders, policy makers, parents, and youth must be given due attention so as to sensitize and create awareness on the impacts and consequences of early marriage,
- Legal measures should be taken on all bodies promoting and supporting early marriage.
- Different government and non government organizations should work towards bringing gender equality using the strategies aimed on improving data, changing attitudes, promoting education, and partnership to change.

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Appendix 1

Institute of Gender Studies

Addis Ababa University

The Gender Dimensions of Early Marriage among Selale Oromos

Consent form

Good morning/good after noon .My name is _____. I am a data collector for a research entitled ‘The Gender Dimensions of Early Marriage among Selale Oromos’. The purpose of this study is to collect data for academic use. I would very much appreciate your participation in this study.

I would like to ask some questions. The questions are very personal, but your answer will not be shown to any one. It is confidential. I will not take much of your time. The interview is completely based on your volunteer and if you come across any question that you don’t want to answer, you just inform me and I will pass over that one. I hope that you will participate in the survey since your views are important. At this time do you want to ask me anything about the study?

Do you want to participate in this interview?

- (1) Yes (continue)
- (2) No (Thank the respondents and End the interview)

Appendix 2

Key informants Guide

Introduction

First of all, I would like to extend my best greeting for your cooperation to have an interview with you. I would ask you some questions about the causes, the social norms and effects of early marriage in your community. The purpose of the study is to collect data for academic use. I would very much be pleased about your participation in this study as you are a key informant. Some of the questions are very personal, but your answer will not be shown to any one. It is confidential. The purpose of the interview is just to hear your own opinion and experience about those issues raised. It will not take much of your time. The interview is completely based on your volunteer and if you come across to any question you don't want to answer, you just inform me and I will pass it. I hope that you will participate in the study since your views are important.

I would like to record the interview using tape-recorder for it will be difficult to write down every thing or remember. As I have said earlier every thing is just between you and me. It will be kept confidentially. Do you agree?

(1). Yes (continue)

(2). No (Thank the respondents and End the interview)

Now, I am going to ask you each questions and you will respond as to your knowledge.

2A. Guiding questions for Key informants (Sector Offices)

Causes of Early marriage

-Could you please tell me about early marriage in your community?

Probe: - At what age most of the time do boys and girls get married?
Is that early or late? How?

-Who gets their daughter married early? Why?

-Why does the age of marriage of boys and girls differ?

- Does a girl have a right to choose when and whom to marry? If no, why not?

-Do you support the prevailing situation? If yes, why? If no, why not?

-How do you think it would be resolved?

Social norms and values that reinforce early marriage

-What do you say about social norms and laws that make sustain early marriage in your community?

Probe: -Do you know any girl who get married before the age of 18?
If yes, could you tell me how the marriage was organized?

-Who organized it? What was her role?

-How is the whole process of early marriage?

-How do women in the community get in to marriage in general?

-Do elderly men marry girl below 18 years old ? Why?

-Why do parents prefer to give a child at early age?

-Are there any ways that the girl gets in to marriage?

-What is your opinion about these enforcing factors that sustain early marriage?

-What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages
of these social norms and values of marriage including early marriage?

Impacts and consequences of early marriage

- What can you say about the advantages and disadvantages of early marriage?

Probe:- -Do you know any that benefit/hurt for getting married at early age?
If yes, how? Please explain in detail.

-What do you say about some of the ways early marriage
help or harm a person?

-What are the immediate impacts of early marriage?
What are the long lasting effects ?

-What is your general comment about early marriage?

Probe: What are the advantages of getting married at early age?
What are the disadvantages?

Intervention/Measures taken

-What can you say about efforts made to address the issue of early marriage at different level?

Probe: - Are there government and non government organizations that work on addressing the issue of early marriage?

-Could you cite them?

- How is the legal enforcement bodies attitudes, capacity, and coordination at each level in addressing the issue of early marriage?

-How do the monitoring and evaluation between implementing bodies at Kebele, Woreda and zonal level take place?

-How do they work?

Or what are the strategies they employ in addressing the issue?

- What about your organization role regarding early marriage as one of the implementing organization? What is your strategy?

-What about your net work with different government and non government organizations?

-What can you suggest as a best strategy to address the issue?

- What do you say about the role of influential people in addressing the issue?

- What are the current problems encountered not to address the issue of early marriage in this community? Describe them in detail?

Thank you for the interview.

2B. Guiding questions for Key informants (Influential people of the community)

Causes of Early marriage

-Could you please tell me about early marriage in your community?

Probe: - At what age most of the time do boys and girls get married?
Is that early or late? How?

-Who gets their daughter married early? Why?

-Why does the age of marriage of boys and girls differ?

- Does a girl have a right to choose when and whom to marry? If no, why not?

-Do you support the prevailing situation? If yes, why? If no, why not?

-How do you think it would be resolved?

Social norms and values that reinforce early marriage

-What do you say about social norms and laws that make sustain early marriage in your community?

- Probe: -Do you know any girl who get married before the age of 18?
 If yes, could you tell me how the marriage was organized?
 -Who organized it? What was her role?
 -How is the whole process of early marriage?
- How do women in the community get in to marriage in general?
 -Do elderly men marry girl below 18 years old ? Why?
 -Why do parents prefer to give a child at early age?
 -Are there any ways that the girl gets in to marriage?
 -What is your opinion about these enforcing factors that sustain early marriage?
 -What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of these social norms and values of marriage including early marriage?

Impacts and consequences of early marriage

- What can you say about the advantages and disadvantages of early marriage?
 -Do you know any that benefit/hurt for getting married at early age?
 If yes, how? Please explain in detail.
 -What do you say about some of the ways early marriage help or harm a person?
 -What are the immediate impacts of early marriage?
 What are the long lasting effects ?
- What is your general comment about early marriage?
 Probe: What are the advantages of getting married at early age?
 What are the disadvantages?

Intervention/Measures taken

- What can you say about efforts made to address the issue of early marriage at different level?
- Probe: - Are there government and non government organizations that work on addressing the issue of early marriage?
 -Could you cite them?
- How is the legal enforcement bodies attitudes, capacity, and coordination at each level in addressing the issue of early marriage?
 - What about your role regarding early marriage as one of the influential person in the community? What is your strategy?
 -What about your net work with different government and non government organizations?
 -What can you suggest as a best strategy to address the issue?
 - What do you say about the role of influential people in addressing the issue?
 - What are the current problems encountered not to address the issue of early marriage in this community? Describe them in detail?

Thank you for the interview.

Appendix 3

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Introduction

Today we are going to have a group discussion on the gender dimensions of early marriage among Selale oromos. Every person is expected to actively participate in the discussion though one person is supposed to speak at a time. You can suggest your views without any fear, and hesitation either the ideas could be shared/supported or opposed by any member of the group. The objective is to learn from your perceptions and arrive at a consensus as you are the most knowledgeable person of the subject matter.

To initiate the discussion, I will ask you some questions and you will respond accordingly. The discussion will be recorded for it is difficult to jot down or remember every thing. I hope that you will participate in the discussion since your views are important. Every thing will be kept confidentially and it will be completed per our program.

Now, I want each person in our group to say your name, how long have you been residing in this community. I also want to tell us your marital status, the number of children you have, and the type of work you are currently engaged in.

(Researcher to begin)

I will begin: My name is---I was born in -----. I have been-----and I have born----- children. I am a post graduate student in the Institute of Gender Studies. I came here to undertake my thesis research.

Now I am going to raise an issue and you will be discussing about it.

**3A. Questions for focus group discussions (victims of early marriage)
(Married women, widowed and divorced, and for those never married administered
independently)**

Causes of Early marriage

- What do you know about early marriage in your community?
- How do you describe age of marriage and the issue of consent of girls?
- What is the problem if a girl gets married after 18 years? Why?
- Why does the age of marriage of boys and girls differ?
- What are the causes of early marriage of a girl child? Why?

Social norms and values that reinforce early marriage

- Can you tell me about the social norms and values that encourage early marriage?
 - What are the norms and values of the community regarding early marriage?
 - What are required on the part of the girls to get married?
 - How do women in the community get in to marriage in general?
 - Are there any ways/means that the girl gets in to marriage?
 - What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages?
of these social norms and values of marriage including early marriage?

Life after marriage

- Could you please describe the life of the bride gets married at early age?
 - What were her roles and responsibilities? Why?
 - What are her husband's roles and responsibilities? Why?
- How is th relationship of the bride and her husband?
 - Who had decision making power on house hold matters,
on resources? Why?
 - Who has access and control of resources? Why?
 - What do you say about the immediate effects of early marriage?

Child delivery and rearing

- Would you please tell me about child delivery at a very early age?
 - Do you know a person who give birth to a child
At early age and encountered fistula?
 - What happened to her? Were she given birth at home or in health clinics?
 - Are there health stations for child delivery in this village?
 - What about Traditional birth attendants? Do they help
pregnant women? How?
 - What is your opinion on child delivery and rearing in general?

Impacts and consequences of early marriage

- What can you say about the advantages and disadvantages of early marriage?
 - Do you know any that benefit/hurt for getting married at early age? How?
 - What do you say about some of the ways early marriage help or harm a person?
 - What did women gain or lose for they get married at early or late age? How?
 - What are the immediate impacts of early marriage?
What are the long lasting effects ?
 - Do you support if the government takes strict legal measures against early marriage practices? Why?

- What is your general comment about early marriage?
 - What are the advantages of getting married at early age?
What are the disadvantages?

Thank you for your cooperation in the discussion.

Appendix 4

In-depth Interview Guide

Introduction

First of all, I would like to extend my best greeting for your cooperation to have an interview with you. I would ask you some questions about the causes, the social norms and effects of early marriage in your community. The purpose of the study is to collect data for academic use. I would very much be pleased about your participation in this study as you are a key informant. Some of the questions are very personal, but your answer will not be shown to any one. It is confidential. The purpose of the interview is just to hear your own opinion and experience about those issues raised. It will not take much of your time. The interview is completely based on your volunteer and if you come across to any question you don't want to answer, you just inform me and I will pass it. I hope that you will participate in the study since your views are important.

I would like to record the interview using tape-recorder for it will be difficult to write down every thing or remember. As I have said earlier every thing is just between you and me. It will be kept confidentially. Do you agree?

(1). Yes (continue)

(2). No (Thank the respondents and End the interview)

Now, I am going to ask you each questions and you will respond as to your knowledge and experience in detail

4A. In-depth interview for key informants (victims of early marriage)

(Will be administered on ever married, divorced, widowed and late married women)

Causes of Early marriage

- Could you please tell me about early marriage in your community?
 - Probe: - At what age most of the time do boys and girls get married?
 - Is that early or late? How?
 - Who gets their daughter married early? Why?
 - Why does the age of marriage of boys and girls differ?
- Does a girl have a right to choose when and whom to marry? If no, why not?
 - Do you support the prevailing situation? If yes, why? If no, why not?
 - How do you think it would be resolved?

Social norms and values that reinforce early marriage

- Can you tell me about the social norms and values that encourage early marriage?
 - Probe: -Do you know any girl who get married before the age of 18?
 - If yes, could you tell me how the marriage was organized?
 - Who organized it? What was her role?
- How do women in the community get in to marriage in general?
 - Are there any ways/means that the girl gets in to marriage?
 - What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages?
 - of these social norms and values of marriage including early marriage?

Child hood Experience

- Could you please tell me about your child hood?
 - Probe:- -Where have you grown up?
 - With whom did you live? How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- What were your roles?
 - What were the tasks you fulfilled or expected to carry out at home as a girl child? Why?
 - Have you ever been to school? If no, why not?
 - Please tell me your feeling about your child hood experience ?

Marital experience

- Can you tell me about your marriage?
 - Probe: -Tell me about your married sisters/brothers?
 - At what age did they get married? Why?
 - At what age did you get married?
 - Were you willing to get married? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- How did you get married? Was it in wedding?
 - How was your marriage ceremony?
 - When was that happened?
 - Where did it take place?
- How was your feeling on the date of your marriage?
 - Were you happy or sad? Why?
 - How do you describe your husband's situation on your marriage day?

- Please tell me your first sexual experience with your husband? What happened to you?

Life after marriage

- How do you describe your life after marriage?
 - Probe: -With whom did you begin living? With your husband alone or with your mother in law's? Why?
 - What were your roles and responsibilities? Why?
 - What were your husband's roles and responsibilities? Why?
- How was your relationship with your husband?
 - Who had decision making power on house hold matters, on resources? Why?
 - Who has access and control of resources? Why?
 - What do you say about the immediate effects of early marriage?

Child delivery and rearing

- Would you please tell me about your children and child delivery?
 - Probe: -Did you give birth to a child?
 - How many children do you have?
- At what age did you give birth to your first child?
 - How was your first child delivery?
 - Were you given birth at home or in health clinics?
 - Did you deliver normally or encounter fistula? Could you please tell me about it in detail?
 - How did you rear your children along with the house hold chores?

Impacts and consequences of early marriage

- What can you say about the advantages and disadvantages of early marriage?
 - Do you know any that benefit/hurt for getting married at early age? If yes, how? Please explain in detail.
 - What do you say about some of the ways early marriage help or harm a person?
 - What did you gain or lose for you get married at early or late age? How?
 - What are the immediate impacts of early marriage?
 - What are the long lasting effects ?
 - Do you support if the government takes strict legal measures against early marriage practices? Why?
- What is your general comment about early marriage?
 - Probe: What are the advantages of getting married at early age?
 - What are the disadvantages?

Thank you for your cooperation in the interview.

**4B. In-depth interview for key informants (Who are at risk of early marriage)
(Will be administered on never married girls)**

Causes of Early marriage

-Could you please tell me about early marriage in your community?

Probe: - At what age most of the time do boys and girls get married?

Is that early or late? How?

-Who gets their daughter married early? Why?

-Why does the age of marriage of boys and girls differ?

- Does a girl have a right to choose when and whom to marry? If no, why not?

-Do you support the prevailing situation? If yes, why? If no, why not?

-How do you think it would be resolved?

Social norms and values that reinforce early marriage

-Can you tell me about the social norms and values that encourage early marriage?

Probe: -Do you know any girl who get married before the age of 18?

If yes, could you tell me how the marriage was organized?

-Who organized it? What was her role?

-How do women in the community get in to marriage in general?

-Are there any ways that the girl get in to marriage?

-What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages

of these social norms and values of marriage including early marriage?

Child hood Experience

-Could you please tell me about your childhood and your role at home?

Probe: Are you the eldest or youngest child in your family?

Do you have brothers and sisters?

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

How many of them do they learn?

Do you have sisters that get married?

At what age did they get married? Why?

-Would you please tell me about your school experience?

Probe: Do you attend school?

Which grade do you learn currently?

What are your ambitions? What is your plan?

At what age do you want to get married? Why?

-What do you feel about early marriage in your community?

Probe: Do you support or reject early marriage? Why?

Do you know friends from school that were given
to marriage at early age?

What was their feeling?

What happened to them? What do you feel about them?

What do you say about the feelings of your parents,
immediate relatives towards early marriage?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of early marriage?

-What should be done to protect girls from early marriage?

- Do you support if the government takes strict legal measures against early marriage practices.

Impacts and consequences of early marriage

- What can you say about the advantages and disadvantages of early marriage?

-Do you know any that benefit/hurt for getting married at early age?

If yes, how? Please explain in detail.

-What do you think about some of the ways early marriage
help or harm a person?

-Please tell me your feeling about early marriage in general?

-What are the immediate impacts of early marriage?

What are the long lasting effects ?

-Do you support if the government takes strict legal measures
against early marriage practices? Why?

-What is your general comment about early marriage?

Probe: What are the advantages of getting married at early age?

What are the disadvantages?

Thank you for your cooperation in the interview.

EARLY MARRIAGE AND LEGAL PROVISIONS

Ethiopia has adopted a number of key instruments that provide clear frameworks for the protection of women's right. These includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Platform for Action of the Beijing Conference on Women, and the like.

The international conventions and national laws particularly emphasized the age at first marriage and the issue of consent as an entry point while discussing marriage.

5A. International Conventions and Early Marriage

The right to free and full consent to marriage is one that has claimed wide recognition since the 1948 UDHR.

- Article 16(2) Universal Declaration of Human Rights reveals “ Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses”
- Article 10(1) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) “The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family.....particularly for its establishments and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependant children. Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses”
- Article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) “ 2 The right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized. 3. No marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses”
- Article 1 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery states Parties shall abolish: “c) Any Institution or Practice where by:

- i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family or any other person or group; or
- ii) The husband of a woman, his family or his clan has the right to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise; or
- iii) A woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another person.”

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 1989 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have also laid a foundation for protection of women’s right.

Article 5(1) of CEDAW obliges states parties to take all appropriate measures for the purpose of achieving the objectives of eliminating prejudices and forms of customary practices “which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either or the sexes or stereotyped roles for men and women.”

In the context of a woman’s marital rights, the convention in particular provides that States Parties should take actions to do away with discrimination against women in all matters that pertain to marriage and family relations.

In particular Article 16(1) specifies the following:

- a) The same right to enter into marriage
- b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent. Further more. sub-Article 2 of the same Article 16 provides thus:

The betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriage in an official registry compulsory.

Adopted in 1989 and ratified by all but two of the member states of the United Nations, the CRC embodies a wide range of rights and protection measures to the child. Almost all its provisions have some relevance to the issue of early marriage, the notable ones being the following:

- Article 1: “A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier,”
- Article 3(1) “ In all actions concerning children.....the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration”
- Article 6(2) “States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child
- Article 12(1) The entitlement of the child to freely express his/her views in all matters that affect him/her.
- Article 19(1) The right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse.
- Article 24 The right to health and the duty of States Parties to take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.
- Article 34 The right of children to protection from all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.
- Article 36 The right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child’s welfare.
- Another important document where by the international community voiced its concern on the fate of women, both children and adults, is the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action espoused by the Fourth World Conference on Women. It has been stated under paragraph 9 (of the Beijing Declaration that the Governments participating in the

Conference reaffirm their commitment to: Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Under paragraph No. 268 of its strategic objectives and actions, the Platform for Action pronounced by the conference further pointed out that early marriage and early child bearing continues to be a serious health risk to young women and an impediment on their way towards self fulfillment. It went further and urged governments to take appropriate actions. Paragraph 274(3) of the Platform for Action has this to offer in this context.

“Enact and strictly enforce laws to ensure that marriage is only entered into with the free and full consent of the intending spouses, in addition enact and strictly enforce laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage and raise the minimum age for marriage where necessary.”

The other international legal instruments that are highly relevant to any discussion on the practice of early marriage are the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages and the related Recommendation on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages. The Convention that was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 7 November 1962 urges all States to take measures that will ensure, inter alia:

... complete freedom in the choice of a spouse, eliminating completely child marriages and betrothal of young girls before the age of puberty, establishing appropriate penalties, where necessary and establishing a civil or other register in which all marriages will be recorded.

According to the provisions of both the Convention and Recommendation:

1. Marital consent is required to be expressed loud and clear in person by both spouses.

2. It is also required to be made in public at the place where the solemnization of the marriage takes place.
3. Marriage by proxy may only be concluded when the concerned authority is satisfied that there are special circumstances that justify the act and, in any way, after full confirmation that the party represented has freely and fully expressed his or her consent.
4. The minimum marriageable age should be clearly specified by the law.
5. Dispensation from the minimum age may only be granted for serious reasons by the appropriate authority and only with a view to protecting the interests of the intending spouses.
6. An official system of registration of marriages should be in place.

On the other hand, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides under its article 18(3) that the State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women as stipulated in international conventions and declarations. In practice, the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child states:

Article 21: "Child Marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation shall be taken to specify the minimum age to be eighteen years"

a much more specific document that will certainly have its bearing on the practice of early marriage is the Maputo Protocol on the Provision of Early Marriage. Inspired by the principles enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol embraces wide range of rights that deal with the different aspects of the welfare and well-being of women. The following are but some of the most important ones.

Article 2(1) (b)

States parties shall enact and effectively implement appropriate legislative and regulatory measures including those prohibiting and curbing all forms of discrimination particularly those harmful practices which endanger the health and general well-being of women.

Article 6. Marriage

States Parties shall ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights and are regarded as equal partners in marriage. They shall enact appropriate national legislative measures to guarantee that:

- a) no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties;
- b) the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years;
- c) monogamy is encouraged as the preferred form of marriage and that the rights or women in marriage and family, including in polygamous marital relationships are promoted and protected;
- d) every marriage shall be recorded in writing and registered in accordance with national laws, in order to be legally recognized;
- e) the husband and wife shall, by mutual agreement, choose their matrimonial regime and place of residence;
- f) a married woman shall have the right to retain her maiden name, to use it as she pleases, jointly or separately with her husband's surname;
- g) a woman shall have the right to retain her nationality or to acquire the nationality of her husband;
- h) a woman and a man shall have equal rights, with respect to the nationality of their children except where this is contrary to a provision in national legislation or is contrary to national security interests;
- i) a woman and a man shall jointly contribute to safeguarding the interests of the family, protecting and educating their children;
- j) during her marriage, a woman shall have the right to acquire her own property and to administer and manage it freely.

5B. National Laws and Early marriage

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Revised Family Law and the New criminal code are very important and decisive documents in protection of human rights including women's right. The constitution provides that the fundamental rights and freedom already mentioned in different conventions. Besides, Ethiopia endorsed almost all international

conventions. Besides, Article 34 and 35 particularly deals with Marital, Personal and Family Rights and rights of Women respectively.

Article 34: Marital, Personal and Family Rights

- (1) Men and women, without any distinction as to race, nation, nationality or religion, who have attained marriageable age as defined by law, have the right to marry and found a family. They have equal rights while entering into, during marriage and at the time of divorce. Laws shall be enacted to ensure the protection of rights and interests of children at the time of divorce.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental unit of the society and is entitled to protection by society and the state.
- (4) In accordance with provisions to be specified by law, a law giving recognition to marriage concluded under systems of religions, or customary laws may be enacted.
- (5) This Constitution shall not preclude the adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws, in accordance with religious or customary laws, with the consent of the parties to the disputes. Particulars shall be determined by law.

The Constitution of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has provisions containing basic principles to protect women from harmful traditional practices. The most important provision in this regard is Article 16 “Every one has the right to protection against bodily harm”

Besides, Article 35: Rights of Women

- (4) The state shall enforce the right of women to eliminate the influences of harmful customs. Laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited.
- (9) To prevent harm arising from pregnancy and child birth and in order to safeguard their health, women have the right to access to family planning education, information and capacity.

Article 91(1) Government shall have the duty to support, on the basis of equality, the growth and enrichment of cultures and traditions that are compatible with fundamental rights, human dignity, democratic norms and ideals and the provisions of the Constitution.” How ever with all these legal protections women are still victims of early marriage.

The New Criminal Code has also included crimes related to harmful traditional practices including marriage. The following articles incorporated in the new criminal code.

Article 561:- Endangering the Lives of Pregnant women and Children through Harmful Traditional Practices.

Article 562:- Causing Bodily Injury to Pregnant Women and Children through Harmful Traditional Practices

Article 564:- Violence against a Marriage partner or a Person cohabiting in an Irregular Union

Article 568:- Transmission of Diseases through Harmful Traditional Practices

Article 569:- Participation in Harmful Traditional Practices

Article 570:- Incitement against the Enforcement of provisions Prohibiting Harmful Traditional Practices.

Article 648 on “Early marriage” the new penal code states that whoever concludes marriage with a minor apart from circumstances permitted by relevant Family Code is punishable with

- a) rigorous imprisonment not exceeding three years, where the age of the victim is thirteen years or above; or
- b) rigorous imprisonment not exceeding seven years, where the age of the victim is below thirteen years

